

Career Break

Guide for employees

This guide outlines how eligible employees can apply for a career break and how to manage this process.

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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

Guide for employees

Overview

This is the guide to career breaks in Royal Mail Group.

This guide explains how an employee can request a career break and the process to follow before, during and afterwards.

This should be read in conjunction with the Career Break Policy.

Who is eligible?

Employees can apply for a career break if they:

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

Employees may apply for a career break of six months up to two years, depending on their individual needs. If a break of six months or less has been requested, the manager may consider offering other time off, if this is more appropriate.

How do employees apply?

Career break request form

The employee should submit a Career break request form to their manager at least three months before the proposed start of the break.

The manager should review the request to see if it is operationally viable and check the employee's eligibility, using the criteria set out in the Career Leave Policy. The manager should consult their senior HR manager (normally the Head of HR for their area) if eligibility may be a problem, and also for final authorisation.

How to check if an employee has an outstanding overpayment

To check if an employee has an outstanding overpayment, or when repayment is due to be completed, please e-mail HRSC Overpayments with the name, pay number and requested start date of career break.

Request approved

If the manager approves the request, they should advise the employee in writing. The manager must go into PSP/Manage My Team/Employee Change Request and select Employee Change Request (ECR) Career Break. The ECR should be submitted to HR Services at least one pay period before the career break is due to start.

When completing the ECR, managers must include:

- In the comments box the name of the senior HR manager (Head of HR or HR Business Partner) who has authorised the career break
- An indicative end date of the career leave

HR Services will send the employee a career break entitlement letter and cancel the employee's pay for the period agreed. If HR Services is notified late about the start date of the career break and the employee is overpaid, all monies will be deducted from the employees next available pay period.

Request rejected

If the request is rejected, the manager should meet the employee to discuss this and offer alternative options, such as flexible working (e.g. change in hours), Other Time

off or annual holiday, where possible.

The manager should confirm the decision in writing to the employee.

Employees can use the Grievance Policy if they believe their request has not been dealt with appropriately.

Before leaving on a career break

Before the career break starts, the manager must carry out a pre-break meeting with the employee.

The meeting should cover:

- How they will keep in touch during the break
- Reminding the employee they must keep their contact details up to date via their manager (e.g. address, phone number)
- Name of a contact person
- Arrangements for any periods of work, e.g. that they will be required to work during Christmas pressure

A written record of the pre-break meeting should be placed on the employee's personal file.

During a career break

Keeping in touch

During the career break the manager should ensure the employee is kept informed of changes such as restructures, voluntary redundancies or office re-signs.

They should also tell employees how to apply for a new role/promotion through the online recruitment site.

The employee should make the manager aware of changes to their address, phone number or personal circumstances.

Annual work

All employees on a career break will normally be required to work for a minimum of two weeks each year, usually in December. Employees will be paid for any weeks worked. The manager should contact the employee to make arrangements for this and instruct HR Services to make payment for the weeks worked.

Save as You Earn (SAYE)

Employees contributing to the SAYE share scheme will need to contact Equiniti (0800 012 12 13) regarding payment options whilst on career break.

Returning to work

As the end of the career break approaches (typically three months before the end), the manager should contact the employee to discuss their return to work.

One month before the employee is due to return, HR Services will e-mail the employee's manager and request that an ECR form is completed.

This will be for one of the following options:

- To request an extension of the career break within the limits of the scheme and inform HR Services of the new return date (This must be approved by the manager)
- Confirm the individual will be returning to work and, where appropriate, confirm their new position and hours of work

- End the employment if the individual has resigned

When returning to work after a career break, the manager should welcome the employee back by meeting with them on their first day. The meeting should cover areas such as:

- Health and safety induction, e.g. reminding them of what is expected of them
- Tour of the office if anything has changed since they went on leave
- Summary of things they have missed while on career leave, e.g. changes to processes or equipment
- Introducing them to any new colleagues
- Update on any changes within the Royal Mail Group they should be aware of
- Talking about the job role and any training that has been arranged
- Employee's salary and holiday entitlement
- The opportunity to raise any questions or concerns

Changing a career break

The employee may request an amendment or extension to their career break up to a maximum of two years in total. In these circumstances, managers should follow the steps outlined in 'How do employees apply?' section of this guide.

Where to go for more information

The Getting help box on the front of this guide tells you where to find more information. Guidance is also available on the Policy and Information Site on PSP or the HR pages of the intranet (non-PSP users).