



University of Liverpool – Enhanced Career Break Scheme Policy and Scheme Terms

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Introduction

The University of Liverpool operates an 'Enhanced Career Break' scheme,) which enables staff to apply to receive part-payment during an extended period of unpaid ('Career Break') leave (i.e. payment for part of the period of the leave, with the rest being unpaid), on the basis outlined below (see table).

This will be separate to the existing provision for staff to apply for a period of [Unpaid Leave](#), which will continue to operate as normal.

Eligibility

The scheme is intended to be open to all University staff, subject to the following exclusions:

- Agency workers who are not directly employed by the University
- Individuals engaged on contracts with variable hours (such as 'zero hours' contracts or casual engagements), where pay is calculated on the basis of hours actually worked and not known in advance.
- Visa holders for whom the terms and conditions of their right to work in the UK do not allow a career break.

Fixed-term contract holders will be permitted to apply to the scheme, but the full period of the requested leave must be covered within the period of the fixed-term contract.

Term-time only staff members who wish to apply under the scheme should make enquiries with the Payroll Office (payroll@liverpool.ac.uk) over how their pay would be affected, which may vary depending on their specific working pattern and the details of their proposed leave.

Staff members whose salary is paid from an externally-funded research grant or contract are required to agree any unpaid leave with their Principal Investigator (PI) and funder.

For the avoidance of doubt, access to the scheme is entirely at the University's discretion, and is not a contractual entitlement.

Period of part-payment

Part-payment under the Enhanced Career Break Scheme will be on the basis outlined below;

Duration of career break	Part-payment available
13 weeks or more	2 weeks' paid leave (70 hours, pro rata for part-time staff)
26 weeks or more	4 weeks' paid leave (140 hours, pro rata for part-time staff)
39 weeks or more	6 weeks' paid leave (210 hours, pro rata for part-time staff)
52 weeks or more	8 weeks' paid leave (280 hours, pro rata for part-time staff)

It will not ordinarily be expected that a period of leave will last longer than one year.

Where an application for a career break under this scheme is approved, the period of payment will be at the start of the period of leave, with the remaining period unpaid. Payment will be based on

normal annual salary during the paid period (including any contractual allowances, where applicable).

For example, if a member of staff commences a period of 26 weeks' Enhanced Career Break leave on 1 October, they will be entitled to 4 weeks paid leave, as per the above table. The person would be paid as normal for the first 4 weeks of the career break, and the remaining 22 weeks will be unpaid.

The period of leave that is paid will be subject to pension contributions and any relevant statutory and voluntary deductions.

Provisions relating to: pensions; statutory entitlements and benefits; other Salary Sacrifice schemes

During the period of leave that is unpaid, staff members who are members of the ULPF and USS pension schemes will be able to request to continue their employee contributions if they wish to do so. Where an individual wishes to maintain their contributions, the University will maintain the employer contributions also. Unless both employee and employer contributions are maintained, no pension benefits will accrue during the period of absence. In this scenario, some employees may have the option of making a smaller contribution to maintain the Life Assurance and incapacity cover which is available under their pension scheme. For members of the NHS Pension Scheme, different rules may apply and if unpaid absence is agreed, and the employee has requested to maintain their contributions, the employer contributions must continue for at least the first six months of the absence. Members of staff are encouraged to contact the Pensions Team (pensions@liverpool.ac.uk) for more information.

Staff members should note that if contributions are not maintained during a period of unpaid leave, the life assurance and ill health cover which is available to pension scheme members will cease.

If a staff member contributes to one the University salary sacrifice schemes (such as child care vouchers, cycle to work, additional purchased annual leave) and they are considering participating in the career break scheme, they should take advice from the University Payroll Team before doing so, as they will not be permitted to continue to participate in any salary sacrifice schemes if doing so would result in their reduced earnings:

- Falling below the appropriate National Living/Minimum Wage.
- Falling below the Lower Earnings Limit for National Insurance (as this could affect entitlement to a state pension and statutory benefits e.g. statutory maternity pay and statutory sick pay).
- In the case of visa holders, falling below the salary threshold for the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code applicable to their role.

Staff members who have voluntary deductions from pay such as sports centre and travel loans, would need to make alternative arrangements for such deductions during any unpaid career break periods, should a staff member need advice on who to contact regarding their voluntary deductions, they should contact the University Payroll Team.

The University Payroll Team can be contacted at: payroll@liverpool.ac.uk

Members of staff should be aware that any statutory entitlements and state benefits will use actual (i.e., reduced) earnings as the basis for calculating entitlement. Any reduction in pay as a result of taking a career break could therefore have an impact on a member of staff's eligibility to qualify for

statutory payments (e.g. statutory sick pay / statutory maternity pay / statutory paternity pay) and entitlement to state benefits/state pension. Staff members are advised to seek advice from HMRC should they have any concerns on how the impact of their career break could have on these entitlements.

How to apply

Staff members wishing to apply for an Enhanced Career Break can do so by completing and submitting an application form to their line manager. The application form is available [here](#).

Applications should be submitted at least 6 weeks in advance of the intended start date.

Please note, if you have more than one post and wish to apply for an Enhanced Career Break against both posts, two separate applications will need to be submitted, with the applicable post number identified on each.

Applications will be determined by line managers, following discussion with the relevant Dean/Head of Department where necessary. Managers should consider applications in the round, weighing up all relevant factors including the likely ability to cover the post on a temporary basis, the cost of doing so relative to the savings that granting the request would generate, and any ongoing management interventions that may be underway. Managers should exercise their discretion responsibly and think carefully about what the workload implications will be on those who remain in work, including prioritising and de-prioritising areas of work as appropriate to ensure workloads remain equitable and achievable. Whilst managers will be expected to adopt a reasonable approach, should a manager consider that a request cannot be supported for legitimate managerial reasons, including because of workload considerations and/or that granting the request would lead to an increase in costs once any backfilling requirements had been factored in, then the request may be declined.

Where approved, individuals and their managers should agree arrangements for handover and staying in touch as appropriate prior to the commencement of the period of leave.

Applicants will ordinarily receive a response to confirm whether or not the application has been granted within 4 weeks of their application.

For the avoidance of doubt, access to the scheme is entirely at the University's discretion. There will be no right of appeal where requests are not approved.

Curtailed

It will not ordinarily be permitted to end an enhanced career break early. Should an individual wish to do so, they should discuss this with their line manager in the first instance. A curtailment should only be agreed in exceptional circumstances, and would usually be subject to three months' notice. If the reduced period of leave means that the individual has received payment under the scheme that they would not have been entitled to had a period of leave of this length been requested at the outset, the overpayment will ordinarily need to be paid back to the University, by agreement with the Payroll Office.

Returning to work following a period of approved unpaid leave

Employees who take unpaid leave will be ordinarily entitled to return to the same position. Instances where this is not possible will only be very rare, but in such cases, alternative employment on similar (no less favourable) terms and conditions will be offered where available. Where a redundancy situation arises, normal consultation arrangements will apply, and the University Redeployment Policy will be activated.

Managers should consider how best to ensure a smooth return to work, what support may be necessary ahead of and during the return period, and should take appropriate steps to facilitate the staff members reintroduction to work. Individuals and managers are encouraged to discuss this ahead of the return, so as to identify and implement any appropriate measures.

Resignation during Leave Period

Should an individual resign within the period of their Enhanced Career Break, or decide they do not wish to return to the University at the end of the period, they are required to give notice in accordance with the terms of their contract. In the event that a member of staff fails to return to work after a period of Enhanced Career Break, or returns to work but fails to continue in employment for at least 3 months, the University reserves the right to reclaim part of, or all of, the ECB payment. This would not apply if the reason for leaving was due to redundancy of the post.

Other terms

Access to the scheme is entirely at the University's discretion and is not a contractual entitlement.

Continuous service will be maintained during the period of the career break. Members of staff will generally be expected to abide by the terms and conditions of their contract and relevant policies during their leave, including in respect of conduct, confidentiality, intellectual property and external professional activities.

Annual leave will continue to accrue as normal during the period of the Enhanced Career Break.

It is not ordinarily expected that staff will take alternative employment during their Enhanced Career Break, and any such requests will be subject to management approval. If alternative employment is approved, it is the individual's own responsibility to seek advice on any implications in respect of tax and other matters.

University property, including laptops, mobile phones and credit cards should be returned to the University for the duration of the career break, unless otherwise agreed locally between individuals and their line managers.

Staff members will be required to confirm that they have read and are agreeable to the terms outlined in this scheme when applying for an Enhanced Career Break.

Further information

Staff members who are interested in applying under this scheme are encouraged to have an initial discussion with their line manager.