



Polasaí agus Nósanna Imeachta/Policies and Procedures

Code	QA103
Title	Career Break Scheme
Policy Owner	Director of Human Resources
Date	24/09/2009; Latest review date: 18/09/2023
Approved By	University Management Team

1.0 Policy Statement

The University confirms its commitment to develop, maintain, and support a comprehensive policy of equal opportunities in employment with the University. To assist in this the University will actively support special leave/career break where it is reasonable and practical to do so and where operational needs will not be adversely affected.

2.0 Eligibility

All members of staff (administrative, library, technical, buildings and research) serving in a permanent full-time or part-time capacity are eligible to request special leave without pay for a career break, provided they have not reached retiring age. The duration of a career break may not extend beyond retiring age. Applications in writing via the [Career Break application form](#) should be addressed to the Head of Unit/School in the first instance and then submitted to Employee Relations, Human Resources Office.

Agreement to career breaks should not be unreasonably withheld and it is envisaged that most requests will be resolved at this informal level. Heads of Units/Schools are encouraged to facilitate career breaks. However, should a Head of Unit/School indicate that the operational requirements of their Unit/School might be adversely affected by granting a career break, the Head of Unit/School will need to put a case to the Employee Relations Manager stating the reasons why they are not supporting the career break. Should an applicant wish to appeal a decision on the grounds of procedure or unfairness, they may do so to the Director of Human Resources.

3.0 Purpose

Staff will be required to provide details of the purpose for which the career break will be used.

4.0 Duration

A career break shall consist of special leave without pay for a period of not less than six months and not more than five years. Staff taking a career break of one year or less have the option of returning to their original post. A second career break may not be taken until a member of staff has service for a period equal to the duration of the initial career break. The total period of special leave should not exceed ten years in all and no one period of absence should exceed five years. Eligible staff may normally avail of two career breaks during their career. The limit of two career breaks may be waived at the discretion of the Director of Human Resources, provided a replacement can be found and that the total period of leave does not exceed ten years.

5.0 Pension Status

Special leave without pay for a career break will not be reckonable as service neither for pension purposes nor as qualifying service for annual leave or promotion. However, a member of staff may have the period reckoned for



pension purposes by making a contribution of an appropriate percentage of salary. Refer to the Pensions Officer of the University.

6.0 Promotion

If a member of staff on a career break wishes to be informed of internal or external advertising of positions, the onus is on the individual member to keep the Human Resources Department informed of their contact address and telephone number. Members of staff on career break will be considered for the post for which they apply. If offered appointment as a result of the selection procedure, the date on which the appointment should take effect would be as laid down by the Director of Human Resources in consultation with the Head of Unit/School.

7.0 Health Insurance / Personal Accident Insurance / Pension

Health Insurance may be continued during career break, and if required should be arranged directly with the provider.

Personal Accident Insurance should be arranged at local level. Contact the Pension Officer of the University.

A career break is not reckonable for pension purposes, however an employee can have the period reckoned by making a contribution of an appropriate percentage. Contact the Pension Officer of the University.

Attention is drawn to a rule involving leaves of absence or career breaks in the Income Continuance (or Permanent Health) plan, see **Appendix 1**.

8.0 Return to Duty

Members of staff on special leave of less than one year have the option to return to the post they vacated. The vacated post may be filled on a contract basis.

The onus is on the staff member concerned to inform the Human Resources Office, in writing, at least three months before the expiry of the career break, whether they wish to (a) apply for an extension to the career break (if appropriate), (b) subject to an appropriate vacancy resume duty on expiry of the career break, or (c) resign from the University.

Members of staff on a career break greater than one year will be assigned to the next appropriate vacancy to be filled following the expiry of their career break. A vacancy, for these purposes, is a fillable vacancy in the grade originally held by the individual concerned prior to departure on career break.

In cases where specialist experience and skills are required it may take longer to return to the next appropriate vacancy to be filled and the individual may have to wait a period normally not exceeding six months.

However, where a vacancy at the appropriate grade does not exist an individual has the choice to extend their leave until an appropriate vacancy does arise or return to an immediate post, which may be at a lower grade, and apply for promotion through the normal channels.

“Return to Duty” arrangements will be in line with agreements dated July 1988, point 5(a) and (b) for administrative and non-professional library staff, see Appendix 2.

Staff who are waiting to resume duty at the end of their career break, should be advised to contact the Department of Social Protection to ascertain whether or not they have entitlements to a social welfare payment or any other benefits.



A member of staff does not have an automatic right to return to duty in a job-sharing capacity, even if they had been job-sharing before commencing the career break. However, the Human Resources Office in consultation with the Head of Unit/School will endeavour to facilitate such requests where feasible.

9.0 Application Process

Staff members should apply via the [Career Break Application form](#) in the first instance to their Head of Unit/School and then submit the approved application to Employee Relations, Human Resources Office.

All requests will normally be processed within three months. The Career Break scheme is an equal opportunities initiative and is not aimed at facilitating other grounds for part-time work. While the University will be sympathetic to such requests, for example to pursue a business interest, they will be dealt with outside of the Career Break procedures.

10.0 Responsibilities

Name	Responsibility
Director of Human Resources	Policy Owner
All Staff	Give three months' notice of intention to avail of this leave, completing the appropriate application form
Line Manager	Initial approval of leave application; Read and comply with this leave policy and ensure the leave application is reviewed and submitted to HR promptly
Human Resources Office	Final approval of leave application; Review this policy on a regular basis in light of any changes in legislation

11.0 Related Documentation

- [Career Break application form](#)

12.0 Appendices

- Appendix 1: Note on Income Protection (or Permanent Health) and Voluntary Life Assurance
- Appendix 2: "Return To Duty" As Agreed With ITGWU, July 1988



Appendix 1 - Note on Income Protection (or Permanent Health) and Voluntary Life Assurance

For members of the Income Protection (or Permanent Health) Plan, you must contact Cornmarket 4 months in advance of taking a career break. Members may take a career break for up to 1 year and can then re-join the plan without any medical underwriting at the end of their career break. For those members who elect to extend their career break beyond 1 year, Irish Life have now agreed that they are prepared to extend the career break to 5 years, and remove the need for medical underwriting, provided that a date of expected return to work is advised before the career break starts. Should you be unable to return to work due to illness or injury, the deferred period will start on this date.

For members of the Voluntary Life Assurance Plan, you may take a career break of up to a maximum of 5 years by paying an advance premium of 0.53% of salary. Alternatively, members who decide not to continue the life cover for the duration of their career break have the option to automatically re-enter the Plan at the end of their career break without the requirement for medical underwriting. This is subject to the member notifying Cornmarket either prior to or within 4 months of taking the career break to allow the waiving of medical underwriting.

Appendix 2 - Note on Income Protection (or Permanent Health) and Voluntary Life Assurance

A. Grade 1 to 3 and Non-Professional Library Grades

Employees granted special leave without pay for a career break under the terms of this interim scheme may resume employment in the next fillable vacancy in their grade which arises, following the expiry of their leave term. In any case employees will be guaranteed re-employment in the College not later than six months after the expiry date of their leave. For Secretarial/Secretarial staff in this situation, however, re-employment at existing grade, if this is higher than grade 1, cannot be guaranteed and will depend upon vacancies available at the time. In the case of a "Grade 3 employee" who returns to post in a lower grade, salary payable will not exceed point 4 of the grade 3 scale. Where a "Grade 2 employee" takes up a post at grade 1 level on return, salary will not exceed the maximum point of the grade 2 scale.

B. Grade 4

Where it is possible to grant leave to a "Grade 4 employee" this will be approved in the context of the post remaining open for the return of the employee, by filling the post on a temporary basis from existing staff, through normal internal advertising procedures. In these circumstances the appropriate "acting-up" allowance will apply.

In this event the temporary employee will revert to their original post on the return of the "Grade 4 employee" and the provision of a maximum 6 month delay period will not apply.