



Career Break Policy

Policy owner: UCD HR

Approval date and body: UMT, 12 April 2022

1. Purpose

This document outlines how the career break benefit is operated within the university and how it is distinguished from other leave related policies which employees also have access to.

The university recognises that people sometimes need to develop their experience, skills and learning outside of their normal workplace environment and acknowledge the value this can bring to the university on their return to work.

An application may be granted by the Head of School/Unit and College Principal subject to the principles and guidelines below. The university cannot guarantee that all applications will be granted as each case must be considered on its own merits taking into account the operational requirements of the School/Unit at the time, but will ensure that all applications are fairly considered.

This policy incorporates the Unpaid Leave of Absence and Career Break policies previously operated by the university.

2. Definitions

Career Breaks are an employee benefit which individuals can apply for a variety of reasons including; to spend more time with their families, to study full-time, carry out voluntary/community work or to travel. A career break can also be availed of by employees appointed or elected to the Oireachtas.

3. Scope

Employees who are permanent or have been issued with contracts of indefinite duration (CID), have satisfactorily completed their probationary period and have ongoing satisfactory performance are eligible to apply.

4. Principles

4.1 For all Career Break applications;

- 4.1.1 The application must be submitted to the Head of School/Unit. The Head of School/Unit should give consideration to the proposed duration of the career break and discuss the options at the end of this period with the employee. The Head of School/Unit should consider the career break in line with the School/Unit staff plan.
- 4.1.2 All applications must have the approval of the relevant College Principal or Vice President, in addition to the Head of School/Unit. If an application is not approved the employee will be advised of the decision in writing by their Head of School/Unit.
- 4.1.3 The purpose for which the career break is being granted must be outlined in the application form.

- 4.1.4 Applications must be made to the Head of School/Unit and, following approval, submitted by email to UCD HR Operations (HRhelpdesk@ucd.ie) at least three months in advance of the proposed start date of the leave. This is essential to allow adequate time to put in place the arrangements for the commencement of the leave. It may not be possible to process late applications in time for approval.
- 4.1.5 The employee may not apply to return to their post before the agreed date of return. Where a slightly earlier return date (not more than 1 month) suits the School/Unit for operational reasons, they can put this in place subject to agreement with the employee.
- 4.1.6 The employee may not work anywhere in the university on a casual or any other basis during the term of the career break.
- 4.1.7 A career break will not count towards Pension Benefits, as directed by the Department of Education and Skills. It may be possible to augment your pension benefits by purchasing notional service or referable amounts. Requests for quotes should be sent to pensions@ucd.ie on return from career break.

4.2 The following applies only to employees applying for a career break for a period of up to a maximum of 1 year.

- 4.2.1 The employee's contract of employment will be suspended from the date on which the period of career break commenced.
- 4.2.2 At least 8 weeks before the date of return to work, the employee must inform their Head of School/Unit in writing of their intention to return to work on the agreed date and copy this to UCD HR via hrhelpdesk@ucd.ie
- 4.2.3 The Payroll Office can advise on maintenance of other deductions from salary, e.g. VHI.

4.3 The following applies only to employees applying for a career break for a period of over 1 year up to a maximum of 5 years (or up to 10 years in the case of those appointed or elected to the Oireachtas).

- 4.3.1 The employee's contract of employment will terminate from the date on which they commenced their career break.
- 4.3.2 The period of the career break will not count as service for any purpose.
- 4.3.3 Vacancies created as a result of employees going on career breaks may be filled subject to approval under the prevailing university arrangements for post, by a permanent replacement of the post.
In the case of employees appointed or elected to the Oireachtas, where a replacement is employed, they will be offered a fixed term contract for the duration of the career break to be terminable on the return or the resignation/ retirement of the employee on unpaid leave, whichever is sooner.
- 4.3.4 The employee must inform the Head of School/Unit in writing of their intention to return to work and copy this to UCD HR via hrhelpdesk@ucd.ie in accordance with the following timelines:
 - Career breaks from 1 to 3 years – minimum notice of 12 weeks
 - Career break over 3 years – minimum notice of 24 weeks
- 4.3.5 Failure to apply to return to work within the timeframes indicated will be taken as an intention not to resume duty and treated as a full resignation.
- 4.3.6 There is no guarantee of a suitable position being available within a particular time frame although the School/Unit will make every reasonable attempt to facilitate a timely return. Waiting periods can and will arise, especially in the case of more specialist positions. Employees should understand that salary will only recommence upon resumption of duties.
- 4.3.7 The employee will be offered the first suitable vacancy, either of a permanent or a fixed term nature at the grade/terms and conditions previously held, which arises in the School/Unit in which they worked.

- 4.3.8 There is no obligation on the employee to accept a fixed term contract. However, if they do so, this is without prejudice to their entitlement to be offered the first permanent vacancy at the grade/terms and conditions previously held in the School/Unit in which they worked. Accordingly, if they accept the fixed-term contract, and if a permanent vacancy at the grade/terms and conditions previously held arises in the School/Unit during the currency of the fixed-term contract, they would be offered that vacancy. Likewise, if such a permanent vacancy arises after the expiration of the fixed-term contract, they will be offered that vacancy. If no such permanent vacancy arises prior to the expiration of the fixed-term contract, the employee will revert to the same status they held on the initial termination of their career break i.e. unpaid and awaiting a suitable vacancy.
- 4.3.9 If the employee chooses not to accept a fixed-term contract being offered, that will not prejudice their entitlement to be offered the first permanent vacancy at the grade/terms and conditions previously held which arises in the School/Unit in which they worked.
- 4.3.10 If any offer of a permanent vacancy at the grade/terms and conditions previously held, which arises in the School/Unit in which they worked is not accepted, the liability of the university is discharged.
- 4.3.11 If no vacancy exists in the School/Unit in which the employee served, applications may be made for other vacancies which arise in the university on the same terms as those which apply to permanent or CID employees who seek internal transfers.

4.4 Notification of Return

- 4.4.1 Employees must inform their Head of School/Unit in writing of their intention to return to work, copying UCD HR via hrhelpdesk@ucd.ie, in accordance with the following minimum timelines:
- Career break up to 1 year – 8 weeks
 - Career break from 1 to 3 years – 12 weeks
 - Career break over 3 years – 24 weeks
- 4.4.2 Failure to apply to return within the indicated timeframes will be taken as an intention not to resume duty and will be treated as a full resignation.

4.5 Application for Extension to a Career Break

- 4.5.1 Employees are encouraged to indicate the full duration of likely break at the outset, rather than to rely on applications for extensions since these are operationally and administratively problematic. However, the facility to apply for an extension does exist.
- 4.5.2 Employees may apply for the extensions using the same procedure as set out in 4.1. There is no guarantee whatsoever in relation to extension applications and each case will be considered on its own merits taking account of the overall operational and staffing needs of the School/Unit at that time, including the impact on other employees.

4.6 Arrangements for Employees in the Education & Training Sector who are elected or appointed to the Oireachtas.

The following shall apply with effect from the commencement of the 32nd Dáil and 25th Seanad term:

- 4.6.1 An employee who is elected/appointed to the Oireachtas cannot remain in their post while serving as a member of the Oireachtas;
- 4.6.2 An employee who is elected/appointed to the Oireachtas shall be given the option of applying for unpaid leave while serving as a member of the Oireachtas;
- 4.6.3 Where the employee is employed in a grade which currently has a career break facility, the unpaid leave will be taken by the Oireachtas member in the form of a career break;
- 4.6.4 Where the individual is employed in a grade which does not currently have a career break facility, the format of the unpaid leave to be taken by the employee will be determined between the Department of Education and Skills and the relevant employer.;
- 4.6.5 The career break/period of unpaid leave shall not exceed 10 years in duration;

- 4.6.6 The career break/period of unpaid leave shall not count as service for incremental credit or incremental progression purposes;
- 4.6.7 The career break/period of unpaid leave will not count as pensionable service as the Oireachtas member will be accruing pension under the Oireachtas pension scheme and provision exists to transfer service for superannuation purposes between the Oireachtas pension scheme and other public service schemes.
- 4.6.8 At the end of the 10 year period of career break/unpaid leave, the employee must return to their post or resign from it.
- 4.6.9 Should the employee resign from their post during or at the end of the 10 year period of career break/unpaid leave and subsequently wish to return to a post in the public service, they must apply for a post in the normal way.

4.7 Provision of IT and other services to Employees on a Career Break

- 4.7.1 Employees on a Career Break of less than one year are entitled to retain access to their UCD IT account, Employee Self Service (ESS) and to both physical and on-line access to UCD Library. Employees on Career Break of less than one year will lose access to all other Business systems and other Business Information Reporting tools such as Infoview and InfoHub. Employees on Career Break of less than one year will not be listed on the UCD Staff Directory or on the Research Management System (RMS).
- 4.7.2 Employees on a Career Break of more than one year lose access to all services and systems.
- 4.7.3 Employees who have notified UCD HR of their intention to Return from Career Break of greater than one year: Once the notification has been received and processed by HR, individuals may obtain a 'casual access' account from IT services. This account only gives access to ESS allowing the individual to apply for all UCD job vacancies, including those only accessible to existing UCD employees.

4.8 General Conditions

- 4.8.1 Staff members should note that the cumulative duration of unpaid leave between the period of an initial career break and any subsequent career breaks should not exceed 5 years in total. Special provisions apply to those elected or appointed to the Oireachtas. These provisions take effect from the commencement of the 32nd Dáil and the 25th Seanad. Further details are outlined at Section 4.6.
- 4.8.2 Any proposed changes to the approved commencement or return date of the career break must be requested by the employee in writing to Head of School/Unit and copied to UCD Human Resources as soon as possible. A decision to allow or decline the request will be made by the Head of School/Unit and College Principal/VP.
- 4.8.3 The University will accept no responsibility for any injury sustained in whatever manner during the period of absence.
- 4.8.4 Any acts viewed as gross misconduct committed during the career break and which would be relevant to the individual's employment may be considered under the disciplinary procedure. Examples of what would be viewed as gross misconduct is contained in the Disciplinary Procedure, found on Governance Document Library.

5. Related documents / policies

Employees can apply for a variety of reasons including to spend more time with their families, to study full-time, carry out voluntary/community work or to travel. Before you proceed, you may wish to explore other leave types like:

- Adoptive & Surrogacy Leave
- Parental Leave (including force majeure leave)
- Carer's Leave

- Bereavement Leave
- Sick leave
- Leave of Absence for Research
- Maternity leave
- Paternity Leave
- Parent's Leave
- Parental Leave

Employees should refer to these policies if it is relevant to their reason for applying for leave.

6. Version history

Version	Date	Description	Author
6.0	November 2012	Policy Versioning Implemented	UCD HR
7.0	July 2013	Clarifications regarding: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer of FTCs to returning employees where appropriate and related details should they avail of same. 2. Clarifying re extensions and seeking changes to career break dates. 3. Clarifying notice periods for those returning to ensure maximum opportunity for effective staff planning. 4. Clarifying eligibility of CID employees to apply for this benefit. 5. Clarifying that all career break applications require the approval of the relevant CP or VP. 6. Clarifying provision of IT and other services to employees on a Career Break. 	UCD HR
8.0	October 2013	No material change. Re-positioning of return to work notification timelines for easier reading and clarity.	
9.0	May 2014	Updates regarding: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clarifying that the maximum duration of cumulative career break periods is 5 years 2. Removing references to Executive Schools 3. Correcting numbering 	UCD HR
10.0	February 2016	Inclusion of Section 5 Arrangements for Staff in the Education & Training Sector who are elected or appointed to the Oireachtas	UCD HR
11.0	June 2020	Policy moved to new template, minor formatting changes	S Raleigh.
11.1	January 2022	New leave types added to related documents New emails for Operations and Pensions added.	P.Fitzgerald, UCD HR

All policies and policy related documents and forms are subject to amendment. Please refer to the UCD Governance Document Library website for the official, most recent version.

		Clarified when Pensions should be contacted.	
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