

Career Break Policy

8 December 2022

Version 1.0

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1. Introduction

1.1 This policy outlines the process and procedures for eligible employees who wish to apply for a career break from their post.

2. Eligibility

2.1 All employees on a contract of employment who have satisfactorily completed a minimum of 12 months service, who have not reached retirement age and who will have at least 12 months remaining on their contract from the cessation of the approved period of the career break may apply for a career break without pay.

3. General Principles

3.1 A career break may be allowed for reasons such as to further education, domestic responsibilities, starting a business, other employment, a stay abroad or for other appropriate reasons. A career break cannot be granted for the purpose of taking up another teaching post in the public sector in Ireland (for employees on current academic contracts); or for the purpose of taking up an alternative permanent position. An employee seeking a career break for the purpose of taking up a job in Ireland should submit a copy of the offer of employment in support of the application.

3.2 There must be no existing or potential conflict of interest between the activity of employment in which the employee proposes to engage in or engages during their career break and their employment within SETU.

3.3 If the reason for career break changes, HR must be informed and in such cases SETU reserves the right to discontinue the approved career break term if a conflict of interest applies e.g. a lecturer taking up another teaching post in a HEI while on career break.

3.4 A career break shall be a period of not less than 1 year and may be extended on an annual basis provided the total period of the career break does not exceed 5 years in total during an employee's employment term with SETU.

3.5 A career break from an academic post must be taken for the academic year i.e. 1 September to 31 August. In exceptional personal circumstances management may allow an academic to commence a career break during an academic year and terminate not earlier than the end of that academic year. This is normally deemed to be a 1 year career break.

3.6 If an employee on a specified purpose contract of employment is granted a career break and their contract expires during this period, then both the contract and career break will expire concurrently.

3.7 Where an employee applying for a career break is on temporary assignment to a post in a higher grade, the employee will revert to their substantive grade on resumption of duty following the career break (if the period of the temporary assignment to a higher grade ends during their career break).

3.8 An employee who has been granted a career break may not undertake any employment within the University.

3.9 An employee on career break remains an employee of SETU and is subject to all relevant legislation, procedures, and SETU policies.

3.10 An employee on career break may not avail of any form of paid leave from SETU (e.g. sick leave) during the period of the career break.

3.11 An employee will not accumulate service while on career break – this means that the length of the career break will not be counted as service for example:

- for increment purposes;
- for annual leave purposes;
- for superannuation purposes.

4 Application Process

4.1 An employee seeking a career break, or an extension of a career break must complete the Career Break Application Form. (see appendix 1)

4.2 A career break or any subsequent extension to the career break should only be granted by the Head of School/Department/Function if the relevant form has been completed and signed.

4.3 An application for a career break should be made to the Head of School/Department/Function at least three months in advance of the proposed commencement date (note academic staff should apply by 31 May prior to the commencement of the following academic year). Management may accept a lesser period of notice in exceptional circumstances.

4.4 The decision to grant or refuse a career break to an applicant will be the decision of the Head of School/Department/Function having regard to operational needs. Where an application for a career break is refused, the grounds for refusing will be provided within 30 days of the application. If any queries in relation to the decision, the applicant should discuss with their manager in the first instance after which they may contact HR.

4.5 If an application for a career break is approved by management, the completed application must be forwarded to the HR Department (See appendix 1).

4.6 On receipt of a completed application signed off by the line manager, HR will sign the application form and notify payroll to cease pay for the period of the career break.

5 Resumption of Duty / Applying To Extend a Career Break/ Resignation

5.1 It is the responsibility of the employee on career break to give the appropriate notice of their intentions:

- Employees seeking to extend their current career break must provide at least 3 months' notice of their request.
- Employees returning from their career break should provide at least 3 months' notice prior to the expiry of their career break.
- Employees not returning to the University must provide at least 1 months' notice of their intention to terminate their contract of employment or as per notice period in contract if this stipulates a longer notice period.

This notice must be submitted in writing to the relevant line manager and to Human Resources at:

Waterford Campus: Please contact hr.wd@setu.ie

Carlow and Wexford campuses: Please contact HUMANRESOURCES.cw@setu.ie

In the event an employee does not return from career break on expiry of their approved career break, HR will make attempts to contact the employee. Failing this, SETU may instigate the disciplinary procedure.

5.2 Employees have an entitlement to resume duty at their substantive grade on the termination of the approved period of the career break. However in some circumstances this may not be the same post they held before they took their career break. If it is anticipated that there will not be a suitable vacancy when the employee

is due to return, the employee will be informed accordingly. In the event that occurs, the employee will return to work out remaining duration of contract (if fixed term) in another area or if a permanent employee they may be placed in another post at the same grade.

5.3 All employees resuming duty following career break are obliged to accept the terms and conditions of service pertaining to their grade at that time. While staff may not return to the same post that they were in prior to taking a career break, they will retain the terms and conditions appropriate to their grade and return to the same campus they left unless otherwise agreed.

5.4 Requests by employees to resume duty before the expiry date of the career break will be considered in the first instance by the Head of School/Department/Function in conjunction with HR.

5.5 All employees should note that salary will only recommence upon resumption of duties. Where an extension to a career break is being sought, the approval of the Head of School/Department/Function is required. Human Resources will engage with management in this regard and will notify the employees of a decision within 30 calendar days.

5.6 An employee who wishes to apply for an extension to a career break must have a contract that will run for at least twelve months from the termination of the extended period of the career break.

5.7 An employee on a career break who intends to resign from their post must do so in writing to their Head of School/Department/Function and copy in HR.

6. Department of Social Protection

6.1 It is advisable that all employees taking a career break maintain entitlements to social welfare benefits by payment of voluntary contributions to the Department of Social Protection. For further information, please contact the Department of Social Protection.

[\(https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/47cee2-operational-guidelines-prsi-prsi-voluntary-contributions/\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/47cee2-operational-guidelines-prsi-prsi-voluntary-contributions/).

7 Pensions – Reckoning Period of Career Break For Superannuation Purposes

7.1 Various options are open to employees who take a career break and who wish to reckon the period of a career break for pension purposes. This can be done by paying additional contributions, which are based on notional service purchase rates, either while on career break or on resumption of duty.

7.2 Queries relating to pension should be directed to the Pensions Office.

8 Policy Review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed after one year and reviewed every three years thereafter.

Appendix 1 – Career Break Application Form / Extension

For members of staff who have satisfactorily completed a minimum of 12 months service and who hold a contract that will run for at least 12 months from the cessation of the approved period of the career break. This form should be submitted to your line manager at least 3 months in advance of the commencement of the career break and by 31 May for Academic staff.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE EMPLOYEE														
Full Name:								Staff ID:						
Home Address:														
Work Email Address:						Alternative Email Address:								
School / Unit:														
Job Title:							Grade:							
Contract Type	Permanent <input type="checkbox"/>			Fixed Term <input type="checkbox"/>			Specified Purpose <input type="checkbox"/>							
	Expected End Date:			Expected End Date:										
Proposed Dates: (Minimum of 1 year)	From:	D	D	M	M	Y	Y	To:	D	D	M	M	Y	Y
Please tick one of the following options: Career Break Application <input type="checkbox"/> Career Break Extension <input type="checkbox"/>														
Purpose of/reason for the Career Break/Extension: _____														
TO BE SIGNED BY:														
I _____ (Print Name) confirm I have read and understood the terms of the Career Break Policy and that there is no existing or potential conflict of interest between the activity or employment in which I intend to engage while on career break with my position from the University.														
I understand that this career break may be terminated if it is not used for this purpose as outlined in this application and note that I may be subject to disciplinary action if found to be abusing this leave.														
Furthermore, I understand that failure to apply to return to work within the timeframes indicated in the Policy may result in the instigation of the Disciplinary procedures.														
Signed: _____					Dated: _____									
MANAGEMENT APPROVAL														
I recommend that this application is approved / not approved in accordance with the University's career break policy														
Career Break /	Approved <input type="checkbox"/>			Not Approved <input type="checkbox"/>										
Reason for not approving: _____														

Head of School/Dept / Function (as appropriate):	_____	Date:
	<i>Print Name</i>	<i>Sign</i>
<i>This application is approved / not approved in accordance with the SETU career break policy.</i>		
HR Manager / Nominee:	_____	Date:
	<i>Print Name</i>	<i>Sign</i>

Please return completed form signed by employee and manager to the HR department at:

Waterford Campus: Please contact hr.wd@setu.ie

Carlow and Wexford campuses: Please contact HUMANRESOURCES.cw@setu.ie

A copy of the signed form will be issued back to the employee to provide confirmation of terms and conditions of the career break.