

**Reduction in Hours and Unpaid Career Break Scheme**

**Document Control**

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# Introduction

* 1. The Reduction in Hours and Career Break Scheme (hereinafter ‘the Scheme’) provides a framework for employees to request to temporarily reduce their working hours or take an unpaid career break. The Scheme offers flexibility for employees who wish to pursue commitments such as training, volunteering, undertaking carer responsibilities or simply looking to improve their work-life balance.
	2. Applications to reduce hours on a permanent and contractual basis, rather than for a temporary period, should be submitted in accordance with Brunel’s Flexible Working Policy and Procedure.

# Eligibility

* 1. The Scheme is open to employees on either a permanent or fixed-term contract and in a position that is funded by university funds. If an employee’s salary is paid from an externally funded research grant or contract, agreement from the Principal Investigator (PI) and funder will be required before a request can be considered.
	2. Employees who are already part-time can apply to temporarily reduce their working hours further.
	3. The Scheme does not apply to employees who are working under a variable hour contract (e.g. HPLs, Job Shop workers) as their hours of work are already offered and accepted on a variable basis.

# Procedure

* 1. This Scheme is open for applications throughout the year.
	2. Applications for reduced hours or unpaid career breaks should be submitted using the application form in Appendix A.

* 1. Employees may wish to contact their HR Business Partner for information on the impact of reduced hours or a career break on their salary and other benefits such as pension and annual leave, before applying.
	2. Employees are encouraged to discuss their intention to apply with their manager in advance so that they can work together to explore what level and duration of reduction/break could be accommodated.
	3. Applications must be first agreed with by the employee’s manager, with duties being prioritised with their agreement if hours are reduced.
	4. Employees should submit their application form to their Head of Department/Director of Professional Services, who will complete section C and then submit the application to their HR Business Partner.
	5. HR will arrange for the application to be considered by a panel comprising:

*Academic and Research Roles:*

* Deputy Vice-Chancellor or their delegate
* Executive Dean of College
* Director of HR or Associate Director of HR

*Professional Services Roles*

* Chief Operating Officer or their delegate
* Director of Professional Services Area or Director of College Operations
* Director of HR or Associate Director of HR
	1. The panel will endeavour to respond to all requests within 10 working days.
	2. HR will notify employees of the outcome of their application and make arrangements for any necessary contract and CHIME amendments.
	3. There is no right of appeal against the decision of the panel.
	4. Employees will continue to have the option to submit a flexible working request in accordance with the Flexible Working Policy and Procedure. A maximum of two flexible working requests can be made in 12 months but requests made under this Scheme will not be taken into account.

# Criteria

* 1. The panel will consider the operational impact of the application. Consideration will also be given to the benefits for the employee and the Department. The panel will also take into account any relevant personal circumstances.
	2. Where there would be a significant impact on the ability to meet operational demands or there would be a negative impact on students or other employees, the request may be declined. In such circumstances, the panel will consider whether a compromise position can be offered, for example:
* reducing the duration of reduction in hours/career break
* delaying the start date of the reduction in hours/career break to accommodate specific operational demands
* considering a smaller reduction in part-time hours

Employees are under no obligation to accept alternative proposals made by the panel.

# Terms - Reduction in Hours

* 1. Employees may apply to reduce their working hours by a minimum of 10%, with a corresponding reduction in salary. Annual leave during the period of reduced hours will also be pro-rated. Further information on the impact of reducing hours on pay and annual leave can be obtained from HR in advance of making an application.
	2. There is no limit to the reduction in hours employees can apply for. However, staff considering a significant reduction in working hours may wish to consider taking a career break.
	3. Applications may request reduced hours for a minimum of three and a maximum of twelve months.
	4. After the period specified, staff will be expected to return to their usual working hours, or to apply to make the reduction a permanent change under the University’s Flexible Working Policy and Procedure.
	5. Employees reducing their hours should have a reduction in their workload by a proportional amount. Employees will need to discuss workload implications with their manager when they apply so that they can agree on which elements of their workload will need to be prioritised if they reduce their hours. The purpose of this Scheme is not to address existing workload difficulties; if employees have concerns about their workload demands they should discuss this with their manager so their workload is managed fairly and transparently.
	6. It is recognised that some employees may apply for reduced hours due to caring commitments or health circumstances. Making an application is a personal choice and such applications will be considered in line with the process outlined above. However, employees should not feel pressured into applying for a reduction in hours and are encouraged to explore with their manager whether other flexible working arrangements, can be accommodated if preferred.
	7. Employees who are considering reducing their hours and wishing to access some of their pension may be eligible to apply for flexible retirement in accordance with the Flexible Retirement Policy.

# Terms – Career Break

* 1. There are several personal and professional reasons why an employee may wish to take a break from employment. Career breaks can also benefit the University by retaining the experience and skills of employees who might otherwise leave the University.
	2. Employees can apply to take an unpaid career break lasting between three months and two years.
	3. Employees on a career break may be required to attend work to update their skills and familiarise themselves with changes in the work environment for one week per year of absence by arrangement with their department. Pay will be provided in accordance with the rate of pay equivalent to the salary payable prior to the period of the career break.
	4. Managers should keep in contact with employees who are on career breaks and keep them informed of important developments, for example ensuring colleagues continue to receive copies of department newsletters. Similarly, employees are encouraged to remain in contact with their Department.
	5. Continuity of employment will be preserved during the career break but entitlement to and accrual of annual increments, annual leave and other service-related benefits will be suspended during the period of leave.
	6. On their return to work, employees will receive the same salary that was applicable when the leave of absence started, increased by any appropriate cost of living awards that have been made during the period of leave.
	7. Employees will return to their original post wherever possible. If this post is no longer available the employee will be employed in a similar role on terms and conditions no less favourable than if they had not been absent. Suitable training will be provided as necessary.
	8. It is recognised that a change in the employee’s circumstances could result in a wish to return to work earlier than previously agreed as part of the career break. In such circumstances, the employee may request an earlier return by writing to their Head of Department and providing at least one month’s notice of their requested return to work date. Requests to return early will be accommodated where operationally and financially possible.
	9. Career breaks may affect pension contributions and associated benefits (e.g. death in service benefits). Employees are advised to refer to the rules of the relevant pension scheme and to take advice where necessary. Further information can be sought from the HR Directorate or the pension scheme provider.
	10. Where an employee has salary sacrifice benefits or loans (such as a car scheme loan or immigration loan), they will be responsible for continuing to make the payments during the career break. Arrangements will need to be confirmed with the HR Directorate in advance of the Career Break commencing.
	11. Where an employee decides not to return to work following eirt career break, they should resign from their position giving the appropriate notice detailed in the contract of employment.

Appendix A

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**Application Form - Reduction in Hours and Unpaid Career Break Scheme**

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| **Section A: Employee Detail and Declaration** |
| **Name** |  |
| **Job title** |  |
| **College/Directorate** |  |
| **Department** |  |
| **Salary grade** |  |
| **Current hours/FTE** |  |
| **Continuous service date** |  |
| I confirm that I have read and understood the terms of the Reduction in Hours and Career Break Scheme |
| **Employee Signature** |  | **Date** |  |

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| **Section B: Request Details** |
| **Request type** | Reduction in hours [ ]  Career Break [ ]   |
| **Proposed start date** |  |
| **Proposed duration** |  |
| **Please give below your reasons for requesting a reduction in hours or career break**All responses will be treated in strict confidence and only shared with your head of department, the panel and HR Directorate. If you would like to discuss your application in confidence before completing this form please contact your HR Business Partner. |
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***Please submit this application to your Head of Department/Director of Professional Services***

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| **Section C: Head of Department Comments** |
| **Manager Name** |  |
| **Manager Position** |  |
| Application supported [ ] Application not supported [ ]  Application supported with amendments [ ]   |
| **Reasons for supporting/ rejecting the request** |  |
| **Agreed arrangements for the period of reduced hours/career break period** (if supported or supported with amendments) |  |
| I confirm that I have read and understood the terms of the Reduction in Hours and Career Break Scheme |
| **Manager Signature** |  | **Date** |  |

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| **Section D: Human Resources** |
| **Date received in HR** |  |
| **HRBP Name** |  |
| **Verified employment details Y/N****Any additional information/comments that may assist Panel** |  |
| **Date circulated to Panel** |  |

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| **Section E: Panel Consideration** |
| **Panel Chair Name and Position** |  |
| **Panel date** |  |
| Application supported [ ] Application not supported [ ]  Application supported with further amendments [ ]   |
| **Decision Rationale** (including any further proposed amendments) |  |
| **HR Representative Signature and Date** |  |
| **Employee and Manager informed of the decision** |  |
| **Date Passed to HR Employment Services for CHIME/Contract** |  |