



Polasaí agus Nósanna Imeachta/Policies and Procedures

Code	QA103
Title	Career Break Policy
Policy Owner	Director of Human Resources
Date	24/09/2009; Review date: 24/06/2023, Review: 01/02/2026
Approved By	University Management Team

1.0 Purpose

The University is committed to the development of work practices and procedures that support equal opportunities, work-life balance and personal development.

To assist in this, the University will actively support a career break where it is reasonable and practical to do so and where business needs of the University will not be affected.

2.0 Eligibility

Employees who are permanent and have satisfactorily completed their probationary period are eligible to apply.

The employee should first discuss the leave request with their line manager who in turn will inform the Head of Unit/School.

Applications in writing via the [Career Break application form](#) should then be submitted to the Head of Unit/School in the first instance for their approval and finally submitted to Human Resources (HR).

Refer to section 5.0 : Procedure for Career Break Application & Career Break Extension.

Employees are expected to have read and understood the provisions of this policy before making an application.

Heads of Units/Schools are encouraged to support and facilitate career breaks where possible.

However, if the Head of Unit/School believes that granting a career break may impact the business needs of the Unit/School, the request may be declined.

In such cases, the Head of unit/ school must provide the employee with clear reasons for the decision in writing.

Should an employee wish to appeal a decision of their career break application on grounds of procedure or fairness, they may do so to the Director of HR.



3.0 Scope

Employees will be required to provide details of the purpose for which the career break is requested, demonstrating how it meets one of the approved criteria outlined below:

- Travel
- Family circumstances
- Study/further training or to undertake voluntary work
- Employees appointed or elected to the Oireachtas

The Career Break scheme is not aimed at facilitating requests for part-time work or work outside the University.

The University may consider such requests; however, such requests will be dealt with outside of the Career Break Policy.

4.0 Duration

A career break is a period of unpaid leave of not less than one year and not more than five years.

Employees taking a career break of one year will return to their substantive post.

Employees availing of a career break more than 1 year will not be entitled to return to their substantive post. Vacancies created as a result of an employee going on career break for more than 1 year, may be filled subject to approval by a permanent replacement of the post.

Refer to section 9.0 : Return to Duty.

A second career break may not be taken until the employee has service for a period equal to the duration of the initial career break.

The total leave period should not exceed ten years and no one period of absence should exceed five years except in circumstances where the employee is appointed or elected to the Oireachtas.

Eligible employees 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 HR, provided the total period of leave does not exceed ten years.



5.0 Procedure for Career Break Application & Career Break Extension.

Employees are required to give three months' notice of their application for career break, with exception of Academic staff members, who are required to give nine months' notice

Employees should apply via the [Career Break application form](#) in the first instance to their Head of Unit/School. The Head of Unit / School will consider the application in the context of the Unit/Schools operational business staffing plans.

Once the application has been approved by the Head of Unit/School, the employee submits the form to HR Office (email: leaveschemes@universityofgalway.ie).

Applications for career break extension should follow the same procedure as outlined above, providing a minimum of 3 months' notice.

Should a career break application or career break extension application not be approved due to business requirements of the unit / school being affected, the employee will be advised of the decision in writing by their Head of Unit / School.

Should an employee wish to appeal a decision of their career break application or career break extension application on grounds of procedure or fairness, they may do so to the Director of HR.

6.0 Pension Status

The career break period will not be reckonable as service neither for pension purposes nor as qualifying service for annual leave or promotion.

It is not possible to continue paying pension contributions while on career break.

In order to reckon the career break period for pension purposes, notional service purchase or the Single Public Service Pension Purchase facility may be of interest on return to University of Galway. Please contact the Pensions Office at pensions@universityofgalway.ie for a quote on your return.

<https://www.universityofgalway.ie/pensions-and-investments/aboutus/>

7.0 Health Insurance / Personal Accident Insurance/ Income Continuance

University of Galway cannot facilitate Health Insurance deductions while an employee is on career break, if required the employee should arrange directly with the external service provider.

Employees on career break are not eligible for the Personal Accident Insurance but can re-apply (following their return to work) at the scheme renewal (November annually).

Any employee availing of leave under the career break scheme should ensure that they are aware of the rule involving leaves of absence or career breaks in the Income Protection and Group Life plans, please see details in **Appendix 1**.



8.0 Promotion

If an employee on a career break wishes to be informed of internal or external advertising of positions, the onus is on the employee to keep informed of advertised vacancies.

Employees on career break will be considered for the post for which they apply. If successful they will be required to take up the role within 4 weeks. The career break will not automatically transfer to the promotional post.

9.0 Return to Duty

Employees on career break of one year will return to the post they vacated. The vacated post may be filled on a specific purpose contract basis during the employee's absence.

Employees returning from career break may be required to undertake employee induction to include a briefing on Health & Safety. The employee should also familiarise themselves with any new policies or procedures that have come into place while they were on leave.

It is the responsibility of the employee on career break to inform their Line Manager and HR Office (email: leaveschemes@universityofgalway.ie), in writing, at least three months, but ideally six months before the expiry of their approved career break leave whether they wish to:

- (a) apply for an extension to the career break
- (b) resume duty on expiry of the career break
- (c) resign from the University

Failure to provide a return-to-work notification within the timeframes indicated will be taken as an intention not to resume duty at the end of approved career break duration and treated as a full resignation.

Employees on a career break greater than one year will be assigned to the next appropriate vacancy 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.

It may take some time to identify an appropriate vacancy for placement, during this period, the employee may have to wait a period normally not exceeding twelve months without pay.

Where a vacancy at the appropriate grade does not exist the employee 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 associated lower pay, and apply for promotion through the normal channels.

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

An employee 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, Head of Unit/School will endeavor to facilitate such requests where feasible in line with operational needs and planning.



10.0 Responsibilities

Name	Responsibility
Director of Human Resources	Policy Owner
All Employees	<p>Provide a minimum of three months'/nine months' notice of intention to avail of this leave in line with section 5.0 of career break policy.</p> <p>Provide return to work notification in line with timelines provided (3 months, ideally 6 months).</p> <p>Read and understand the provisions of career break scheme policy prior to application.</p> <p>Keep the University updated of any change of address or other contact details.</p>
Line Manager	<p>Review & approve leave application.</p> <p>Provide written explanation should a career break application or career break extension application not be possible.</p> <p>Read and comply with this leave policy and ensure the leave application is reviewed and submitted to HR promptly.</p>
Human Resources Office	<p>Process approved leave applications.</p> <p>Review this policy on a regular basis in light of any changes in legislation</p>

11.0 Appendices

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



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

Appendix 1 - Note on Income Protection and Group life Plans

If you plan to take a career break, you must send an email to Cornmarket (the Plan administrators) in advance of the start date of your career break. The email should be sent to, spsadmin@cornmarket.ie and it should include:

- Name
- Address
- Employee Number
- Career Break start date
- Career Break end date (Career Breaks can be taken for a max. of 5 years)
- Whether or not you intend to travel abroad during your Career Break and if so, to where

Once you do this:

- Cornmarket will send you any cover options which may be applicable. For example, if you are a member of the Group Life Plan and you are not travelling to a country which is on the Insurer's 'no cover' list, you may be able to pay a lump sum up front to retain your Life Cover for the course of your Career Break.
- Whether or not cover during career break is an option for you and whether or not you avail of the option/s, you can re-join the plan without any medical underwriting at the end of their career break. Should you be unable to return to work due to illness or injury, the deferred period will start on this date.

Failure to notify Cornmarket in advance of your career break may result in your membership of the relevant Plan/s being lapsed/deleted. If your policy is lapsed/deleted and you want cover again, you will need to complete an application form and may have to undergo medical underwriting after which you may or may not be accepted as a member of the plan again.