

# University of Bristol

## Secondment Policy

### 1. Introduction

The aim of the Secondment Policy is to provide guidance to enable managers to best facilitate the development needs of their staff by way of a secondment. It is not intended to be prescriptive but to prompt full consideration of the issues to be addressed by departments when offering a secondment opportunity, and by prospective candidates when considering whether to apply for a role on the basis of a secondment. This Policy provides the basis for all internal and UK based external secondment arrangements. For overseas secondments, please refer to the International Mobility Policy.

### 2. Scope

Employees who have both successfully completed their Initial Service Review period and have been employed by the University for a minimum of 12 months may be eligible to apply for a secondment under this policy. It applies when an individual identifies an advertised opportunity (which is either specified as a secondment or a fixed term contract) for which they would like to be considered on a secondment basis.

### 3. Definitions

The University supports the use of secondments, recognising them as:

- personal development for the individual;
- a means of supporting succession planning;
- adding to the skills base of the University;
- an opportunity to deal with short term or problematic work levels
- an opportunity to build or develop further strong relationships with other businesses

#### 3.1 Internal Secondment

An internal secondment is a temporary placement of an employee into another role for a specific purpose and period of time to the mutual benefit of all parties. The secondment should usually be for no more than two years. This is different to 'acting up' which is defined below. Internal secondments occur where a faculty/department of the University wishes to temporarily deploy an employee who has the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to undertake particular tasks that cannot be covered by existing roles. Normally these tasks are expected to be for a limited duration although there are occasions when the secondment offers an opportunity to assess whether the need for the particular expertise is likely to be long term.

Any internal secondment arrangement is subject to the normal approvals process which applies to any recruitment undertaken across the University. Prior to proceeding, managers should seek advice and guidance from their HR team.

Individuals will be sent a secondment letter stating details of the arrangement which may also act as a temporary variation to their contract of employment. External secondments will also require a signed agreement with the host organisation. Such an agreement should be initiated by the

University using the standard University template if the member of staff is remaining on the University payroll and details can be obtained from Human Resources.

### ***3.2 Acting up***

Acting up is usually instigated in situations where unplanned cover for part of a role at a higher level is required for a short period of time, e.g. due to absence of the substantive post holder, and usually but not exclusively within the same department. Where an individual is covering a full role, they should normally be seconded into that role – see 3.1; *Internal Secondments*.

These opportunities do not necessarily have to be advertised if they are intended to cover short term situations only. For longer term arrangements (for example more than 3 months), normal recruitment processes will apply. If there is more than one individual within the department who could cover the acting up, the opportunity should be offered to the group and a selection process applied. Acting up opportunities would typically be offered for a minimum of 1 month and a maximum of 12 months. Acting up arrangements are subject to the normal approvals process. Prior to proceeding managers should seek advice and guidance from their HR Team.

## **4. Support for secondments**

Whilst the University is committed to encouraging personal development, this must be balanced against the business needs of the department or service and therefore approval for the secondment from the current line manager is required. Secondment opportunities should not be unreasonably refused by the home department but a manager's agreement to a secondment is not automatic, may not be possible in every case and can be dependent upon business requirements at that time. The length of the proposed secondment may also have a bearing on whether the individual may be able to return to their existing post. Secondments will normally be restricted to a maximum of two years after which the individual will be expected to return to their substantive department.

Secondments can be considered provided they meet the following criteria:

- the secondment will provide personal and professional development for the employee;
- there will be overall benefits to the University through improved individual and organisational performance;
- the seconding department can reasonably expect to cover the work of the secondee by redeployment, other secondment arrangements or fixed term recruitment.

## **5. Roles and responsibilities**

### ***5.1 Current line manager***

Managers should first consider whether it is possible to release the individual from their current role for the requested time period. Managers are advised to involve HR at an early stage in discussing the options for providing temporary cover for the post. It is also important to consider the individual's development needs and if they are best met by supporting a secondment. Individuals can benefit from secondment opportunities and, in many cases, will return to their original team at the end of the period with increased knowledge and experience and a greater understanding of the University.

### ***5.2 Line manager during secondment***

During the secondment period, it is strongly recommended that the new line manager holds regular reviews with the secondee following the ISR model at one, three and six months to ensure individuals are supported and also that there is an opportunity to review performance.

### *5.3 Individuals*

Prior to submitting a request for a secondment, individuals must approach their line manager to discuss whether a secondment application would be supported in principle by the department. Individuals are also encouraged to identify areas of their development which would directly benefit from the secondment opportunity and ultimately how any knowledge or experience gained from the secondment will likely benefit the team when they return. Normally this development discussion should be part of the annual Staff Review & Development Process although it is acknowledged it may also arise outside this discussion.

## **6. End of secondment**

Prior to the end of the period of secondment, a meeting should be arranged between the secondee and their substantive line manager to discuss the implications of returning to their substantive post, and in order to update the individual on any changes within the department. This meeting should be arranged at least one month before the return date. If, during the term of the secondment, organisational change results in the original post being substantially altered or made redundant, the individual will be consulted with in the normal way in line with the University's Ordinances.

## **7. Secondment Extension requests**

An extension to a secondment arrangement, where the total secondment period does not exceed two years, would need to be agreed with the home department as they should consider the impact of the extension.

For appointments which are extended beyond the initial duration, there can be no guarantee that the individual will return to their substantive post unless a prior agreement for an extension has been reached. If there is no agreement by the home department, an individual has the option to still accept the secondment extension, but this would be offered on a fixed term basis and the individual would be deemed to be resigning from their substantive post. At the end of the fixed term appointment, the University will manage the termination of contract in line with the fixed term contract procedures. Redeployment to an alternative role may be offered depending on the reason for the fixed term contract i.e. for contract reasons other than cover. The implications on future employment, continuous service and potential redundancy entitlements of taking on a fixed term post in these circumstances will need to be clearly explained to the individual by the new manager in conjunction with HR and followed up in writing.

Where a seconded role becomes available on a permanent basis, the incumbent in the seconded role may be offered the role on a substantive basis if there has been an open recruitment process at the start of the secondment and where there have been no significant changes to the role. This is in line with the University's Fixed Term Contract Guidance.

## **8. External Secondment for University of Bristol Employees**

An external secondment is used when a University of Bristol member of staff remains under contract with the University but is hosted by another organisation for an agreed period. During such secondments, the member of staff normally retains all University of Bristol terms and conditions including continuous service rights and existing pay and pension arrangements. Things to consider in negotiations following requests to release secondees from the University of Bristol include the need to consider Intellectual Property Rights, Confidentiality and role and responsibilities. The secondment agreement with the host organisation will need to include financial reimbursement arrangements.

## **9. Requests for Secondees into the University of Bristol from Third Party Employers**

Things to consider in negotiations for requests to host secondees at the University of Bristol include the need to consider Intellectual Property Rights, Confidentiality and role and responsibilities. The appropriate Line Manager should consider these aspects in any arrangements to host a third-party employee in conjunction with the Secretary's Office ahead of signing any formal agreement.

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