

## **CAREER BREAK POLICY**

### **Introduction**

The Career Break Policy was introduced as part of the University's commitment to family friendly policies, to provide staff with the opportunity, in defined circumstances, to leave their employment without a break in service to fulfil personal commitments whilst maintaining their career in the intervening period.

The University of Nottingham also has a number of other relevant policies, which the employee may wish to refer to. These are: Special Leave for Unplanned and Urgent Domestic, Personal and Family Reasons, Maternity Leave, Adoption Leave, Parental Support, Job Share and Flexible Working Arrangements at <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport>

### **The purpose of the Career Break Policy**

To assist in the development, retention and return of key staff whose contribution is vital to the future needs and success of the University, where such leave provides benefit to both the University and the employee.

### **Eligibility for a career break**

Applications to take a career break will be considered from both full time and part time staff who have a minimum of five completed years continuous service with the University. Applications under the Policy will be considered in the light of the purpose of the Career Break Policy and the compatibility of the request with the operational needs of the University.

### **Criteria for a Career Break**

The application criteria are:

To undertake caring responsibilities. (Please note that these provisions are in addition to the separate provisions for maternity leave, adoption leave, parental or paternity leave and long term carers leave.

To undertake a period of further full-time education/training (which should be relevant to the employment of the member of staff). (Please note that these provisions are in addition to the separate regulations for academic staff on study leave or leave of absence for academic purposes.)

To undertake a period of voluntary service overseas.

To accompany a partner (employed by the University) who is working overseas.

### **Period of Career Break**

Career breaks will be granted for a minimum period of one year and up to a maximum of three years duration.

The period of the career break cannot exceed the duration of any existing contract of employment.

A maximum of two career break periods will be allowed with a total number of years not to exceed five years. In order for staff to be considered for a second career break period they must have completed a minimum of five years continuous service with the University following any previous career break.

## **Application Process**

Employees interested in making an application under this Policy are encouraged to seek the advice of their [HR Business Partner](#) at an early stage and to raise the matter informally with their Head of School/Department or appropriate manager.

A formal application should be made by completing a Career Break Application Form also available from their Head of School/Department, which should be forwarded to the Human Resources Department, giving a minimum of four months notice of the date on which the career break is due to start. Applications giving less notice may be accepted at the discretion of the University. Where appropriate, relevant documentation must be provided to accompany the career break proposal.

Applications under the Policy will be considered and determined by the relevant Head of School/Department. To ensure consistency of approach, the HR Business Partner will assist the Head of School/Department in reaching a decision on the application for a career break. The relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor will be consulted for decisions relating to academic and related staff.

The employee will be notified by the Human Resources Department of the decision concerning their application. In the event of an application being unsuccessful, reasons will be given to the individual concerned.

An employee who is advised that their application under the Policy is unsuccessful, will have a right of appeal to the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Staffing (or to a PVC nominated by the Registrar, where the PVC for Staffing has previously been involved in the decision process) whose decision on any application will be final. Acceptance on the career break is solely at the discretion of the University and the University reserves the right to refuse a career break application.

## **General Conditions**

During each twelve month period of the career break, the employee will be required unless impracticable to undertake five days appropriate development work/training or CPD activity normally within the relevant School/Department. The arrangements will be made by the relevant School/Department, giving at least one month's notice to the individual concerned. The period may comprise a single week period or a number of shorter periods and the timing and nature of the development work or training activity undertaken will be at the Head of School/Departments discretion.

If an employee is unable to attend an arranged development work/training period they must notify their Head of School/Department at the earliest opportunity. Failure to attend three consecutive arrangements without good reason will invalidate the career break.

During the period of the career break the School/Department will make arrangements to keep the employee updated on any changes within the School/Department, or items of interest and will confirm on an annual basis the continuation of the career break arrangements.

A career break is a period of unpaid leave and will not be regarded as a break in service.

The employment contract continues for the period of the career break, but with no entitlement to pay or pay benefits. The contractual entitlements and obligations of notice, grievance and disciplinary procedures, confidentiality and not participating in other businesses remain in force.

Employees must not undertake any paid employment (which in any way relates to their University employment) with another employer during the period of the career break without the prior approval of the University. Failure to adhere to this condition will invalidate the career break and could result in termination of the contract of employment.

Normal incremental progression will be suspended during the period of the career break, but will recommence upon return to work.

Pension/Superannuation payments may be suspended during the period of the career break. However, employees will be given the option to continue to make payments to the scheme during the break, subject to Inland Revenue rules, and in such circumstances the University will meet the appropriate employers' contributions. Employees are advised to speak to the University Pensions Administrator, prior to going on the Career Break, to discuss the options available during the Career Break to ensure that any implications for their pension membership and benefits are understood. Staff can also contact the relevant pension scheme helpline direct, details of which can be found on the pensions notice board.

There will be no entitlement to annual leave or accrual of entitlement to annual leave during the period of the career break. Any annual leave owing must be taken before the commencement of the career break.

There will be no entitlement to sick pay whilst on the career break scheme. If the employee is unable to attend the development work/training period due to sickness, another period will be arranged at an appropriate time.

Where an employee becomes pregnant during a career break the normal accrued Statutory Maternity Leave entitlements will apply. Where appropriate, the career break will be superseded by Maternity Leave, but the Maternity Leave will not extend the period of the Career Break, nor there be entitlement to Occupational Maternity Pay in these circumstances.

The duration of the career break will be clearly specified and agreed before commencement of the break, and an employee will not be entitled to return to work before the expected end of the career break. It is however appreciated that there can be exceptional personal circumstances which frustrate the original purpose of a career break. If this occurs the individual concerned has no automatic entitlement to return to work prior to the expiry of the career break. However, in exceptional circumstances, the University will at its absolute discretion consider an application for an early return to work, but in such circumstances of an early return to work the University would not be expected to create a post or to move another employee out of an existing post. An unsuccessful application for an early return to work is without prejudice to the individual's right to return to work at the expiry of their career break.

### **Employee Commitment**

During the career break the employee will:

Complete a period of five days appropriate development work/training or CPD activity for each twelve months of the career break, as arranged by the Head of School/Department.

Keep themselves up to date with their career and the University's activities.

Let the University know of changes in their circumstances, including change of address.

Agree to return to a substantive post at the end of the career break for a period of not less than six months.

### **Arrangements to return to work**

The absence of an employee for the purpose of a career break will normally be covered by an appointment on a fixed term basis.

The employee must confirm their intention to return to work, in writing, three months in advance of the actual date of return.

In the event the employee wishes to return to work on a different contractual basis please see the paragraph below regarding requests for flexible working arrangements.

It is normally expected that the employee will return to their substantive post. Should this not be possible for any reason, the Human Resources Department will offer the employee every assistance in identifying suitable alternative employment within the University. In the event that redeployment is not possible, the normal arrangements for redundancy will apply, based on total continuous service including the period on career break.

**Requests for flexible working arrangements (including part-time working)**

Employees have the right, under certain circumstances, to request flexible working. Guidelines and an application form are available [here](#).

If a request is made under this right to change the contractual working hours and/or pattern of work, then the School or Department will always consider such a request carefully. If such a request is turned down, the manager must objectively justify why e.g. explain why a job has to be done on a full time basis by one individual, as opposed to two people doing it on a part time basis. Employees should submit any request as far in advance as possible to allow adequate time for the request to be fully considered and where appropriate put the necessary arrangements in place.

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**Human Resources Department**