

# Career Break Policy

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## 1. Introduction

At Strathclyde we are committed to supporting colleagues work-life balance and we recognise that there may be circumstances where it may be beneficial to take a break from work. A career break is an unpaid period of time away from work with the ability to return at a later, agreed date.

In this policy you'll find information about how to request a career break, the impact on your pay and benefits and more.

Please note, if this policy refers to additional guidance, FAQs, online forms, or training, these are accessible to University colleagues on our [People Hub](#).

## 2. Who is Covered by this Policy?

This policy applies to all staff within the University who have worked at the University for at least 12 months prior to the start of the career break.

## 3. What is a Career Break?

A career break is an extended unpaid break from work for an agreed amount of time. There are a number of reasons why you may wish to take a career break. These include (but are not limited to):

- To provide care for a partner, relative or child
- To travel overseas or take on voluntary work
- To continue childcare after a period of maternity, adoption or shared parental leave
- To undertake personal study.

At the University we offer leave for a wide range of circumstances. If you are unsure if a career break is right for you and your situation, you may find it helpful to refer to our guidance [What is the Right Leave for Me?](#) (staff login required).

You can make a request for a career break for a minimum period of 6 weeks up to a period of 12 months. It is not expected that a career break will extend beyond 12 months but this may be agreed in exceptional circumstances. At the end of the career break you will return to your role where possible. However, in cases of longer breaks, where business needs may change, you may return to a similar role with the same terms and conditions as your post. Your line manager will always notify you if there are any plans to change the nature of your role whilst you are off.

It is not expected that you will take up alternative paid employment during the period of your career break. However, there are situations where this may be agreed and you should discuss your plans with your line manager. A request to work elsewhere while on a career break will need to be discussed and approved by your Head of Department in line with the [Procedure in Relation to Working for Outside Bodies including Consultancies](#). You can also seek advice from Human Resources.

## **4. Making a Request for a Career Break**

If you wish to request a career break you should meet with your line manager to discuss this. If your manager agrees to the period of leave, then you should submit your request in writing to your manager who will then seek approval from your Executive Dean or Senior Officer. If the request is approved at this stage, then your manager should notify you and Human Resources who will then write to you confirming the arrangements during your period of leave.

It may be the case that your request cannot be supported. If your manager is unable to approve your request, they will advise you of the reasons for this when you meet.

## **5. Dealing with a Request for a Career Break**

We will aim to support a request for a career break wherever possible. However, each case for a career break will be different. When considering your request, your line manager will look at factors such as:

- The purpose or reasons for the career break and whether a different leave type or a request under the [Flexible Working Policy](#) may be more appropriate.
- The period of time being requested
- The operational needs of the department
- The impact on colleagues and service delivery
- The potential to cover the duties of the post on a temporary basis
- The potential to return to the same post at the end of the period
- The benefits for the employee and the University
- The cost to the University of approving the request. This may include costs of replacing the post during leave.

Your request will be dealt with fairly and consistently and your line manager should aim to respond to your request as soon as possible. Normally a decision should be reached on your request within one month from when you submit it.

## **6. During a Career Break**

Whilst you are on a career break, we would encourage you to keep in contact with your line manager and to keep them updated on any changes to your circumstances. Your line manager should also keep you updated of any relevant Department or University changes. Your line manager should agree the contact expectations with you before the career break begins.

During the time that you are off, there will also be an impact on your terms and conditions. These changes are outlined below.

### **6.1. Pay and Service**

The period of leave taken for a career break is unpaid. However, you will remain employed by the University and your service will be maintained.

## 6.2. Pension

During your period of leave, your contributions to your pension and the University's contribution will stop. However, if you wish to continue to pay your contributions to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) whilst you are off, the University will also make the employer's contribution to allow you to build up pension benefits. Pension scheme rules vary depending on the pension scheme you are in so we would encourage you to contact the [Pensions Team](#) directly to discuss your pension arrangements further.

## 6.3. Holiday Pay and Annual Leave

Whilst you are off you will continue to accrue statutory holidays at the rate of 28 days per year (pro-rata for part-time staff). You should aim to use annual leave that you have built up prior to commencing your career break.

## 6.4. Maternity, Maternity Support, Adoption or Shared Parental Leave Pay

If you become a parent, adopter or a partner of a parent/adopter during the period you are on leave you will not be entitled to University Maternity, Paternity, Adoption or Shared Parental Leave and Pay unless you end your career break early and return to work. If you wish to do this, you should speak to your line manager at the earliest opportunity and you will normally require to give at least 3 months' notice.

However, if you do not wish to end your career break you may still be entitled to statutory payments. You should note that these payments are calculated based on the salary you receive in the weeks before the Expected Week of Childbirth or Matching Week for adoption so these may also be impacted. For any questions in relation to your statutory payments please contact the [Payroll Team](#).

## 6.5. Sick Pay

If you become ill during your career break you will not be entitled to University sick pay under our [Sickness Absence Policy](#). However, you may be entitled to statutory sick pay and you should speak to a member of the [Payroll Team](#) to discuss this further.

## **6.6. Incremental Pay Progression and National Pay Awards**

You will continue to receive an increment, on your scheduled increment date, during your career break unless this extends beyond 12 months. Your salary may also change due to nationally agreed pay increases during the period of your leave.

## **6.7. Applying for another role at the University**

You are able to apply for any internal or external advertised posts whilst you are on your career break. However, if successful in being offered a new role, you would require to accept the role at the time of offer and end your career break.

## **6.8. Restructuring and Redundancy**

If there is a restructuring exercise in your Department during the period you are on a career break you will be advised and consulted with about any proposed changes. If your post is put at risk of redundancy you will be treated the same as other employees and in line with the relevant University policies and procedures.

## **6.9. Keeping In Touch Days**

While you are on a career break you can return to work for up to 10 Keeping in Touch (KIT) days without bringing your career break to an end. The use of KIT days are encouraged to ensure that you stay connected to the University and they can be particularly helpful at the point you are planning to return to work. You will be paid for any work that you do as part of a KIT day and therefore it is important to agree this with your line manager before you do the work. And just so you know, working for part of any day counts as one KIT day. Payment will be made for the number of hours worked on that day.

To request payment for a KIT day you should complete a [Keeping in Touch Day Payment Form](#) (staff login required).

## 7. Returning to Work

We will assume that you will return to work on the date agreed at the start of your career break. However, if your circumstances change and you wish to return earlier or later than planned you should speak to your line manager as soon as possible.

If you wish to return earlier than the agreed date you should give your line manager, where possible, three months' notice. Whilst we will always attempt to accommodate a request to an early return to work, your line manager may not be able to agree to this without suitable notice. In these situations, line managers can speak to [Human Resources](#) for advice.

If you do not intend to return to work at the end of the agreed period and therefore wish to resign, you must notify your line manager in writing and provide the required notice that is outlined in your terms and conditions. Your contract will normally end from the date that you provide your resignation and we would not normally expect a notice period to be worked.

If you don't return to work on the agreed date following your career break and we do not hear from you, we will assume that you have resigned and you will lose your right to return to your role effective from the career break end date.

## 8. Further Information and Support

If you have any queries about this policy, please talk to your manager or contact [Human Resources](#). You may also find our [Career Break FAQs](#) (staff login required) helpful.

## 9. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed by Human Resources on a regular basis. To see when the next review is due, please see our [Policy Review Schedule](#) (staff login required) on our People Hub.