

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of the career break scheme is to facilitate members of staff who wish to take an unpaid break from their career.
- 1.2 A career break may be allowed for a number of purposes such as domestic or caring responsibilities; further education; or any other reason that the University considers to be appropriate under the remit of the scheme.
- 1.3 A career break will not normally be permitted for the purposes of taking up alternative salaried or wage earning employment unless prior written approval has been obtained from the People and Culture Director.

Such approval will only be given in exceptional circumstances. In such circumstances there is a need:

- (a) to ensure that the proposed work to be undertaken is not in conflict with the interests of the University;
- (b) that the basis upon which access to University facilities is afforded is clearly agreed prior to the commencement of the career break.

The People and Culture Director, or nominee, will consult with the appropriate Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor in respect of permission sought by members of academic staff.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1 All members of full-time and part-time staff who have satisfactorily completed their probationary period may apply for a career break. Given the nature of the work undertaken by staff on a fixed term contract, it is unlikely that they will be granted a career break. All requests will be reviewed on an individual basis taking into account the business needs.

3. Application

- 3.1 An application for a career break should be made to the Head of School/Director giving at least 3 months' notice, unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so.
- 3.2 Applications from:
 - a member of staff in a School will be considered by the relevant Head of School; and
 - a member of staff in a Directorate will be considered by the relevant Director.
- 3.3 All applications will be considered on their merits and will be treated sympathetically. Career breaks that fall within the remit of the scheme will be granted where possible.
- 3.4 In considering an application regard will be given to the business needs of the School/Directorate. Reasons for refusal to allow a career break will be conveyed to the applicant in writing by the Head of School/Director.
- 3.5 A member of staff on a career break should provide People and Culture and his/her Head of School/Director with a contact address.
- 3.6 The application should be made using the Career Break Application form available [here](#).

4. Appeal

Where a request for a career break is refused the member of staff has a right to appeal against the decision. The appeal should be made in writing to:

- the appropriate Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor if the appeal is from a member of Academic staff: or
- the Registrar and Chief Operating Officer if the appeal is from a member of staff other than a member of Academic staff.

5. Duration and Number of Career Breaks

- 5.1 Special leave without pay for a career break may be granted for a minimum of one year and for any period in full calendar months up to a maximum of three years.
- 5.2 A career break may be extended twice for a period of not less than one year on each occasion provided the total period does not exceed three years in total.
- 5.3 Only in the most exceptional circumstances will consideration be given to an extension of a career break beyond a total of three years. University employees seeking public office will be subject to the University's procedure on staff elected to parliaments and assemblies.

6. Conduct during a Career Break

- 6.1 During a career break a member of staff will remain subject to the University's requirements and regulations in matters of conduct.

7. Career Development and Training

It will be the responsibility of the Head of School/Director to keep the member of staff on a career break fully informed of significant work place developments which may be relevant to his/her employment, for example relevant promotion opportunities and/or work place benefits.

8. Reckonability of Service

- 8.1 A member of staff who is paying pension contributions should discuss his/her situation with the Pensions Office prior to commencement of his/her career break. Membership of USS/RBP will be suspended during the course of a career break. The employee may have the option of paying a contribution to cover the provision of death in service and incapacity retirement benefits during the course of the career break. The Pensions Office will provide further details upon request.
- 8.2 A member of staff on a career break will not qualify for normal annual increments. However, if he/she has been at work for six months or more of the incremental year, he or she will qualify for an increment in this year.

9. Qualifying Service

A member of staff on a career break will not accrue qualifying time for annual leave or service and will have no entitlement to holiday or sick pay. Service prior to and after a career break will count for these purposes.

A member of staff on career break will have no entitlement to maternity pay other than Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), subject always to eligibility requirements for SMP which can be affected during periods of unpaid leave.

10. Resulting Vacancies

The vacancy, and any consequential vacancies, resulting from a member of staff taking a career break will normally be filled.

11. Appointments/Promotions

- 11.1 A member of staff on a career break may apply for any advertised post in Queen's that may arise during the break. If he/she is appointed to such a post the career break will be cancelled.
- 11.2 A member of academic staff on a career break will not normally be considered for the annual academic promotion exercise or regrading during the career break. However, for staff research and scholarly activity carried out while on a career break may be taken into account for promotional proposes on return to work.

12. Social Security Benefits

It is the responsibility of the individual member of staff on a career break to establish with the Social Security Agency whether he/she is entitled to any social security benefits and to check the position regarding National Insurance contributions.

13. Return to Work

- 13.1 All efforts will be made to assign a member of staff returning from a career break to his/her former post, but no guarantee can be given about this. Where it is not possible to do so, he/she will be assigned to a suitable post and may be offered a post at a lower grade, until a post of an equivalent grade to the original post becomes available.
- 13.2 Where the member of staff is assigned to a post at a lower grade than his/her former post, the member of staff will receive a salary commensurate to the salary of the his/her original post protected for 2 years.
- 13.3 A member of staff on a career break must contact the Head of School/Director, in writing, three months before he/she is due to return to:
- confirm that he/she intends to return on the due date or agree an alternative date; or
 - apply for an extension of the career break, using the Extension to Career Break Application Form available from
 - <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/annual-family-other-leave/work-life-balance-policies/>

The Head of School/Director will consult with People and Culture.

- 13.4 In addition a member of staff who is granted a career break of more than one year's duration must inform the Head of School/Director in writing at the end of each twelve month period of his/her intention to resume work in the University.
- 13.5 A member of staff who is unable to resume work on the due date because of illness will be required to submit a medical certificate covering the period of absence for the purpose of determining eligibility for sick pay.
- 13.6 Where a member of staff wishes to return early from a career break, sympathetic consideration will be given to his/her request by the member of staff's Head of School/Director, who will consult with People and Culture. However, no guarantee can be given that the request for early return will be able to be accommodated.

14. Resignation

Should a member of staff on a career break decide to resign from his/her employment with the University, he/she must inform in writing, where possible, at least three months before he/she would have been due to return to work of his/her intention to resign from the post. The resignation must be submitted to:

- the Vice-Chancellor and copied to the Head of School and People and Culture Director if the member of staff resigning is a member of Academic staff; or
- the Vice-Chancellor and Head of School/Director and copied to People and Culture Director if the member of staff resigning is a member of Academic Related staff; or
- the Head of School/Director and People and Culture Director if the member of staff resigning is a member of staff other than a member of Academic or Academic Related staff.

15. Other Work Life Balance Leave

Please see also the University's procedures in relation to:

- Adoptive Leave
- Dependant Leave
- Flexible Working
- Maternity Leave
- Paternity Leave
- Parental Leave
- Shared Parental Leave

Further information on these policies can be accessed through the web at the following addresses:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/annual-family-other-leave/work-life-balance-policies/>

If you have queries regarding any of the policies above please contact the HR Hub, ext 3000, e-mail hrhub@qub.ac.uk

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