

Royal Mail Group

Career Break Policy

Royal Mail Group supports employees by providing the opportunity to take a career break to pursue a personal opportunity where this is supported by a business need. This policy outlines our approach to managing career breaks at Royal Mail Group.

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Getting help

Contact your manager if you have any queries about this guide.

Managers can obtain advice by:

Calling the HR Services Advice Centre on 0845 6060603 / 5456 7100

Managers working for Parcelforce Worldwide should call 0845 6042787 / 5456 4747

For web access go to:
<https://www.psp.royalmailgroup.com>



Career Break Policy

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all employees working for Royal Mail Group Ltd. This policy does not apply to agency staff, contractors or self-employed workers.

Within this policy 'Royal Mail Group Ltd' will be referred to as 'Royal Mail Group'.

This policy is effective from 28 April 2012.

This policy does not form part of contracts of employment. Royal Mail Group reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time.

The policy

Royal Mail Group is committed to supporting employees to manage their work life balance in a number of ways. One of these ways is by providing the opportunity to request a career break.

A career break is an extended period of unpaid time away from work, which can be taken for a variety of reasons, for example to fulfil caring responsibilities for dependants.

Guiding principles

Royal Mail Group is committed to:

- Providing a process for employees to request a career break
- Fairly considering each request
- Providing clear and transparent criteria on which to base the decision on whether a career break is appropriate
- Achieving consistent and fair treatment of employees who take a career break

Expectations

Our expectations of managers

It is the manager's responsibility to:

- Understand and follow this policy and Career Leave Guide
- Operate this policy objectively, consistently and fairly
- Authorise career break requests after discussion with their manager and the relevant senior HR manager (normally the Head of HR or HR Business Partner for the area)
- Maintain contact with employees during their career break
- Support employees on their return to work

Eligibility

Employees are able to apply for a career break if they meet the following criteria:

- They have two years or more continuous service
- They have a record of good performance and satisfactory attendance
- They do not currently have an outstanding overpayment

Employees may apply for a career break of between 6 months and up to 2 years depending on their individual need.

Effect on employment

Royal Mail Group guarantees the right to return following a career break to an employee's former function or business unit only and not necessarily to the same job. In addition, the employee will return to their former or equivalent grade.

Pay

During the career break the employee will not receive any pay from Royal Mail Group. If the employee is overpaid all monies will be deducted from the employees next available pay period.

Alternative paid employment

Employees wishing to take up employment with another employer or to become self employed are not eligible to apply for a career break.

Sick pay

During the career break the employee will not have any entitlement to sick pay from Royal Mail Group.

Continuous service

During a career break the individual will remain an employee of Royal Mail Group. Therefore this period will still be considered as part of the employee's continuous service. However, this unpaid period will not be counted for the purposes of other policies, e.g. Managing the Surplus Framework (MTSF), annual holiday and long service awards.

Salary upon return

When an employee returns to work after a career break, their salary will reflect the negotiated pay rate where appropriate.

Pensions

During the career break the employee will not pay pension contributions, although they will still be a member of the pension scheme. Upon returning to work the employee can arrange to repay the missed contributions should they wish to do so.

Requesting a career break

The employee should request a career break via their manager at least three months in advance of the proposed start date using the career break request form.

Decision criteria

The manager will arrange to meet with the employee to discuss their request. In addition to the eligibility criteria noted above, the request will be considered based on the following:

- Is it likely that a suitable role will be available at the end of the break?
- Will the break place any undue strains on operational performance?
- Is the employee committed to the company and are they likely to return?
- Can the employee's work be covered?
- Will the break incur additional costs?
- Are there clear benefits to be realised by the employee and/or organisation?
- Is there a specific need to retain their services e.g. experience, skills, qualifications?
- Does the employee have an outstanding overpayment and will it be paid back in

full before the career break is due to start?

The manager will consider the request using the responses to the questions above and will make a decision to approve or decline the request after consultation with their senior HR manager.

If the request is accepted

The dates for beginning and end of the career break will be by mutual agreement between the employee and their manager. Outstanding work activities and replacement resourcing arrangements will need to be taken into account.

The manager should follow the correct process to notify HR Services of the details of the career break. The Career Break Guide contains the relevant process.

If the request is declined

Career breaks may be declined for operational or business reasons. If an employee's request is declined, their manager will provide them with reasons for the refusal in writing.

If the employee is dissatisfied with the decision in the first instance, they should raise the matter with their manager.

A career break may not always be the best option

In certain circumstances a career break may not be the most appropriate arrangement for an individual employee. Alternative arrangements could include other types of leave including annual holiday, other time off (see the Other Time Off (Special Leave) Policy) or flexible working (see the Flexible Working Policy).

In such instances alternative arrangements more appropriate to the individual case may be agreed between the employee and Royal Mail Group.

Prior to leaving for a career break

Before the start of the career break, an employee's manager must carry out a pre-break meeting. Details of the areas to cover at the meeting are contained in the Career Break Guide.

During a career break

Annual work

All employees on a career break will normally be required to work for a minimum of two weeks, which will be paid, in each year of the career break, usually in December.

Keeping in touch

Royal Mail Group will aim to ensure that some contact is maintained with employees who are on a career break.

In addition, employees taking a career break are encouraged to keep in contact with Royal Mail Group during the break.

During the course of the career break, employees must inform Royal Mail Group of any changes to their circumstances including their address, telephone number and any personal arrangements.

Organisational changes during a career break

Should any organisational changes occur Royal Mail Group will ensure that, where possible, employees who are taking a career break and who are due to return to work within three months are involved in any consultations or other appropriate procedures on the same basis as all other affected employees.

Resignation during a career break

Where an employee decides to resign during a career break, they must submit a written statement of resignation to HR Services. The contract of employment will cease from the date when the resignation is received; it is not expected that a notice period will be worked.

Returning to work

As the end of the career break approaches, typically within three months of the end date, the manager should contact the employee and discuss their return to work.

One month before the employee is due to return to work, HR Services will e-mail the employee's manager and request that an Employee Change Request form be completed. Full details of the process to follow can be found in the Career Break Guide.

Where an employee does not return to work at the agreed time at the end of their career break, this will be managed under the Leaving the Business without Notice Policy.

Where to go for more information

The Getting Help box on the front page tells you where to find further information. Guidance is also available on the Policy and Information Site on PSP and the HR pages on the intranet (non-PSP users).

In the event of any inconsistency between this policy and the supporting guide, the terms of this policy take precedence.

Forms

The following forms can be found on the Policy & Information site on PSP:

- Career Break Request Form

Related documents

You may find it useful to read the following documents (located on the Policy and Information Site on PSP and the HR pages on the intranet (non-PSP users)) in conjunction with this policy:

- Flexible Working Policy and Guide
- Other Time Off (Special Leave) Policy and Guide