

Unpaid Career Break Policy (For Staff with Caring Responsibilities)

1. Introduction

As part of the University's aim to support staff with caring responsibilities, salaried staff may apply for an unpaid career break under the terms of this policy. The University recognises that flexible working policies such as this can help to retain skilled, experienced and valuable staff and reduce staff turnover.

2. Criteria

An application must be on the grounds of caring responsibilities for dependent children, frail, older people, or disabled or sick dependants.

At least six months' notice should be given of such a request (unless particular circumstances make this impossible).

A career break would normally be no less than one year and not more than three years.

Eligibility to apply will normally be confined to staff with at least two continuous years' service in the University in their current staff category.

The line manager's support and formal approval from the Group People Director or nominee, on behalf of the Council, is required.

3. Pension

Where the member of staff taking unpaid leave of absence is a member of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), their membership of USS will be suspended during this period. For further information, please see the Unpaid Career Break Guidance listed in the Useful references section below.

4. Contractual terms during unpaid career breaks

Return to work would normally be to the job occupied at the beginning of the career break, although this cannot be guaranteed. Where this is not possible, the member of staff will return to a job which is equivalent in grade to the one which they held at the beginning of the career break.

Continuity of service will be maintained and the period of leave will count towards the employee's length of service with the University.

5. Equality, diversity and inclusion

Policies are inclusive of all Open University staff, regardless of age, care experience, caring status or dependency, civil status, disability, family status, gender, gender expression, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnership, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or trades union membership status.

6. Useful references

Unpaid Career Break Guidance (for Staff with Caring Responsibilities)

Unpaid Leave Policy

Unpaid Leave Procedure