

Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

Document Name: Career Break Policy
Document No: 6.1.5 (original)
Effective Date: 15th February 2019
Written By: Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor
Approved By: +Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin



Operating under the patronage of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, the Diocese of Elphin aims to provide staff members with a safe, caring and supportive Christian environment in which to carry out their work. Work objectives are to be advanced with due regard to the needs and dignity of each staff member and with due regard for the individuals and communities the diocese serves.

This document outlines the Diocesan policy on Career Breaks. It is applicable to parishes, offices, agencies and any entity operating under the governance of the Diocese of Elphin (hereafter referred to as "the employer"). Line Managers (Bishop, Priests, Deacons, Religious, Lay Personnel who supervise staff members) are responsible for communicating this policy and having it signed off by their staff member(s).

Introduction

"The employer" is pleased to support staff members to take unpaid career breaks in order to provide them with the opportunity to develop their knowledge, broaden their experience or improve their work-life balance.

A career break is an agreed period of absence from work for:

- career development;
- attendance at an educational course;
- carrying out full-time voluntary or charitable work;
- pursuing sporting activities;
- international travel;
- domestic/personal reasons.

Eligibility

Staff members with 2 years' service who are interested in taking a career break should discuss the issue with their manager in the first instance. "The employer" is keen to support staff members who are interested in taking such breaks. However, "the employer" retains the right to refuse a career break or to propose an alternative time period, in order to meet ongoing pastoral and resourcing requirements.

During a career break, you do not have to attend for work and the contract of employment is suspended. The period is regarded as continuous for the purposes of pension entitlements, but the period of the break is not considered reckonable and therefore is not used for the calculation of any benefits. The career break period is also reckonable for the purposes of calculating redundancy payment entitlement.

Duration

Career breaks can be taken for a minimum of 3 months to a maximum of 2 years. You may apply for an extension of up to 3 months, which will be considered by "the employer". However, "the employer" retains the right to refuse such an extension.

Conditions

Your period of career break will not count as service for accruing annual leave or other benefits. However, you will continue to receive your normal public holiday entitlements for the first 13 weeks of your career break period.

You must continue to adhere to the confidentiality policy for the duration of the career break period. The onus is on the staff member to provide "the employer" with any change of contact details during the career break.

Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

Document Name: Career Break Policy
Document No: 6.1.5 (original)
Effective Date: 15th February 2019
Written By: Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor
Approved By: +Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin



Return to work

You must give 2 months' notice of your intention to resume normal working. You will return to work at your existing level. "The employer" will endeavour to appoint you to the same section in which you were working before the break. However, this is not guaranteed. An application for an early return from a career break will not normally be considered by "the employer".

Applications

Application forms must be submitted 3 months before the proposed date of commencement to your line manager.

Note

- Staff members intending to work in other employment during the break have to receive prior written permission.
- "The employer" will not accept responsibility for any injury sustained in whatever manner during the period of your absence.
- Prior to the commencement of the career break, you are required to:
 - ensure all outstanding annual leave is cleared;
 - research personally your own position regarding taxation and PRSI as a result of your break;
 - arrange payment of health/life insurance contributions during the break if you want to continue your cover (where applicable);
 - confirm suspension of pension contributions (where applicable).

For further information please contact:

HR Advisor
Elphin Diocesan Office
St. Mary's
Temple Street
Sligo F91 KTX2
Email: hr@elphindiocese.ie
Mobile: 087 240 4882

Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

Document Name: Career Break Policy
Document No: 6.1.5 (original)
Effective Date: 15th February 2019
Written By: Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor
Approved By: +Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin



Appendix 6.1.5(a) Career break confirmation letter

Dear _____

I am pleased to confirm that "the employer" has agreed to grant you an unpaid career break for _____ months/years for the purpose of _____. This will commence on _____ and end on _____, a period of _____ months/years.

Your career break is subject to the following conditions:

- The career break has been granted to you in respect of the dates above.
- An early return from this break will not be possible once the break has commenced.
- You must confirm to me in writing not later than 2 months before the end-date that you plan to return.
- Failure to give the required notice, or not to return to work on the agreed date, will be taken as an intention not to resume duty.
- Your contract of employment will be deemed to be suspended from the date on which you commence the career break.
- "The employer" undertakes to take you back onto the staff at the end of the career break if due notice of your return has been given.
- "The employer" will endeavour to appoint you to the same location that you worked in before the break. However, this cannot be guaranteed.

Please confirm your acceptance of the terms and conditions of your career break by signing the enclosed copy of this letter and returning it to me.

I hope that you find this career break both beneficial and rewarding.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
 (On behalf of the employer)

Acceptance

I _____ confirm my acceptance of an unpaid career break under the terms and conditions contained in this letter and in the accompanying career break policy.

Signed: _____ Date _____
 (Staff member)