

## Interchange Scheme Guidance – External Secondment

### 1. About Interchange

The NI [Interchange Scheme](#) allows you to immerse yourself in another working environment, learning from other people and situations.

It involves organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors, facilitating, as a development opportunity, the exchange of knowledge and skills between different organisations and individuals where a development need has been identified and agreed. The scheme is managed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) who, whilst a member of the Scheme, also administrates the scheme.

### 2. Benefits

Participating in Interchange brings a number of benefits to both the individual, and the organisations.

It allows **you** to:

- Broaden your outlook through acquiring experience, knowledge and skills with different organisations and sectors.
- Adapt to new challenges and situations in a safe environment
- Increase your confidence by bringing back new skills and knowledge into your own organisation
- Learn “in the flow of work”
- Increase your network, and career development opportunities, developing connections and relationships with others

It allows the **organisations** to:

- Encourage cross organisational and cross sectoral learning through the exchange of people, ideas, information and best practice.
- Share resources and expertise
- Enhance organisational effectiveness by learning from others when considering new initiatives

### 3. Eligibility

The scheme states that opportunities are usually available to staff at middle and senior manager levels which broadly equates to roles at level 2 and above (**typically** grades 7 and above) of our [Leadership and Management Framework](#) . At times, there may also be opportunities available to staff at other levels. Staff need to meet criteria before applying.

You may apply if:

- You are a permanent employee at Queen’s University Belfast, have completed your probation period, have not initiated grievance action against another member of University staff, and your performance, conduct or attendance are not currently being assessed under performance management, discipline or attendance management procedures.
- Staff on a fixed-term contract can only be considered if the duration of their contract is longer than the secondment opportunity as they must return to the University at the end of the secondment period.

- At the discretion of the line manager, staff applying for a secondment opportunity should normally have completed at least two years' service in the University.
- Upon returning to the University, Staff normally cannot apply for a further secondment opportunity until they have completed the same period of time that they were on secondment.
- You meet the job requirements and specification.
- The experience is demonstrably of benefit to you, your department and/or the Queen's as a whole.
- Your release is agreed with your line manager and Head of department/school/directorate as appropriate. Your department has the right to refuse any secondment application for business reasons and must advise you of the reason, as appropriate

#### 4. Opportunities

##### 1. Outward (external) secondment:

Responding to an advertised opportunity from Interchange to move to a different organisation for a specified period via an outward (external) secondment.

Details of Current Opportunities are available on the Interchange webpages.

##### 2. Inward Secondment:

Hiring Managers within Queen's may, where appropriate, avail of the Interchange programme to arrange an inward secondment e.g. from a member organisation into Queen's, to meet a skills/knowledge gap. Before doing so, they should discuss with their HR Business Partner in the first instance, complete the relevant templates (Hosting Proforma) and submit to [interchangesecretariat@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:interchangesecretariat@finance-ni.gov.uk)

**Note** that hiring managers should advertise an opportunity on Interchange only after the redeployment register has been checked and in situations where there has been difficulty recruiting particular skills for a fixed term role, where skills are specialist and not easily available in the current workforce.

#### 5. Application Process for Outward Secondment

You can **respond to an advertised opportunity** - opportunities available from partner organisations are placed on our internal Interchange webpage and advertised in the staff Roundup.

Individuals will be required to participate in the partner organisation's selection process and will be notified of the outcome via the Interchange process.

If you are seeking an opportunity to meet a development need, you should discuss appropriate opportunities as part of the ongoing PDR process. Before applying for an Interchange opportunity, you must first discuss with your line manager/PDR reviewer, the feasibility and practicability of secondment, should your application be successful. In making an application, you should, alongside the secondment guidelines:

- Highlight a clearly identified development need and how this can be met by the Interchange opportunity.
- Identify the benefits regarding your own development. You need to show how participating will benefit your department in Queens – e.g., how you can contribute to the host organisation, what skills and knowledge you will be bringing back to the workplace, how you will use them and how participating in the scheme will broaden your experience or enhance your effectiveness in a certain area.
- If you need any guidance from a learning and development perspective, you can discuss the opportunity with the Talent Manager and /or colleagues within the Organisational Development team who are also happy to assist with any general learning and development queries you may have.
- You also need to discuss the opportunity with the QUB Interchange Manager (**contact via [Interchangemanager@qub.ac.uk](mailto:Interchangemanager@qub.ac.uk)**) who is required to sign your application.

#### Further Support

- Explore the [NI Interchange website](#) which gives useful information about the Interchange scheme.
- Browse our [Career Development Hub](#) which gives general tips and resources on career progression and development.

## 6. Terms & Conditions of Service during an Outward Secondment

While on secondment, the Terms and Conditions of employment and the secondee's continuous service are maintained. If the secondment opportunity is part time, terms and conditions of employment will be applied on a pro rata basis to include salary and membership of relevant pension scheme where appropriate.

Secondment opportunities are temporary in nature and, where possible, secondees retain the right to return to their substantive post at the end of the secondment period. Departments are required to retain the substantive post for one year. Where a secondment lasts more than one year and the substantive post is not retained, the University will seek to redeploy to an alternative post at your substantive grade.

Queen's provides the written Secondment Agreement to be signed by all parties before the secondment begins. In the case of inward secondment, any particular information required by Queen's should be included in the agreement and/or agreed between the line managers/Interchange Managers.

All parties (Current Employer (Queen's), External Organisation (Host) and individual (secondee) agree the nature and terms of the secondment in the Secondment Agreement.

For insurance and indemnity purposes, the Host's insurance policy is required to cover the secondee for any loss, injury and damage caused by or to the secondee.

The HR Business Partner, Finance Business partner and HR Hub need to be notified of approved arrangements if the application is successful.

7. Duration of an Outward Secondment

An outward secondment will usually last from 3 months to 2 years, depending on the nature of the opportunity, the purpose of the secondment, and the needs of the both the Department and the host organisation.

A secondment should not normally last more than 2 years, although in exceptional circumstances and for compelling business reasons, a Department may consider allowing an extension beyond 2 years, subject to a case for the extension being formally considered and agreed by the Department.

8. Useful Links

[NI Interchange](#)

[Candidate Application Form](#) (Candidate Pro-Forma)

[Personal Development Review](#)

[Career Development Hub](#)

[Process Flow](#)