



Career Break Policy

Policy document

Version number: 2.0

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Next review date: May 2027

Policy Owner: People, Culture & Workplace Director

Approved by: Policy and Management Board

Background

Ofcom operates a Career Break policy which has been developed as part of our commitment to be a flexible employer and as a means of helping us to promote development and retain valued colleagues.

Ofcom recognises that you may wish to take a break from work for many reasons, such as to pursue an academic or non-academic endeavour.

All Ofcom colleagues and managers are required to be aware of, and act in line with this policy as this policy applies to all colleagues directly employed by Ofcom. The eligibility criteria is outlined below.

A career break is an extended period of unpaid leave which can be of benefit to both colleagues and Ofcom.

A career break could be for a multitude of things, such as personal reasons like fulfilling caring responsibilities, travelling, or for reasons of personal development, such as pursuing an academic endeavour, or to write a book.

Please note: if the purpose of your leave is to care for a child, you could consider if Parental Leave is more suitable, or if you have other caring responsibilities, you may consider the Carers' Policy. These policies are more appropriate for shorter leave periods relating to caring responsibilities and more information can be found in the relevant policies.

Please see our Family friendly policies and time off policies for more information and your CPM will support you regarding the leave type that is most appropriate in the circumstances.

Where to get advice & support

If you would like to discuss anything in relation to this policy, either for yourself or as a CPM, please don't hesitate to contact the [Employee Relations & Policy Team](#).

You can also access a range of other support through our [Thrive@Ofcom](#) programme.

Eligibility Criteria

You can request a career break once you have one year's continuous service, including successful completion of your probationary period. In exceptional circumstances, career break applications before this may be reviewed and approved by the P&T Director.

We will accommodate requests wherever possible, but approval will be subject to the operational needs of the business area. There is no automatic contractual right to a career break. The approval of any career break and its length is at Ofcom's absolute discretion. We reserve the right to refuse a request, especially if we cannot reasonably expect to offer you a job at the same level on return. Additionally, a career break can be used for any purpose, except taking up paid employment without the express permission of Ofcom. We would consider factors such as if this presented a conflict of interest. An example that may be permitted is a colleague receiving a stipend from a charity to do voluntary work.

Duration

You can apply for a career break of between 3 months and 2 years. You can combine it with annual leave, but your total time away from work must not exceed 2 years.

The leave must be taken in one continuous block.

Any unpaid leave for less than 3 months should be considered under the [Unpaid Discretionary Leave policy](#).

Application process

In the first instance, you should discuss your request with your CPM. You should then submit your request for a career break to your CPM on Workday at least three months in advance of the proposed start date.

If there are exceptional circumstances that mean that you are unable to give three months' notice, you should discuss this with your CPM.

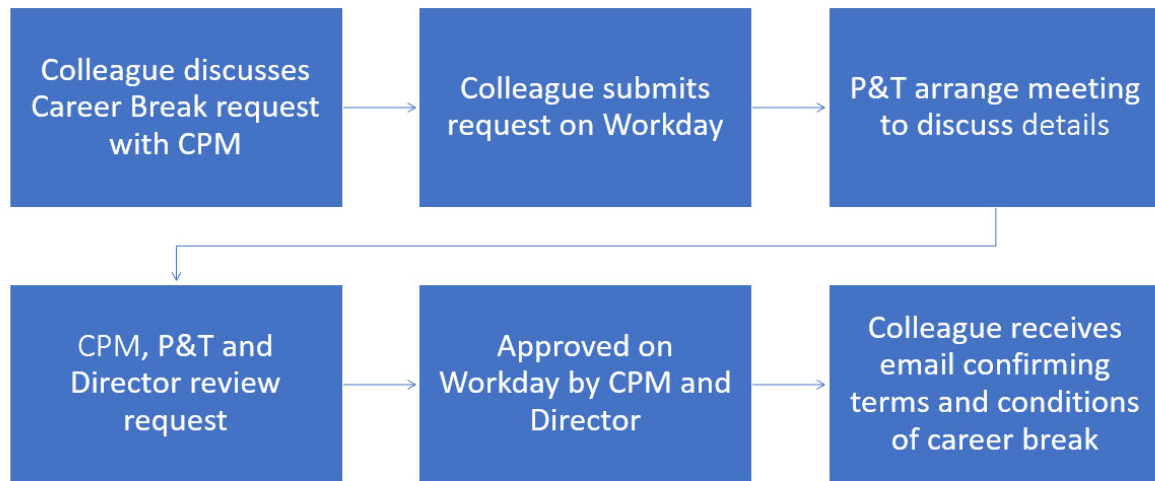
All applications must be signed off by your CPM and relevant Director, with support from the Group Director and P&T.

Reviewing Applications for Career Break Requests

As detailed above, the approval of any career break and its length is at Ofcom's absolute discretion. All requests for Career Breaks will be carefully reviewed. Your CPM, Director and P&T will review:

- The number and length of any previous career breaks you have taken
- That it has been at least 1 year since you returned from a previous career break
- The operational needs of Ofcom; Approval is subject to the agreement of Ofcom taking into account the impact on the business, the need for continuity, the availability of colleagues to cover your absence and any special projects or work you are undertaking

- The need to retain your skills, knowledge, and experience, and
- The potential benefits of the proposed career break for both Ofcom and you.



Pay and Benefits during a career break

A Career break will be unpaid – your pay, Flexible Benefits allowance and Pension Allowance will cease for the duration of the career break.

All standard Choices benefits (Life Assurance, Group Income Protection Insurance, Private Medical Insurance and Annual Health Check) will cease for the entire duration of your career break. For clarity, this includes any variation to standard choices benefits, that is, if you have flexed any of your standard benefits up or down, the chosen level will also cease.

Any other benefits that you have selected through Ofcom Choices (e.g., critical illness insurance, personal accident insurance) will also cease for the entire duration of your career break.

It is your responsibility to ensure that in the absence of standard or additional benefits provided through Ofcom Choices you are adequately protected during your career break. There may be implications of certain benefits ceasing. It is your responsibility to conduct a risk assessment of the potential impacts, the table in the [Benefit Impact Guidance toolkit](#) gives details of the impacts for each benefit. You can also seek advice from the P&T benefits administrator on your individual benefits package and the implications for you.

Returning from unpaid leave of more than 4 weeks is considered to be a life event. Please refer to the Choices portal for further details regarding what can be changed under each Life Event.

You will continue to accrue your holiday entitlement through the period of your unpaid leave. This entitlement includes your standard holiday, public holidays, long service holiday award and one additional day's holiday for your birthday.

Any carried over leave should be taken at the end of your career break. You also won't be able to carry any leave over and above the normal allowed limits, so you should also plan to use your

holiday entitlement from the current holiday year too. This may mean you need to take some of this prior to returning too. Please speak with your CPM to ensure you do not lose any unused holiday allowance.

If you are based in an office in England or Wales, you are usually provided with an additional day's leave over the Christmas and New Year period to ensure parity with colleagues based in Scotland and Northern Ireland who have additional Bank Holiday allocation throughout the year. If you are a colleague based in an office in England or Wales on a career break during this period and this is provided, you will accrue this additional discretionary day.

Any outstanding season ticket loan or other payments owing will be addressed based on the amount owed and remaining time left on the loan on a case by case basis, an appropriate repayment plan for the duration of the loan will be agreed.

If on career break at the point Ofcom is reviewing salaries, you will be eligible for consideration for a salary review. Any One Ofcom bonus payment would be pro-rated and based on the period you worked for Ofcom during the performance year (1 April – 31 March, i.e., you could not earn a bonus to cover time whilst you are on career break). Please note eligibility criteria applies and can be found on the relevant Hive pages.

Contractual status during a career break

For the duration of the career break you will remain an employee of Ofcom and the contractual relationship as outlined in your Contract of Employment will still apply. You must continue to adhere to the terms of both the general and personal statements, particularly regarding confidentiality.

You are not expected to undertake any paid work for Ofcom during your career break.

Continuity of employment will be preserved, and you will have the right to return to a suitable role at the same level and pay. Every effort will be made to ensure you return to the same role, and your CPM will keep you updated on any developments, however, in very exceptional circumstances, you may need to return to a different role.

Please note that if there is a restructure that affects your role while you are on a career break, your CPM will contact you to ensure that you are made aware of any change and that you are included in any consultation process.

Keeping in touch during your career break

Before you go on a career break, you must provide up-to-date contact details to your CPM and agree how you can be contacted during this period (e.g., by phone, email or in writing).

You will be contacted by your CPM a reasonable amount of time before the end of your career break to discuss the arrangements for your return to work. This will depend on how long you have been on leave but is likely to be around 3 months before you are due to return, unless on a shorter career break.

Access to Ofcom ICT

For the duration of your career break, your access to Ofcom ICT systems will be removed, and you must return your Ofcom ICT equipment to ICT or your CPM before you go on a career break. Your CPM will make the arrangements with ICT to reinstate your account and prepare ICT equipment for collection on your first day of returning to work.

Before you go on a career break, your CPM must inform ICT at least **five working days** before your career break is due to begin by submitting a 'Leavers' form.

Your CPM must contact the ICT Service Desk at least **a week** before you're due to return to request to reinstate your account and prepare your ICT equipment.

Version history

Version	Date	Reviewed by	Summary of changes
1.0	September 2012		Old Policy
1.1	April 2013		Current policy (amended to clarify benefits during unpaid leave)
1.2	January 2014		Current policy (amended to align wording re: benefits during unpaid leave to parental leave policy)
2.0.	April 2023		Full review: Revised Career Break policy supersedes Unpaid Leave Framework.
2.0	May 2024		Annual review – no updates.
2.0	July 2025		Annual review – no updates.