

Career Break

1. Introduction

This procedure explains:

- how to apply for a career break, including extensions to an existing career break period;
- what to consider if you're going on a career break, e.g. keeping in touch; and
- return to work arrangements.

2. Applying for a career break

To apply, you should first speak to your manager about your proposal for a career break, including your reason(s) and the time off work that you would like to have. Following this discussion, if you still wish to apply you should confirm your proposal in writing (email or letter) to your Manager detailing:

- the purpose of the career break;
- the intended duration of the career break; and
- proposed start and end dates.

Applications should be made at least 3 months prior to the date on which the career break would start. This notice will help your Manager to plan cover (where appropriate) for your work and minimise disruption, should your application be approved.

If you are on, or due to go on, maternity/adoption/shared parental leave, you can apply for a career break either before the leave starts or whilst on leave. If you are already on leave, you should ensure that you apply no later than three months before your maternity/adoption/shared parental leave is due to end.

Your Manager will consider your application in line with the requirements of the business and the impact of your absence. They will also consult the Unit Manager to ensure the impact on the wider team has been considered when reviewing your application.

If your Manager is able to approve your application they will confirm to you if they intend to keep your job open for you, for example, by recruiting temporary resource or distributing the work amongst the existing team. However, under [HR Policy – Career Break](#), there is no guarantee that you will have a post to return to at the end of your career break. Your Manager may find it necessary to backfill your post on a permanent

basis from the start of your career break. For more information on what may happen at the end of your career break, please refer to [Section 6](#).

Your Manager will forward a copy of your approved career break application to your dedicated HR team, who will take the necessary administrative steps to confirm the career break. This includes the requirement for you to sign and return a 'statement of intent', which confirms the intended duration of your career break, as well as your acceptance of the applicable terms and conditions and the potential impact on your contract of employment.

Career breaks may be refused for business reasons. If your application is refused, your Manager will meet with you to explain the reason why and then confirm this in writing. If your career break cannot be granted you may wish to explore flexible working arrangements that are more suited to business needs. Your Manager will send your career break application, and a note of their decision, to your HR Team.

2.1 Applying for an extension

Career breaks are normally only for the agreed period and to a maximum 2 years, however, extensions to a career break can be considered in wholly exceptional circumstances.

You may apply to extend your career break providing that your reason remains in line with [HR Policy - Career Break](#). Applications for extension should be made at least 3 months prior to the date on which the career break was due to end, to help your Manager and the wider business plan ahead.

To apply, you should first speak to your Manager about your proposed extension, including your reason(s) and the additional time off work that you would like to have. Following this discussion, if you still wish to apply you should confirm your proposal in writing (email or letter) to your Manager detailing the purpose of the career break and the intended duration of the extension including the proposed end date.

Your Manager will consider your application for an extension and a decision will be issued to you in writing. If your request is approved, your HR team will confirm the extension in writing.

2.2 Appeals

If your application for a career break, or for an extension to a career break, is not approved, then you can appeal. Appeals should be to the Manager immediately above the one who has turned down the request, in writing (email or letter). You will be invited to discuss your appeal, either by telephone or in person, and the decision will be confirmed to you in writing.

3. Before you go on career break

If your application for a career break has been approved, there are a number of actions that you need to take before you leave:

3.1 Performance reporting

Depending on the date you leave, you may need to complete a performance report meeting with your Manager before you go. This can also provide the opportunity to discuss hand-over arrangements for your work.

3.2 Annual leave and flexi-time

You should send your annual leave sheet to your dedicated HR team as soon as possible after your career break application has been approved so that your leave allowance can be recalculated for the current leave year. You should ensure that all annual leave you are entitled to is taken before your career break starts. If you work flexi-time, you should also ensure that you have a nil balance before you go on career break.

3.3 Equipment hand-over

You must return all FC equipment to your Manager before you leave (including laptop, mobile phone, security pass and Government Procurement Card). You will be responsible for any costs associated with terminating a lease agreement, e.g. CAPES car.

3.4 Loans or salary advances

You must make arrangements to repay any loans or advances in full before you go on career break.

4. Contact and keep in touch days

An important feature of career break arrangements is that regular contact between you and your local management is maintained. This ensures that you still feel part of the FC, even while you are absent, and your line manager and unit maintain a good working relationship with you.

You should agree with your line manager how you want to be kept up-to-date whilst on career break, for example if you want to be sent details of staff meetings, local training and development opportunities, organised work events, etc.

Your dedicated HR team will automatically send Connect Bulletin to your personal email address, unless you tell them that you do not wish to receive this information.

You must ensure that both your line manager and your HR team have your current address, telephone number and personal email address, and are notified if these change.

As well as keeping in touch with the FC you should try to keep up-to-date with developments in your particular area of expertise, for example continuing with any professional membership, reading relevant publications, etc. This will help you to keep abreast of developments during your career break and ensure your return to work is as smooth as possible.

4.1.1 Keep in touch days

During your career break you may wish to come back to work for short periods (keep in touch days) to help you keep your skills and knowledge up to day and continue to feel a part of your Unit and the FC. Keep in touch (KIT) days are optional during your career break and must be mutually convenient to both you and the Unit. The days can be used either to undertake suitable work or training. You should discuss any wish to undertake KIT days with your Manager from the outset of the career break. If you are already on your break and feel that you will benefit from having KIT days, you should contact your line manager.

Pay on KIT days will be at the same substantive rate of pay you received before your career break commenced, taking account of any applicable pay awards that have occurred during your absence. Also, KIT days will be reckonable for annual leave – your HR team should be contacted to calculate the entitlement. Calculations will be based on the number of days/hours worked. For example, if you work two weeks full time during the year and your holiday entitlement is 25 days then your allowance is:

$$\frac{2 \times 25}{52} = 1 \text{ day}$$

The leave accrued on KIT days can either be taken at the end of your career break or added to your leave allowance on your return to work (subject to normal carry forward rules).

5. Effect on terms & conditions of employment

5.1 Pension

Time on a career break will not reckon for pension purposes. However, providing you have at least two years' qualifying service, your pension rights accrued prior to the start of your career break are preserved. If you return to work, you have the opportunity to improve your pension rights by making additional voluntary contributions or by buying

added pension. Further information on your pension options is available at:

www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk.

5.2 Sick leave

Time spent on career break is excluded when reviewing absence and does not count towards re-qualifying for paid sick absence.

5.3 Annual leave

A career break will not count as qualifying service for higher annual leave allowance but qualifying years which have been served before the break are added to those which are served on return. Annual leave does not accrue whilst on career break.

5.4 Family leave

If you or your partner give birth to/adopt a child during your career break, you are not eligible to receive contractual maternity/adoption/paternity or shared parental pay, however, you may be entitled to receive statutory maternity/adoption/ paternity or shared parental pay, or maternity allowance. If you've taken a career break following a period of maternity/ adoption/paternity or shared parental leave, you will not be required to repay the contractual enhancement of pay provided you work for at least one calendar month after your career break.

5.5 Additional housing cost allowance

Housing allowances will not be paid during your career break. Payments will be resumed on return. The period of time over which any housing allowance is paid is not extended by the length of time spent on a career break.

5.6 Pay progression

When returning from your career break, you will receive the same substantive salary you received before your absence, plus any applicable pay award that took effect during your absence.

5.7 Redundancy

Time on a career break is not reckonable service for redundancy compensation.

5.8 Employment status

Whilst on your career break, you remain an employee of the FC and a Civil Servant. This means that you are subject to the normal rules relating to, for example, conduct and political activity. The FC's disciplinary procedure can still be applied if you breach standards of expected behaviour during your career break.

5.9 Promotion and career development

If you are successful in applying for a vacancy whilst on career break you will be expected to comply with the requirements of the opportunity and take up the relevant post within the necessary timescale, after you are notified of your success.

You may be able to claim travel & subsistence costs when attending interviews. Costs will be covered by the Cost Centre you were attached to before going on career break.

5.10 Working during a career break

Whilst on career break you are still an employee and, therefore, subject to the rules and conditions covering the acceptance of outside appointments as detailed in the conduct rules. You must seek consent from your Manager should you wish to work for another organisation during the career break.

5.11 Resignation during career break

If you decide to resign from the FC during your career break you should send your Manager a written letter of resignation as soon as possible. You should aim to let your Manager know at least three months before you were due to return, to help the FC with resource planning.

6. Returning to work

You should contact your Manager six months before your agreed notional return date to discuss:

- possible postings
- your preferred working pattern; and
- any training and development needs.

If your job has been kept open for you to return to, you can agree your return date with your Manager, who will then arrange your re-induction as appropriate. Your Manager will inform your dedicated HR team of your return so that your personal records are updated, including being placed back on payroll and given a fresh calculation of annual leave. There is no guarantee of a return on the working pattern previously undertaken as this will depend on business need at the time of return.

If your job has not been kept open for you to return to, you are expected to pro-actively start looking for a suitable alternative post from six months before the end of your career break. Your HR Team will keep in regular contact with you regarding potential vacancies and will inform you of suitable alternative posts before they are advertised. If a post has not been found by the end of your career break, you will move onto unpaid leave for a maximum of 12 months, during which time you and your HR Team will continue to find a suitable alternative post. If a post has not been identified by the end

of the 12 months period of unpaid leave, your contract of employment will be terminated. In these circumstances, you will not be entitled to receive any compensation payment.

If the FC offers you a suitable alternative post and you reject the offer, this will constitute resignation.

6.1 Returning to work early

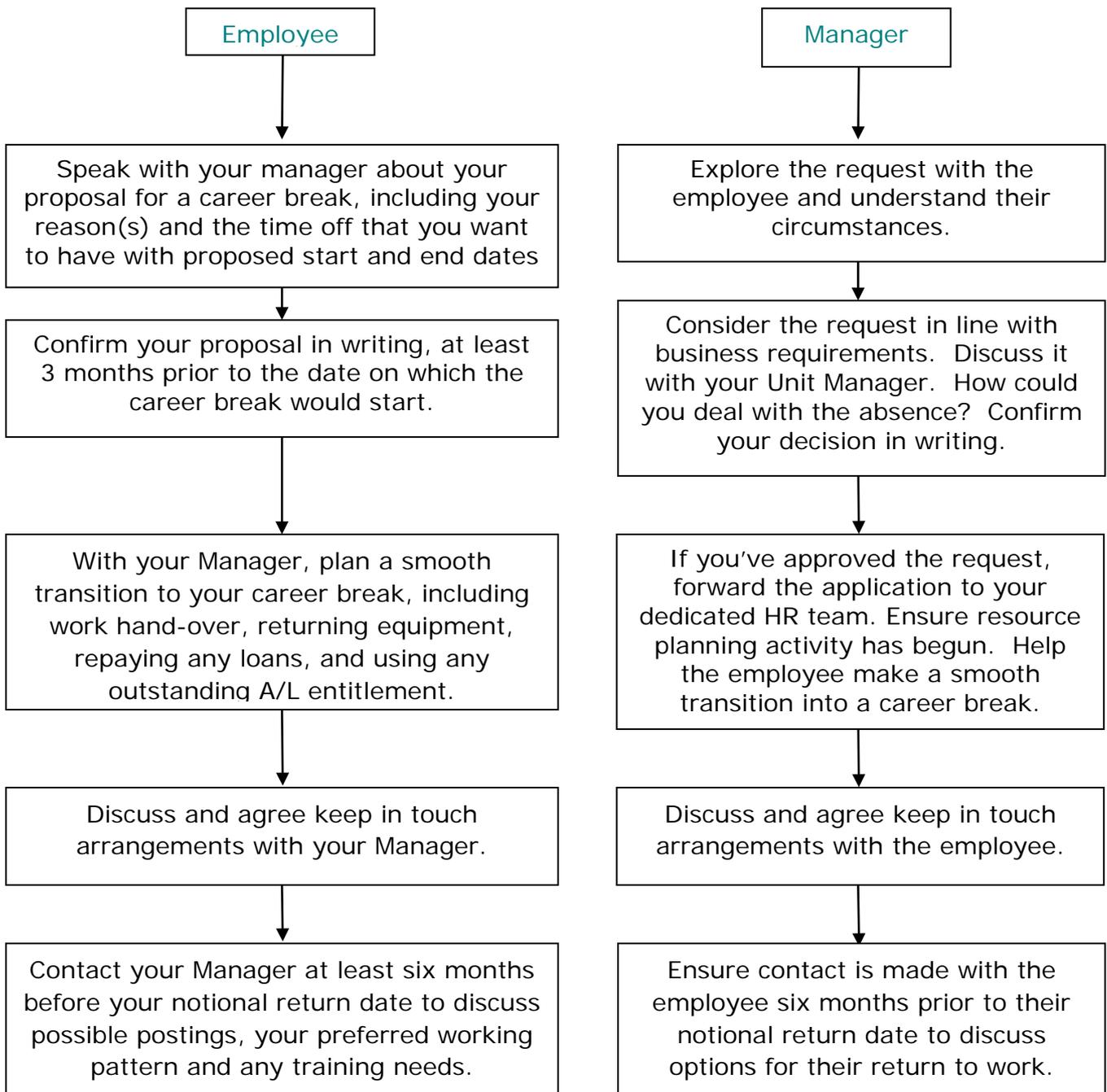
If your circumstances change and you wish to return earlier than your agreed return date you should contact your Manager to ask if this is possible. You can return to work early providing a suitable post exists. If there is no post for you to return to in your Unit, your Manager will contact your HR Team to see if there are any suitable alternative posts available in another part of the FC that may be of interest to you.

6.2 Request to change hours / working pattern

If you would like to return to the FC on different hours or a different working pattern than you had before you went on a career break you will need to discuss and agree this with your Manager/new Manager before returning. For more information, please refer to [HR Policy and HR Procedure – Flexible Working](#).

7. Flowcharts

Flowchart 1: Arranging a career break



Flowchart 2: Turning down a career break (extension) request

