



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Career Break Policy and Procedure

Poileasaidh is Dòigh-obrach a
thaobh Brisidhean Cùrsa-obrach

17 August 2018



Introduction

The SPCB recognises that there may be occasions where members of staff wish to take a period of unpaid extended leave with the intention of resuming work at an agreed date in future. It seeks to accommodate requests for such Career Breaks where possible within the constraints of operational requirements, acknowledging the benefits such opportunities can bring members of staff.

Reasonable measures will also be taken to assist staff in managing the transition back to work on conclusion of a Career Break.

This policy sets out the Career Break provisions for SPCB staff and the procedures which should be followed. It is supplemented by [Guidance for Managers and Staff](#).

Enquiries

If you have any queries regarding Career Break provisions, you should contact the HR Enquiry Service on Extension 86500.

Eligibility

Career Breaks may be requested for a variety of purposes, including but not limited to:

- Travel;
- Further study or research;
- Voluntary/charitable work; and
- Religious and/or cultural reasons.

Should you wish to request an unpaid period of absence from work owing to caring responsibilities, you should refer to the provisions of the [Family Care Leave Policy](#) in the first instance.

A Career Break will not normally be granted for the purpose of taking up alternative paid employment. You may only undertake paid employment during a Career Break if it accords with the provisions set out in the [Code of Conduct](#) and you have the express written consent of your Head of Group/Office. If you wish to apply for an external secondment opportunity, you should consult the [Interchange Policy and Procedure](#).

You must normally have a minimum of three years' continuous service with the SPCB at the date of application for a Career Break and have satisfactory levels of attendance, conduct and performance.

Career Breaks will normally be granted for a minimum period of three months and up to a maximum period of one year. The total duration of a Career Break, inclusive of any extension granted, will not normally exceed a total period of one year. Consideration will be given, if requested, to granting an extension to a Career Break providing this would not take the total length of the Career Break beyond a period of one year. Only one extension will normally be considered. Individual circumstances and operational requirements will be taken into account by the SPCB in reaching a decision.

You may request more than one Career Break in the course of your employment with the SPCB, up to a maximum of two years' break in total. Consideration will be given to individual circumstances if a longer period of Career Break is requested. You will not normally be granted a further Career Break until at least 3 years after the completion of a previous Career Break. If you make a request for a Career Break to immediately follow a period of Maternity, Adoption or Additional Paternity Leave, this will be considered irrespective of any previous Career Breaks you may have had.

Requesting a Career Break

You are expected to informally discuss your intention to request a Career Break with your direct line manager in advance of submitting a formal request in order that an early view can be formed of the potential implications for the business.

You should normally submit your formal request at least three months in advance of the date you wish your Career Break to commence. Individual circumstances will be taken into account if these timescales cannot be met. Applications must be made and will be managed in accordance with the [Flexible Working Procedure](#). Your reasons for requesting a Career Break must be clearly set out. Incomplete requests will not be considered and will be returned to you for completion and resubmission. In these circumstances, your request for a Career Break will be considered from the date your fully completed request is received.

Your Head of Group/Office will consider if your request may reasonably be accommodated within the needs of the business. Professional advice and guidance may be sought as required from the Human Resources Office. Where your request cannot be supported, your Head of Group/Office will explore other potential options with you to help you achieve an appropriate work-life balance. Where your Career Break is approved, you will be required to sign a Career Break Agreement and you will be responsible for abiding by both this and your terms and conditions of employment. Your Head of Group/Office may, in consultation with you, postpone the commencement of any agreed Career Break where the needs of the business require it.

The decision of your Head of Group/Office is final. It will be provided in writing and where applicable, reasons for refusing a request will be fully set out.



Impact on Terms and Conditions of Employment and Conduct

You continue to be employed by the SPCB during a Career Break and this period therefore counts towards your period of continuous employment for the purpose of entitlement to other statutory employment rights. Your progression of salary linked to continuous service will be honoured. You will not accrue entitlement to Annual Leave during your Career Break.

During your Career Break, all forms of remuneration will cease including employer pension contributions. Prior to the commencement of your Career Break, it is recommended that you seek advice from the relevant pension scheme provider as to the options available to you. You may also wish to seek independent financial advice.

Following a Career Break, you will as far as reasonably practicable return to a similar job, in a similar capacity. Where your existing role is no longer available you may be offered another suitable vacancy subject to the implementation of the SPCB's [Redeployment Policy](#). This provision does not affect your employment rights.

Conduct

During the period of your Career Break, you will continue to be subject to all the normal SPCB requirements relating to conduct. This means that if you breach the SPCB's Code of Conduct, you may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Keeping in Touch and Returning to Work

Keeping in Touch

The SPCB wishes to ensure that, where practical, a member of staff who takes a Career Break is afforded the opportunity to keep in touch with the Parliament during their absence. Prior to the commencement of your Career Break, you should agree with your Head of Group/Office a preferred method and frequency of contact to ensure that you are kept abreast of developments in your business area and the wider Parliament. You and a nominated person (normally your direct line manager) will be jointly responsible for maintaining reasonable contact as agreed.

In the course of your Career Break, your line manager may offer you the opportunity on an ad hoc basis to attend work for a specific purpose, for example, to participate in events relating to significant business change, strategic planning or development activity. In such circumstances, your attendance will be by mutual agreement. You will be paid for any hours worked at the rate of the normal contractual salary which would have applied at that point in time had you not taken a Career Break.

You should ensure that the HR Enquiry Service is supplied with details of any change of address or other circumstances in order that you can receive weekly copies of the Corporate Bulletin, be consulted about potential changes affecting your employment and can be contacted in the event of any emergency.

Returning to Work

You are required to advise your Head of Group/Office promptly of any circumstances potentially impacting your agreed return to work date. In any case, you must write to your Head of Group/Office, normally a minimum of three months in advance of your agreed return to work date, to confirm either that:

- You will return to work on the date agreed;
- You wish to request an extension to your Career Break; or
- You wish to resign from your post at the Parliament.

Where your Career Break is for a period of six months or less, one months notice in writing will suffice.

Keeping in Touch and Returning to Work

Returning to Work (Continued)

Sympathetic consideration will be given to a request to return on a date earlier than that agreed. Such requests will be accommodated if possible within the constraints of operational requirements.

Having taken into account any extenuating circumstances, a failure to return to work on the date agreed with the SPCB may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal being taken.

Prior to or upon your return, your line manager will discuss with you any support you may require to assist you in making an effective transition back to work. Support measures will be agreed with you in advance and will be tailored to your individual needs and those of the business. Measures which may be considered include:

- a mini re-induction programme;
- buddying arrangements for an agreed period of time;
- learning and development opportunities; and
- planning the use of anticipated annual leave in such a way as to allow you to return on a phased basis over a set time period.

Career Break Policy and Procedure (English only)

For further information contact:

HumanResources@parliament.scot

0131 348 6500

