



University of  
St Andrews

## Secondment

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1.5	Section 8.4 updated to clarify that cover posts (e.g. due to a secondment) will require WPG approval.  Moved onto new policy template.	Published	Lisa Stewart HR	01/10/2025

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## **1. Statement**

- 1.1 The University is committed to developing work practices and policies which support lifelong learning, the ongoing development of employees and succession planning. Secondments and shadowing are effective methods of achieving this. The University also recognises the value of encouraging secondments when it proves to be of mutual benefit to the employee and organisation.

## **2. Purpose**

- 2.1 This policy sets out the University's approach to secondments, the basis on which they may be taken and how they should be managed.

## **3. Scope and eligibility**

- 3.1 This policy applies to all employees. This policy does not apply to standard/open-ended advertised posts.
- 3.2 Academic employees wishing to take leave of absence for academic purposes which are directly linked to their work, should refer to the [Research Impact Paid Leave Procedure](#).
- 3.3 All employees can apply for a secondment opportunity, provided they are not currently on secondment and do not have a live disciplinary or capability warning. In addition, the employee must have at least 2 years' continuous service with the University before the start of the proposed secondment. In exceptional circumstances, applications may be considered from employees who have less than two years' service, on a case-by-case basis. Approval will be at the line manager's discretion.

## **4. Definition**

- 4.1 A secondment is defined as a tripartite agreement where the 3 parties are:
- 4.1.1 The individual seconded (seconded)
  - 4.1.2 The School/Unit/organisation in which the seconded was originally employed (seconding employer)
  - 4.1.3 The School/Unit/organisation in which the seconded is placed for the secondment (host organisation)

- 4.2 To qualify as a secondment, the secondee's employment with the seconding employer will continue after the secondment, subject to the conditions laid out in [Section 9](#).
- 4.3 Secondments will be either:
- 4.3.1 **Internal:** Within the University, to a different School, Unit or function e.g. the University advertises an internal secondment opportunity or a fixed term vacancy which an employee may wish to apply for on a seconded basis.
  - 4.3.2 **External (out):** From the University to an external organisation (e.g. a university employee wishes to work in another organisation external to the University on a seconded basis).
  - 4.3.3 **External (in):** From an external organisation to the University.
- 4.4 The duration of a secondment will normally be between 3 months and 24 months. Where a secondment is for more than 12 months initially or is extended to more than 12 months in total, the University reserves the right to place the secondee on their return into a different role, but at the equivalent grade and job type as set out in [section 9](#).

## 5. Salary

- 5.1 Whilst on secondment the employee's salary will be paid from their host organisation's or Host School/Unit's budget for the duration of the secondment to allow the seconding employer to backfill if need be.

## 6. Aims

- 6.1 This policy has been developed to enable employees to develop and enhance their knowledge, skills and experience in another area within the University, or elsewhere, in order that they utilise these skills in their substantive role on their return. Longer term benefits to the University include forging stronger inter-relationships between Schools, Units, Departments and external organisations whilst providing for an environment that will allow for succession planning. It is also likely to be of benefit to the employee in terms of their future career aspirations.

## 7. Principles

- 7.1 When the secondment is internal, Human Resources will confirm this in writing to the employee. An external secondment will involve a secondment agreement being set up which will be shared with the employee.

- 7.2 If the secondment is to an external body, this will normally mean that the individual will remain an employee of the University whilst working for another organisation for a defined period. The employee retains the University terms and conditions including continuous service and pension provision. However, local arrangements within the host organisation will be confirmed in a written secondment agreement which will be agreed between the University, employee and host organisation.
- 7.3 Line managers are generally expected to encourage and support employee applications for secondment although this will not always be possible. In circumstances where the secondment would be to the detriment of the department or would disadvantage service delivery, then the secondment may not be authorised.
- 7.4 The line manager and Head of School/Unit will have the final decision about the authorisation of a secondment.
- 7.5 Where the host employer does not recognise trade unions or where TUs do not exist within the organisation then the secondee may be accompanied by TU officials to relevant meetings.

## **8. Procedures**

- 8.1 The employee wishing to apply for a secondment should discuss the matter with their line manager before making an application. The line manager should then discuss the matter with the [HR Business Partner](#) if they have any concerns before continuing any in depth discussion with the employee.
- 8.2 The standard selection process will be followed thereafter. This will normally involve a competency-based interview with possible additional selection tests. As with all standard selection processes, the decision of the selection panel is final.
- 8.3 If successful, the employee, recruiting manager and current line manager will negotiate a mutually acceptable start date. Responsibilities for each of these parties can be found in the guidance notes located in [Appendix A](#).
- 8.4 Normal recruitment procedures will apply to backfilling any posts made temporarily vacant by the secondment e.g. advanced approval from Workforce Planning Group.
- 8.5 The employee will receive a secondment agreement for the period of the secondment which will set out in writing contractual details such as duration, salary and main duties.
- 8.6 Should any issue arise during the period of the secondment and the host/seconding employer, or the employee wishes to invoke an HR policy

(e.g. absence, disciplinary, capability, grievance), in all situations the seconding employer's policies will be utilised. The host organisation will be asked for input to that process. In cases of gross misconduct, this will be considered on individual circumstances but may result in termination from both the seconding and host employers.

- 8.7 Underperformance during the secondment will be subject to standard capability procedures which will be invoked and managed by the host organisation. The seconding employer's capability procedure will be utilised. If, having followed the capability procedure, the employee continues to perform to an unacceptable standard, the secondment will end and the secondee will return to their substantive post.
- 8.8 If the secondee wishes to end a secondment prematurely, they should discuss reasons for this with both the seconding employer and host organisation. Standard notice periods will apply, as laid out in the contract of employment. However, if the substantive role has been back-filled, it is likely a 3-month notice period will be required on the part of the employee. If circumstances change within the host organisation or seconding employer and the secondment must end prematurely, the secondee will be consulted about this.
- 8.9 The secondee will report to a specified manager based at the host organisation (host manager) for the duration of the secondment for the purposes of ongoing task allocation, sickness and annual leave reporting and performance review.
- 8.10 Development objectives must be agreed by the secondee's host manager and secondee, then documented, prior to the start of the secondment. The seconding manager must also be consulted and involved in this process. Secondments into the University will be subject to similar arrangements whereby the individual will undertake review meetings.

## **9. Returning to substantive post**

- 9.1 The secondee will have the right to return to their substantive post at the end of the secondment, should the duration of secondment be 12 months or less. If either party wish to extend the secondment beyond the originally agreed date, then this needs the approval of the seconding manager. Should the secondment be greater than 12 months, or the secondment be extended to more than 12 months in total, the University reserves the right to redeploy the secondee into a different role at the end of the secondment. This role will be equivalent in grade and job type to the substantive role.
- 9.2 If the post is to become standard, then the normal recruitment process will be adhered to unless there is justification for following an alternative course of action.

- 9.3 The line manager from the seconding employer is responsible for keeping the secondee up to date with all workplace developments or changes within the seconding employer to ensure a smooth return to their substantive post.
- 9.4 Where there has been reorganisation or redundancy of the secondee's substantive role during the secondment, the University will consult with the secondee about the impact of the changes and options which may be available. The University will seek suitable alternative employment should the secondee's substantive role no longer exist and normal redundancy procedures will be followed in these circumstances.

## 10. Version control

- 10.1 This policy is not contractual and may be amended by the University from time to time.
- 10.2 This policy will be reviewed regularly in conjunction with the University's recognised Trade Unions and changes implemented where required. Any feedback on policy content should be directed in the first instance to the [HR Policy Officer](#) who will consider this as part of the review.

Version number	Purpose or changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and School or unit	Date
1.0	Migration of the policy to the Governance Zone	Published	Lisa Stewart Human Resources	03/07/2019
1.1	Change to the classification from internal to public	Published	Lisa Stewart Human Resources	23/10/2019
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1.3	Change to review date	Published.	Lisa Stewart Human Resources	29/08/2023
1.4	Amending the expiry date only to coincide with policy review consultation dates.	Published.	Lisa Stewart Human Resources	26/09/2024
1.5	Section 8.4 updated to clarify that cover posts (e.g. due to a	Published	Lisa Stewart HR	01/10/2025

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## **Appendix A: Secondment Guidance Notes**

The following provides a brief overview of responsibilities which line managers may find useful when dealing with secondments.

### **Secondee**

- Maintains contact with their seconding manager and informs them of their progress on secondment.
- Meets with their host and seconding managers at least 3 months before the scheduled end of the secondment to discuss reintegration. For example, the Secondee may wish to attend team meetings in their Seconding School/Unit or have a phased return to their substantive role.
- Provides evaluation feedback at the end of their secondment to both seconding employer and host organisation.

### **Seconding Head of School/Unit**

- Final sign off to approve the secondment.

### **Seconding employer line manager**

- Responsible for agreeing how the workload of the secondee will be handled in their absence (e.g. split between the rest of the team; hosting another member of staff on secondment; recruiting a temporary/casual member of staff.)
- Maintains contact with the secondee to monitor the secondment and inform them of developments in their seconding School/Unit.
- Where possible, provides opportunities for the secondee to use their newly developed skills, knowledge and experience when they return to their seconding School/Unit.
- Meets with the secondee and host manager at least 3 months before the scheduled end of the secondment to discuss reintegration. For example, the secondee may wish to attend team meetings in their seconding School/Unit or have a phased return to their substantive role.

### **Host organisation line manager**

- Conducts regular update meetings with the secondee.
- Conducts annual reviews with the secondee and shares the completed form with the seconding manager.
- Meets with the secondee and seconding manager at least 3 months before the scheduled end of the secondment to discuss reintegration. For example, the

employee may wish to attend team meetings in their seconding School/Unit or have a phased return to their substantive role.