



TUS

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre, An tIarlthar Láir
Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest

Career Break Policy

2026-2029

HUMAN RESOURCES

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1. Introduction

TUS Career Break Policy is intended to provide staff of the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) with details of their entitlement to Career Breaks.

2. Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures for eligible staff members of TUS who wish to apply for a career break without pay from their post.

3. Scope

All staff members of the University who have one year service in their existing, (or a previous) grade, may apply for a career break.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. Line Managers/supervisors

- Authorise leave requests in a timely manner.
- Ensure a discussion takes place with staff member in preparation for the leave.
- Ensure fair and consistent application of leave policies
- Promote an environment of equality, diversity and inclusion which support work life initiatives.

4.2. Staff

- Read and understand this policy and make themselves aware of their obligations.
- Apply for leave within defined timelines.
- Provide reasonable notice to the line manager/supervisor to take leave for a plan to be put in place to avoid/minimise any disruption to service.

5. Entitlements & Duration

5.1. A career break shall consist of leave without pay, for a period of not less than one year, and not more than five years for one of the following reasons:

- family reasons
- other domestic reasons
- travel
- educational purposes
- voluntary service overseas
- employment in the private sector or becoming self-employed

- 5.2. A staff member may apply to have a career break extended, provided the period of leave without pay, does not exceed five consecutive years, or a pro rata entitlement based on service prior to commencing career break.
- 5.3. A career break cannot be granted for the purpose of taking up any type of work in the public sector; or in an organisation where the pensions transfer network applies; or where a state superannuation scheme is in operation.
- 5.4. There must be no existing or potential conflict of interest, between the activity or employment in which the staff member proposes to engage or engages in, during their career break and their position in the University.
- 5.5. A career break for an academic staff member runs for the academic year i.e., 01 September to 31 August.

6. Application Process

- 6.1. Staff seeking a career break must submit an application for approval via the Employee Request facility on the Employee Self Service system (ESS) three months in advance of the date the career break is required.
- 6.2. The application must state the purpose for which the career break is being sought, as outlined in 5.1.
- 6.3. The line manager/supervisor will consider an application having regard to operational requirements.
- 6.4. Notification will be sent to staff member advising if their request has been approved or rejected.
- 6.5. Where the career break cannot be approved, possible alternatives should be considered and discussed with the staff member before a final decision is reached. Where a request cannot be agreed, the reason will be set out in writing to the employee by the HR Department and the line manager/supervisor's decision will be final. If the employee is dissatisfied with the decision, an appeal may be made in writing to the HR Department.

7. Refusal

- 7.1. Where the career break cannot be approved, possible alternatives should be considered and discussed with the staff member before a final decision is reached.
- 7.2. Where a request cannot be agreed, the reason will be set out in writing to the staff member by Human Resources and the line manager/supervisor's decision will be final.

- 7.3. If the staff member is dissatisfied with the decision, an appeal may be made in writing to Human Resources.

8. Application for Extension

The staff member is required to give at least three months' notice prior to the expiration date of a career break, of their intention to apply for an extension of their career break. If an extension of the career break is sought, notification of this must be forwarded in writing to Human Resources and the line manager/supervisor for approval.

9. Resumption of duty

- 9.1. At least three months prior to the end of the career break, the staff member must notify Human Resources and the line manager/supervisor, in writing that it is their intention to resume duty, following the career break. Salary will only recommence upon resumption of duties.
- 9.2. Should the University not receive this notification of the staff member's intention to return to work, the University will assume that the staff member is resigning from their position of employment, and therefore the University will have no option but to terminate their contract of employment, on the date the career break is due to end. (Note: The onus will be on the employee to keep the TU updated in terms of their contact details, while on career break.)
- 9.3. Staff returning from career break have an entitlement to resume duty at their substantive grade on the completion/termination of the approved period of the career break.
- 9.4. All staff resuming duty following career break are obliged to accept the terms and conditions of service pertaining to their grade at the time of their return.
- 9.5. Garda vetting: The University will only re-vet staff members on return from a career break in line with the TUS Staff Garda Vetting Policy and Procedures.
- 9.6. Staff members on a career break in excess of two years, will be required, prior to return, to undergo a medical assessment and be deemed medically fit by the OHP.
- 9.7. Requests to resume duty early, following a career break, may only be considered in exceptional circumstances, where there is not a negative effect, on the replacement staff member's contract. If agreed, a return-to-work date will be determined by Human Resources in conjunction with the line manager/supervisor.
- 9.8. A staff member on a career break who intends not to return to work and to resign from their post shall give the University three months' notice in writing.

10. Other considerations

- 10.1. Where a staff member is acting-up, the acting-up arrangement will cease on commencement of the career break and will not recommence on return from the career break. Such staff members will normally revert to their substantive post on resumption of duty.
- 10.2. A staff member will not accumulate service while on career break – this means that the length of the career break will not be counted as service for example:
- for increment purposes;
 - for annual leave purposes;
 - for superannuation purposes*.
- * For staff availing of a career break and who are a member of either the Education Section Superannuation Scheme [ESSS], or the Single Pension Scheme [SPS], they should contact the Pension Section in Human Resources for advice.
- 10.3. Once a professional, management and support staff member's application for career break is approved, their annual leave balance will be recalculated, up to the commencement date of the career break. Where it is found that a professional, management and support staff member has overtaken their annual leave entitlement, the overpayment amount will be brought to the attention of the staff member and the full amount owing, will be deducted from final salary, before commencement of their career break.
- 10.4. While on career break a staff member shall be eligible to apply for internally and externally advertised competitions by the University. It is the staff member's responsibility to make themselves aware of such competitions.
- 10.5. It is advisable that, staff going on career breaks, maintain entitlements to social welfare benefits. Staff can contact the Department of Social Protection for more information.

11. Compliance/Monitoring Review

This Policy will be updated as required to reflect changes in applicable laws or in relevant circular letters.

The policy will be reviewed every 4 years to reflect national policy and guidelines, and national / international benchmarks of best practice.

12. Queries

For enquiries on this policy please contact the relevant HR Office:

TUS Midlands: hr.midlands@tus.ie TUS Midwest: hr.midwest@tus.ie