



Career Break Policy & Procedure

Document Reference	FSU/HR/018
--------------------	------------

POLICY DOCUMENT – VERSION CONTROL SHEET	
Document Title	Career Break Policy & Procedure
Document reference	FSUHR018
Supersedes	Career Break Policy & Procedure
Originator/Author	
Ratified by Federation Boards	March 2023
Circulated	May 2023
Review date	March 2026

Career Break Policy & Procedure

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Scope	4
3. Aims	4
4. Principles.....	5
5. Duration and number of career breaks.....	5
6. Roles & Responsibilities.....	6
7. Applying for a career break	7
8. Contractual position during a career break.....	7
9. Benefits	9
10. Paid Employment during a Career Break.....	9
11. Keeping in touch	9
12. Training and professional registration.....	10
13. Appointments	10
14. Resignation.....	10
15. Returning to work	10
16. Extension to Career Break	11
17. Failure to return to work	11
18. Data Protection / GDPR	11
19. Equality Statement.....	12
Appendix A- Career break application form	13
Appendix B - Career break extension form.....	17

1. Introduction

GP Federations/FSU are committed to developing work practices and policies which support work-life balance. Federations/FSU recognise that some staff may wish or need to take an extended break from work for a variety of personal reasons, during their employment.

Staff are not entitled to take a career break, but the Federation/FSU recognises that there may be circumstances where it may be beneficial to the employee, and to the Federation/FSU, to allow an unpaid period of time away from work.

This policy sets out the Federation/FSU's approach to career breaks and the basis on which they may be taken.

2. Scope

The Career Break Policy applies to all employees with the requisite service, see section 4-Eligibility.

Reasons for a career break may include:

- o Care and/or responsibility for children or other dependants
- o Personal study, training, or development (which is relevant to the employee's work with the Federation/FSU)
- o Any other purpose agreed with the Federation/FSU e.g., overseas travel or voluntary work

The terms of this policy do not apply to maternity or adoption leave, parental leave, paternity leave, compassionate leave, emergency carers leave for care of dependants or flexible working for which separate Federation/FSU policies are available.

3. Aims

This policy has been developed to enable employees to take an extended period of unpaid time away from work to balance their career with other commitments, responsibilities, and interests. This policy has been developed in accordance with the Federation/FSU's equal opportunities policy. It aims to:

- provide a sympathetic response to staff wishing to take time away from work
- ensure that all employees are treated in a fair and consistent manner
- consider the ability of the Federation/FSU to deliver services.

4. Principles

To be considered for the scheme, employees must have at least two years continuous service with their current Federation/FSU employer.

When considering a career break application, the following factors will be considered:

- o The purpose of, or reasons for, the career break.
- o The period of absence requested.
- o The employee's length of service.
- o The employees' remaining length of employment contract.
- o Whether the employee has taken a career break on a previous occasion.
- o The operational needs of the Federation/FSU and requirement to provide services
- o The need to retain key skills, knowledge, and experience to achieve the Federation/FSU's objectives
- o The ability to be able to recruit cover for the post on a temporary basis.
- o The potential for the employee to return to a similar / the same post.
- o The potential benefits to the Federation/FSU/ Individual Employee

This list is non-exhaustive therefore other factors may influence the Federation/FSU's decision.

Not all applications will be approved so an employee must not commit themselves to any plans prior to their application being approved.

The granting of a career break and the duration of the break will be entirely at the Federation/FSU's discretion and the Federation/FSU's decision will be final.

In certain circumstances, a career break may not be the most appropriate arrangement. Where this is the case, an alternative which is more appropriate to the individual case may be agreed between the employee, their Lead/line manager with support from HR as appropriate.

5. Duration and number of career breaks

A career break will normally last between three months and 23 months.

An employee may seek to take more than one career break, but there will normally be at least three years between each break and separate approval must be sought on each occasion.

A career break may be extended beyond the agreed duration provided that the total period does not exceed 23 months.

Please note the maximum time for any one career break or aggregate total of multiple career breaks, during an employee's career with a Federation/FSU, is 23 months.

6. Roles & Responsibilities

Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Discussing the application with his/her line managero Submitting an application to their lead/line manager in accordance with required notice periods.o Signing a career break agreement to confirm his/her agreement to the terms and conditions of an approved career break.o Providing their lead/ line manager with contact details for the duration of the break.o Maintaining good two-way communication with their lead/ line manager during the career break.o Maintaining professional or skill competencies whilst on the career break.o Giving notice of their intention to return to work in accordance with required notice periods.o Notifying their lead/line manager if unable to return to work on the agreed date.
Lead/Line Manager/	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Giving full consideration to career break applications and seeking approval of Board on final decision.o Working with HR, notify the employee of the decision in writing, providing reasons where a career break has been refused.o Forwarding the completed Career Break Application Form to HRo Ensuring thorough consultation with the Federation and FSU that approved career breaks can be accommodated within the Federation/FSU and that suitable arrangements can be put in place to cover the period of absence.o Keeping the employee on a career break informed of any significant workplace developments which may be relevant to his/her employment.o Ensuring that the employee receives a comprehensive re-induction on their return to work.
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Providing guidance and advice to the individual, the line manager and Federation on any aspect of the career break policy.o Confirming the terms and conditions of an approved career break in writing.o Informing payroll of change to salary or pension contributions relating to the career break.

7. Applying for a career break

An employee wishing to apply for a career break should discuss this with his/her line manager in the first instance.

The employee should then complete the Career Break Application Form- See appendix A and send it to their Lead/line manager a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed start date. It is, however, recognised that there may be circumstances beyond an employee's control which prevent an employee from adhering to this timescale (e.g., a sudden change in personal circumstances) and managers may consider such requests accordingly.

On receipt of the application, the Lead/line manager will arrange a meeting with the employee to discuss their request.

When considering a request for a Career Break, the Lead/line Manager will consider the factors set out in Section 4 and assess the impact of agreeing the request based on these.

Following the meeting, the Lead/line Manager will consult with the Federation Chair or nominated Federation Board member making a recommendation for a request to be approved or refused.

Where circumstances result in more than one career break request being submitted by staff at the same time, preference will initially be given based on the order the request was received, unless exceptional circumstances would indicate otherwise.

Following Board approval, the Lead/line manager will inform the employee of the decision in writing usually within 10 working days of the meeting with the employee. In cases where a career break is refused, the reasons will be given.

Where a career break is approved, the employee will be required to sign a career break agreement to confirm their agreement to the terms and conditions of the career break.

8. Contractual position during a career break

8.1 Remuneration

All career breaks will be unpaid.

8.2 Salary Increments

Incremental progression will not take place during a period of a career break, and a career break will result in the normal increment date being delayed by the period of the career break. This delay will be implemented for all cases, whether the increment date is due within the period of the career break, or after the career break ends. This delay to the increment date is imposed because increments are awarded to reflect the development of skills, knowledge, and experience within the role for which an individual is employed.

8.3 Reckonable Service

A career break will not be regarded as a break in service for the purposes of statutory employment provisions. However, the period of the career break will not count towards any service-related benefits as reckonable service e.g., occupational sick pay, occupational maternity pay, service-related increases in annual leave, occupational redundancy payments. For these purposes service before the career break will be aggregated with service after the career break.

8.4 Pension

If an employee contributes to the HSC Pension Scheme and wishes to continue to contribute to the Scheme during their Career Break then it is important to note that during the first 6 months they will be responsible for their own share of the contributions and the Federation will continue to pay the employers share.

However, under the rules of the scheme, thereafter the employee has an option to continue for a further 18 months and they will be responsible for both theirs and the employers share of the contributions.

If the employee wishes to continue paying pension contributions it is very important that they contact HR before their Career Break commences to make arrangements for the payment of contributions. Contributions must be paid in full at the commencement of the Career Break.

Upon commencing a Career Break, unless an employee opts to continue to contribute to the HSC Pension Scheme, they will be deemed to have left the Scheme until such time as they return to work. Upon returning to work it is the Employees responsibility to ensure they re-enrol in the HSC Pension Scheme should they wish to.

It is also important to note that if you contribute to the Superannuation Scheme the regulations state that anyone out of pensionable employment for 5 years or more cannot re-join the 1995 Section and will automatically join the 2015 Section on their return to pensionable employment. Any queries in relation to clarifying the scheme an employee currently contributes to, or the implications on benefits associated with moving to the 2015 Section, should be directed to the HSC Pension Branch who can be contacted on 028 7131 9111.

8.5 Annual Leave

There will be no entitlement to holiday pay whilst on a career break and the employee will not accrue annual leave. Any annual leave owing must be taken before commencement of the career break. There will be no payment in lieu of any leave outstanding.

8.6 Sick pay

There will be no entitlement to statutory or occupational sick pay whilst on a career break.

8.7 Maternity, Adoption & Paternity Pay

Employees on a career break will not be eligible for Occupational Maternity, Adoption and Paternity Pay. Entitlement to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) may also be affected since SMP is calculated based on the employee's salary 15 weeks before the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC). An employee wishing to know how the rules apply to a particular situation are strongly advised to seek advice from HR.

9. Benefits

It is the responsibility of the employee on a career break to establish with the Social Security Agency whether he/she is entitled to any social security benefits and to check the position regarding National Insurance contributions.

Employees participating in salary sacrifice schemes e.g., Child Care vouchers, Cycle to Work etc. must notify the providers of their Career Break and reduction in salary so that appropriate changes can be made to the repayment schemes.

10. Paid Employment during a Career Break

Staff on Career Breaks will not normally be allowed to take up paid employment with another employer except, for example, work abroad or charitable work which could broaden experience. In such circumstances written authority from the Federation must be obtained PRIOR to engagement in such activity.

Please note paid employment includes bank work, temporary contracts, agency work and self-employment.

11. Keeping in touch

An employee on a career break should supply their Lead or line manager with contact details for the period of absence and notify HR if these details change.

The employee and lead/line manager should maintain reasonable contact during the career break period to make the return to work easier for both parties. It is recommended that the employee and lead/line manager discuss what kind of contact there will be in advance of the career break commencing.

The lead/line manager is responsible for keeping an employee on a career break informed of any significant workplace developments which may be relevant to his/her employment.

12. Training and professional registration

The employee must make a commitment to attend, where necessary, appropriate training during each year of their Career Break with the aim of acquiring and maintaining relevant professional registration, skills, techniques, and knowledge to allow them to return to the workplace with an appropriate level of confidence, skill, and ability. The number of training/development days (maximum of 5 per year) that an employee will be required to work will be determined by the Lead/Line Manager. Employees will be paid for any days they are required to work.

Staff will be responsible for maintaining their own professional registration during a Career Break including the meeting of any requirements under such regulations.

Failure to do so will result in a delay to their return to work and in some circumstances the Federation's guarantee of employment may be withdrawn.

On the employee's return to work, the lead/line manager should ensure that a comprehensive re-induction process is put in place which includes, for example, training on any new systems or procedures that have been introduced during the period of absence and briefing on any changes that will affect them.

13. Appointments

An employee on career break may apply for any advertised post that arises at the Federation during the career break but will be required to accept the post at the time of offer and take up duties when required.

14. Resignation

If an employee decides to resign from his/ her post during a career break, they must submit a written statement of resignation in advance of the agreed return to work date in accordance with their contractual notice period.

15. Returning to work

Providing that the terms and conditions of the career break policy and any subsequent agreement between the employee and the Federation are met, the Federation will guarantee the employee the opportunity to return to work at the end of the career break.

An employee is entitled to return to the same job (as far as reasonably practicable) provided they return to work within one year. It should be noted that following any approved application for leave of a duration of more than one year that no guarantee can be given that the employee will return to their substantive post. However, they may return to as similar a job as possible at the equivalent pay band, reflecting increases awarded during the break.

Before returning from a career break, an employee must give their lead/line manager at least three months' written confirmation of their intention to return to work.

If an employee wishes to return from a career break early, they should put in a request in writing to their lead/line manager at the earliest opportunity and at least three months in advance of the date on which they wish to return for breaks lasting less than 12 months and 6 months in advance for career breaks of 12 months or more.

The Lead/Line Manager will consider requests to return early. However, there is no guarantee that requests to return early will be accommodated.

16. Extension to Career Break

If an employee wishes to apply for an extension to a career break, they should do so using the Extension to Career Break Form Appendix B, at least 3 months in advance of the agreed return to work date.

The Lead/Line Manager will consider requests to extend a career break if the original duration of the break was less than 23 months. However, there is no guarantee that requests to extend a career break will be accommodated. The Lead/line Manager will consult with the Federation Chair or nominated Federation Board member to seek Board approval before a final decision is made.

17. Failure to return to work

If an employee is prevented from returning to work on the date agreed due to ill-health, they must contact their lead/line manager as soon as possible. The right to return to work may be extended beyond the notified date of return, providing an appropriate medical certificate has been submitted.

Where there is failure to return on the due date and no alternative date has been agreed, the employee may lose their right to return to work.

18. Data Protection / GDPR

In applying this policy, the Organisation will have due regard for the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Personal Confidential Data of data subjects will be processed fairly and lawfully and in accordance with the six data protection principles. Data Subject's Rights and freedoms will be respected, and measures will be in place to enable employees (data subjects) to exercise those rights. Appropriate technical and organisational measures will be designed and implemented to ensure an appropriate level of security is applied to the processing of personal confidential data.

19. Equality Statement

In applying this policy, the GP Federation/FSU will have due regard for the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

Appendix A- Career break application form

Before completing this form, you are advised to read the Federation/FSU's Career Break Policy and discuss the matter with your lead/line manager. To request a career break please complete this form and send it to your lead/line manager for consideration **at least *6 months before the proposed start date of the career break.**

*Consideration may be given to requests which, due to individual circumstances beyond the employee's control, are submitted less than six months in advance.

Name

Job title

Federation/FSU

Date of appointment

Type of employment contract	Permanent / Fixed term (if fixed term specify remaining length of contract)
------------------------------------	---

Purpose of, or reasons for, the career break

Reasons for a career break may include: (i) care and/or responsibility for children or other dependants; (ii) personal study, training, or development (which is relevant to your work at the Federation/FSU); (iii) any other purpose agreed with the Federation/FSU e.g., overseas travel or voluntary work.

Please note as per the Career Break Policy, employees cannot undertake paid work during the career break unless overseas and relevant to your work at the Federation/FSU. Please see definition of employment section 10 of policy.

A career break may last between three months and 23 months.

**Proposed length
of career break³**

**Proposed start
date**

	Proposed return to work date	

Have you taken a career break previously? (as an employee of the Federation/FSU) If yes, please give details:

Yes / No

Please provide further information in support of your request

e.g., What is the potential benefit of the proposed career break to you and the Federation/FSU? What practical difficulties or problems might arise from the proposed career break with respect to the service and/or your colleagues, and how might these be overcome?

Signature

Date

- Please forward this form to your Lead/Line Manager at least 6 months before the proposed start date of the career break.
- On receipt of the application, your Lead/Line Manager will arrange a meeting with you to discuss the request.
- You will be advised of the outcome of your request in writing at the earliest opportunity. Where the career break is refused you will be given reasons for the refusal; where it is approved, you will be required to sign a career break agreement to confirm the terms and conditions of the career break.

Note to Lead/Line manager

On receipt of the application, you should arrange a meeting with the employee to discuss the application. Factors to consider include:

- o The purpose of, or reasons for, the career break.
- o The period of absence requested.
- o The employee's length of service.
- o The employees' remaining length of employment contract.
- o Whether the employee has taken a career break on a previous occasion.
- o The operational needs of the Federation and requirement to provide services
- o The need to retain key skills, knowledge, and experience to achieve the Federation's objectives
- o The ability to be able to recruit cover for the post on a temporary basis.
- o The potential for the employee to return to a similar / the same post.
- o The potential benefits to the Federation/ Individual Employee

Do you support this Application?

Yes / Yes with amendments / No (delete as appropriate)

(Based on assessing the above factors)

Please see page 14 for Lead/Line Manager's rationale for accepting / refusing the request.

Date decision approved by the Federation Board:

If career break approved, please confirm the agreed start date and return to work date and give your reasons for accepting the application:

Start date

Return to work date

Reasons for accepting the application (with or without amendments):

If no, please give your reasons for rejecting the application:

Signature

Date

Please forward this form to HR and inform the employee of the decision in writing at the earliest opportunity providing reasons in cases where the career break has been refused.

Appendix B - Career break extension form

Name:	Date of Appointment:
Job Title:	
Federation	
Type of Employment Contract: Permanent / Fixed term	
If fixed term, specify remaining length of employment contract:	
Purpose of, or reasons for, the career break extension: ¹	
Proposed length of the career break extension:	
Previously agreed return to work date:	Proposed new return to work date:
Signature of Applicant:	Date:

Note to the employee:

Please forward this form to your Lead/line manager at least 3 months before the originally agreed return to work date. On receipt of the application, your Lead/Line Manager will consider the request, but there is no guarantee that the request will be accommodated. You will be advised of the outcome of your request in writing at the earliest opportunity. Where the career break extension is refused you will be given reasons for the refusal; where it is approved, you will be required to confirm in writing your agreement to the terms and conditions of the career break extension.

Note to Lead / Line manager

There is no obligation to accommodate a request for a career break extension, but you should give it consideration considering the following factors:

- o The purpose of, or reasons for, the career break.
- o The period of absence requested.
- o The employee's length of service.
- o The employees' remaining length of employment contract.
- o Whether the employee has taken a career break on a previous occasion.
- o The operational needs of the Federation and requirement to provide services
- o The need to retain key skills, knowledge, and experience to achieve the Federation's objectives
- o The ability to be able to recruit cover for the post on a temporary basis.
- o The potential for the employee to return to a similar / the same post.
- o The potential benefits to the Federation/ Individual Employee

Do you support this request?		Yes	/	Yes, with amendments	/	No
Date decision approved by the Federation Board						
If yes, please confirm the mutually agreed return to work date and give your reasons for accepting the request:						
Revised return to work date:						
Reasons for accepting the request:						
If no, please give your reasons for rejecting the request:						
Signature of Lead/Line Manager:					Date:	

Please forward this form to HR and inform the employee of the decision in writing at the earliest opportunity, providing reasons in cases where the career break extension has been refused.