

Step Ups and Internal Secondments Policy

Policy Statement

This policy will ensure a fair and equitable approach in situations where an individual(s) may be asked to temporarily work, either wholly or as a significant part of their role, in a higher pay grade for a significant period of time.

This policy applies to Durham University staff grades 1 – 10.

The Human Resources (HR) Business Partner team can provide support in the implementation and application of this policy.

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The Policy

1.0 Overview

1.1 A Secondment or Step Up may occur, usually - but not exclusively - in the following circumstances:

- A vacancy has arisen that has not yet been filled but there is a requirement for the post to be covered;
- A member of staff is temporarily undertaking another role but will revert to their substantive role at a defined point in time;
- A member of staff is on long term sick or it is envisaged that they will be;
- A member of staff is on statutory (maternity/paternity/adoption/shared parental) leave;
- A member of staff has taken a career break.

1.2 Step Ups or secondments are **not** to be used to cover annual leave or when

- the role of 'Deputy' is included in the job description or job title of the member of staff seeking an acting up payment;
- the additional responsibilities are regarded as a development opportunity;
- the duties taken over are consistent with the current grade of the member of staff who is providing cover e.g. a member of housekeeping staff taking over the cleaning duties of a team leader *but not the other supervisory responsibilities* as these may be covered on a temporary basis by a supervisor.

1.3 Staff in grades 1 - 5 who are considering applying for, or accepting, a Secondment opportunity at grade 6 or higher have a responsibility to make themselves aware of the potential pensions impact referred to in [section 9.0](#) and discuss with a member of the pension team if they have any queries.

1.4 Staff should normally expect to resume their normal job on the same terms and conditions once the Step Up/Secondment has ended, except where this was a fixed term appointment. Where the department considers that this is not operationally possible, this must be discussed with the HR Business Partner Team before any arrangement is entered into.

2.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

2.1 **Step Up (to be used for temporary arrangements of less than 12 months)** –

A Step Up is a temporary move into a higher graded position, undertaking all, or a significant majority of the duties of that role. This is likely to be for a short term or unknown length (e.g. due to sickness) and the member of staff is paid an allowance

to the grade of the role being carried out (the allowance is non pensionable) in addition to their usual salary. For example, if a grade four member of staff is carrying out the full or significant majority of the duties of a role of a grade six, they will commence on the bottom spine pay of grade six. If a member of staff is carrying out less than a significant majority of the role, remuneration will be calculated relative to the higher level work being carried out, as agreed with HR.

2.2 Staff undertaking Step Ups do not need to be selected through advertising, rationale for appointments can be made following management consideration of the pool of potential staff, versus the requirements of the role. Informal discussions with staff may take place where more than one member of staff is identified as suitable. The member of staff will retain the terms and conditions of their substantive position. The step up payment will be paid monthly as a non-pensionable amount in addition to the monthly salary.

2.3 **Secondment (to be used for temporary arrangements of 12 – 24 months)** –

A Secondment is a temporary move into another role. A Secondment may be a planned move, for a longer and more defined period. Selection for these roles is normally through internal advertising for applicants to apply, and the member of staff moves wholly to the new role with full terms and conditions including pension (but excluding pensions if the secondment is for someone in grade 1 to 5 being seconded to a post in grade 6 or above, in which case the Terms and Conditions (T&C's) relating to pensions will remain as per the substantive role). The full role is performed and the member of staff is paid at the evaluated grade for the role. The member of staff will move to the terms and conditions that relate to the grade of the Secondment position, and the whole salary will be pensionable.

3.0 Guidance

3.1 It is a Department/Faculty/College's responsibility to agree if a Step Up or Secondment is available and to confirm that budget for the additional expense is available and fully approved. No agreement should be entered into until approval is gained. Advice is available from their HR Business Partner Team. Consideration should be given to the following:

- If the work can be postponed until the absent employee returns, or the vacancy is filled on a permanent basis;
- If management objectives require that the work must be undertaken by a specified employee, or they may be shared amongst others as part of their standard duties;
- An assessment to consider if there is likely to be a University employee competent to take on the duties and responsibilities, or if there may be a need to look externally;
- Where possible to identify a likely timeframe that a Step Up or Secondment may be required. This will help identify which option is most suitable.

4.0 Equality

4.1 In applying this policy, the University will have due regard for the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and provide for good relations between people of diverse groups, in particular on the grounds of the following characteristics protected by the Equality Act (2010); age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. The University has an Equality and Diversity team who are available to provide advice and guidance - <https://www.dur.ac.uk/equality.diversity/>

5.0 The Procedure

5.1 Consideration should be given in relation to how the Step Up or Secondment should be advertised, and the groups of staff to be included.

5.2 If the Step Up/Secondment role later becomes available (following budgetary approval) on an open ended basis the member of staff undertaking the initial Step Up/Secondment cannot move to the open ended role unless they had been appointed through a competitive recruitment process.

5.3 Where this has not occurred, any subsequent open ended role that becomes available must then be filled through a competitive recruitment process.

5.4 If a situation arises where a manager believes that a post should be ring-fenced or restricted for a specific individual(s), this should be discussed with the HR Business Partner Team in the first instance.

6.0 Appointing to a Step Up

6.1 Advertising may take place across the Team, Department, Faculty, College or University, depending on the role in question and the skills/experience required. A form of selection process should take place in order to select the appropriate candidate to move temporarily into the position. The rationale for selection should be documented.

6.2 On occasion it may be that there is only one appropriate candidate within the University. Where this is the case, it should be documented how this has been determined, and the appropriate HR Business Partner should be consulted before appointment into the step up.

6.3 Where more than one member of staff may have the skills/experience to undertake those duties a short form of selection process should be used. This should establish the essential skills/experience required, and carrying out a paper based and documented evaluation of each potential candidate against those

essential and desirable criteria for the role. On occasion it may be more appropriate to hold short informal discussions with each potential candidate, based on the identified criteria, to establish a score against the criteria.

7.0 Appointing to a Secondment

7.1 A form of selection process should take place in order to select the appropriate candidate to move temporarily into the position. The rationale for selection should be documented.

7.2 On occasion it may be that there is only one appropriate candidate within the University. Where this is the case, it should be documented how this has been determined, and the appropriate HR Business Partner should be consulted before any decision on the appointment is made.

7.3 For a Secondment, especially where the role may turn into an open ended position, it may be appropriate to fill the position using a full and open competitive recruitment process to determine the successful candidate for the opportunity.

5.3 Duration

7.4 A Step Up or Secondment to a post in a higher grade should not be for a period of less than one month.

7.5 A Step Up will be used for any period of less than 12 months. If during the Step Up it becomes known that the remaining period is likely to exceed 12 months in total, this should be discussed with the HR Business Partner team

7.6 A Secondment will be used for any period of 12 - 24 months.

7.7 The maximum period of the Step Up or Secondment would not normally exceed 24 months, except in cases where the substantive post holder is absent for a longer period, for example, if on a career break or long term sickness absence. Where the maximum term is likely to be exceeded this should be referred to the HR Business Partner Team.

7.8 The Department/College where the post holder is substantively employed must agree to the terms and length of the agreement.

8.0 Remuneration

8.1 Pay should normally be set at the minimum point of the pay grade of the role stepping up or seconded to. However, if this would result in little or no increase in gross pay, consideration may be given to paying the individual up to two incremental points in the new pay band. This will need to be approved by the UEC lead and HR.

8.2 Where a member of staff moves on Secondment from grade 1-5 to a grade 6 or higher position, this will mean they will move to the terms and conditions for the higher graded role excluding pensions in which case the terms and conditions relating to pensions will remain as per the substantive role.

8.3 A Step Up arrangement will involve retaining the conditions of service of their substantive grade, while receiving an additional non - pensionable pay allowance in recognition of the short term increase in responsibilities.

8.5 A secondee will move to all conditions of service and allowances for the higher graded post. A contract will be issued to reflect the terms and conditions of the seconded role. The higher rate of pay for a Secondment will be fully pensionable, within their current pension scheme.

9.0 Pensions

9.1 During a secondment, which is normally for a period of 12 months or more, the full salary will be pensionable within their current pension scheme.

9.2 Where an individual is seconded from a grade 1-5 post into a grade 6 or higher, the individual will remain in Durham University Pension Scheme (DUPS) but the higher salary from the secondment will be pensionable. If the secondment post becomes permanent then at that point the individual will move to the University Superannuation Scheme (USS).

9.3 A Step Up, which should be for a period of less than 12 months, will mean the individual remains a member of, or eligible to be a member of (in conjunction with pension scheme rules) any pension scheme of which they are currently a member. They are not eligible for the pension scheme at the grade to which they are in a Step Up arrangement.

9.4 Pension scheme rules will continue to govern staff eligibility to join or re-join those pensions; this will be in conjunction with University policy on eligibility due to grade.

10.0 Increment Date

10.1 Whilst on a secondment, you will receive an increment on the anniversary of your appointment to the seconded role.

10.2 When the Step Up/Secondment period has ended with no permanent move to the higher grade, the individual will retain their substantive post increment date and any increments gained during their seconded post. The spine point they return to will take into account the time spent on Step Up/Secondment.

10.3 Should the individual be confirmed into the Step Up/Secondment post at a later date, and more than 12 months after taking up the seconded post, then the increment date will change to the date at which the Step Up/Secondment began.

11.0 Confirmation into Post

11.1 Where an individual is undertaking a Secondment/Step Up, and was appointed to the role via a competitive recruitment process, and the post becomes available, the Department/College, after discussion with their HR Business Partner, may agree to confirm the individual into the post with no further recruitment process taking place.

11.2 Where the recruitment process was limited due to the short term nature of the post, or no competitive recruitment process took place, and the post becomes available on a permanent basis, a further recruitment process should take place in order to fill the position.

Questions and Answers

What happens if my substantive role is involved in any restructures or any other organisational changes during the time I am on a Step Up or Secondment?

If your role is involved in any proposed organisational structural changes you will be consulted with as part of any change process that may affect your substantive role.

Will my substantive role be secure?

Your substantive post may be impacted by organisational change in the same way as if you were performing the role and you will be informed and consulted with in the same way.

I am concerned about how any step up or secondment may affect my pension contributions, who can I discuss this with?

In the first instance you should call or email the University Pensions team with any queries.

What is a competitive recruitment process?

A competitive recruitment process must involve the step up or secondment being advertised at least University wide so that the opportunity is open to all staff.

What support and training will I receive during a step up or secondment?

A member of staff undertaking a step up or secondment will receive the training and support relevant to the role being carried out and should raise with their line manager if this is not the case or they feel further support would be beneficial.

What if the step up or secondment is no longer appropriate for me?

You should raise this with your line manager who will make arrangements for additional support or if you wish, your return to your substantive role in liaison with HR as needed.

Will it be possible to obtain a reference related to the role I am stepping up or seconded into?

The University will be able to confirm the role(s) which a member of staff has carried out during their time with the University.

Document Administration

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Related Documents

- [Terms and Conditions Grades 1-9](#)

Revision History

Version	Date	Changes	Changed by
Version 1.0	01.09.17	Final version agreed for publication	Emma Beavis, HR Adviser
Version 2.0	8/2/18	Wording for Step Ups changed from 1-12 months duration to less than 12 months after feedback.	Brian Elliott, HRBP
Version 3.0	21/3/19	Biennial review. Template updated to new branding and formatting. No other changes	Brian Elliott, HRBP