

# **Secondments**

## **Postings and Transfers**

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## Introduction Secondments

### Overview

This section describes the guidelines and procedures for arranging a secondment.

A secondment is defined as the exchange of staff with other organisations, where either a person employed by the British Council works in another organisation, or a person employed by another organisation works in the British Council. In either case, the secondment is for a planned period of more than three months.

This section covers:

- the different purposes for which a secondment is arranged
- planning a secondment, including working out the cost
- obtaining authorisation of the secondment
- selecting staff for a secondment
- managing the secondee and the secondment
- managing the secondee's return to their previous post
- evaluating the secondment.

### Audience

This policy applies to UK-appointed staff. It can provide good practice guidance for country/territory TACOS and/or English and Exams staff contracts, subject to local law and conditions.

### Responsibilities

These guidelines and procedures are primarily the responsibility of:

- managers wishing to arrange a secondment
- staff undertaking a secondment.

### Policy

Secondments arranged under this policy involve a variation of the contract of employment, to be determined on a case-by-case basis. Managers should contact their local HR adviser, HR Overseas consultant or HR services consultant for advice. If the proposed secondment is with a strategic partner, the manager should also consult the Strategic Partnerships Manager in the UK.

### Criteria for secondments

A secondment arranged under this policy must meet at least one of the following objectives:

#### 1. To build relationships

The purpose of the secondment is to develop and enhance relationships and understanding with a key strategic partner. This can refer either to an individual secondment or to a planned exchange of staff. Managers must consult the Strategic Partnerships Manager in the UK.

#### 2. To develop skills - organisational

The purpose of the secondment is to develop skills for the British Council as an organisation. One of two different objectives may be sought:

- a. To bring expertise into the British Council. The planning for the secondment must include an element of skills training and/or knowledge sharing with permanent British Council staff
- b. To provide training for a future job. The secondment must be planned prior to recruitment and highlighted in the job description and advertisement. Selection must follow standard recruitment procedures.

### **3. To develop skills - individual**

The purpose of the secondment is to provide specific skills training for a job. This job may be either:

- the secondee's current job. The secondment must be planned and agreed in the job plan
- a secondment specifically to support the personal development of an individual who has been without a substantive post for more than six months and who has a clearly identifiable skills gap. The secondment must be designed to equip the individual with skills that will increase the opportunity to obtain a substantive role in the British Council. An individual who is 'displaced' will remain displaced during the course of the secondment. It should be noted that this use of secondments is likely to be very rare.

Under the terms of the redundancy procedures agreement, secondments may also be used as a redundancy avoidance measure; see Early Retirement and Redundancy.

Any of the above criteria can be used for secondments out of the British Council. Only objectives 1 and 2a can be used for secondments into the British Council.

### **Planning a secondment**

When you are proposing or planning a secondment, you must consider:

- the objectives of the secondment and how long it should last. Secondments should be planned to last for at least three months and should last no longer than three years
- the cost of the secondment. This needs to be planned for in departmental budgets. See Costing the secondment
- who should authorise the secondment. See Obtaining authorisation for the secondment
- how to select a secondee. See Selecting a candidate for secondment
- how the secondee is to be managed, both day to day and for performance evaluation. See Managing the secondment. Each secondment must have a clearly identified 'Secondment Manager', who is both responsible for the management of the secondment and for ensuring that the secondee is appropriately line managed
- what will happen when the secondee returns to the original organisation. Managers should note that this might involve the cost of managing a displaced person. See Returning from secondment
- how the secondment will be evaluated. See Evaluating the secondment
- how the secondment will affect headcount. Secondments must be taken into account when planning headcounts.

### **Costing the secondment**

You must also plan for the following.

- Salary and benefits should remain on the same terms as the secondee's current contract and you must obtain the exact monthly cost for planning purposes.
- It is usual for the secondee's employer to invoice the host organisation on a monthly basis. Note that in the UK these invoices are subject to VAT. For non-UK secondments, check local tax legislation.

- For some secondments, it may be appropriate for the British Council and the partner organisation to share the costs of the secondment. In these circumstances, authorisation must be obtained from the appropriate member of the senior management team (SMT).

### **Obtaining authorisation for the secondment**

1. Seek the advice of your local HR adviser, HR Overseas consultant or HR services consultant.
2. Submit the proposed secondment to the relevant senior manager using the *Secondment Authorisation Document*.
3. For secondments that meet one or more of the following criteria, you must obtain authorisation from the appropriate SMT member:
  - The secondment is intended to last for more than one year.
  - The secondment is with a key strategic partner.
  - The secondment is part of or is likely to become an on-going exchange of staff.
  - The secondment involves an international exchange of staff.
4. The SMT member must ensure that Operations Group are notified of any secondments that meet one or more of these criteria.

### **Selecting a candidate for secondment**

Selection must involve both organisations and you must plan the process for selection carefully. It may be possible for a secondment to be operated on a part-time or job-share basis and both organisations should give serious consideration to these or other flexible working options, if requested by the candidate. For more information about flexible working, see Working Time and Flexible Working.

1. Use the criteria and objectives of the secondment to decide on the most appropriate selection 'pool'. See Examples below for illustrations of possible scenarios.
2. You must choose secondees through a selection process that meets the standard of the British Council's recruitment policy; in the majority of cases this will be achieved by following the British Council's procedures. There may be occasions when there is a clear business case to arrange a secondment without a selection process, but these situations are exceptional and you must refer to guidance in the recruitment policy. See Exceptions to the Standard Recruitment Procedures for more information.

### **Examples**

For advice on any of the examples below, consult HR Services or the HR Overseas team.

#### Example 1 - secondment of British Council staff to other organisations

The British Council wishes to second a member of staff to another organisation to develop the relationship with that organisation and/or to work on a specific project with the partner organisation.

The selection pool will be British Council staff and the secondment will be advertised in the Bulletin. The selection must follow British Council recruitment policy and procedures and involve the partner organisation at final interview stage.

#### Example 2 - secondment of staff from another organisation to the British Council

The British Council needs to import a specific set of specialist skills or knowledge that is not available in the British Council but is available in a partner organisation, for example, the BBC.

The selection pool will be the BBC and the secondments will be advertised internally via their mechanisms.

Because British Council managers are familiar with the British Council's recruitment procedures, they are advised to use these procedures whenever possible. However, when working in partnership with another organisation, British Council managers may need to work with the partner organisation's recruitment procedures. In these circumstances, British Council managers should ensure that:

- the British Council is involved in the selection and decision making process
- the partner organisation's recruitment procedures share the same key principles as the British Council's recruitment policy. See *Recruitment Policy*.

Example 3 - secondment of staff from another organisation to the British Council

The British Council has an ongoing requirement to keep up-to-date with the secondary education sector, specifically at head teacher level.

The secondment will be advertised in the press, possibly as a rolling programme.

## **Managing the secondment**

### **Managing British Council staff seconded to another organisation**

1. When a member of British Council staff is seconded to another organisation, you must ensure that a line manager is nominated in the partner organisation. This manager is responsible for providing day-to-day supervision and management. This manager should be nominated at the planning stage and, if possible, be involved in the selection process.
2. You must also ensure that a British Council line manager (usually the Secondment Manager) is nominated. This manager is responsible for ensuring that the British Council's performance management system is implemented during the secondment, including the Job Description, Job Plan, Personal Development Plan and Annual Performance Evaluation. These documents must be agreed between the secondee and their line manager, ensuring that all stakeholders are adequately consulted. It is vital that people on secondment have their performance evaluated and recorded in order to assist a smooth return to their original organisation.
3. You must be aware that the manager in the partner organisation will be unfamiliar with British Council policies and you must negotiate and plan communication mechanisms that will enable the secondee to be fairly assessed.

### **Managing staff from other organisations seconded to the British Council**

All the following matters must be discussed and agreed with the partner organisation at the planning stage of the secondment:

1. When a member of staff from another organisation is seconded to the British Council, you must ensure that a formal induction and briefing programme is carried out. See the Corporate Induction website for more information.
2. To ensure fairness and equity of treatment of all secondees into the British Council, you are recommended to ensure that they are managed using the British Council's performance management system, with the recommended modifications for secondments. It may also be necessary to provide input to the partner organisations' performance management system, depending on their requirements, and it is recommended that the support/networking is discussed with the partner organisation.
3. Secondees into the British Council who have line management responsibilities must be trained in British Council management procedures, particularly performance management.

## **Supporting the secondee (inward or outward)**

- Secondees must be aware that they may experience a degree of culture shock when they first begin working in the new organisation and they should work with their managers in both organisations to ensure that they have the necessary support mechanisms in place. These will vary according to individual need, but the minimum recommendations are:
  - once weekly telephone contact with their British Council manager
  - weekly meetings with the partner organisation line manager
  - quarterly face-to-face meeting with their British Council manager.All of these contacts may need to be more frequent in the early stages of the secondment.
- Other support/networking mechanisms can include:
  - a mentor - there may be more than one of these and can include other staff who have been on secondment from either organisation or an individual from either organisation who has a similar job description to the secondee
  - ensuring that outward secondees have access to the British Council intranet and are included in mailings to all staff (for example, the Director General's monthly newsletter), and are retained on the British Council global address lists
  - where practicable, ensuring that the secondee is invited to British Council social events.

This list is not definitive. Support and communication mechanisms should be regularly reviewed and revised as necessary.

### **Terms and conditions of service for staff on secondment**

All matters relating to terms and conditions of service, for example, annual, maternity, and paternity leave, salary, sick leave entitlements, remain the same as in the secondees' contract of employment with the releasing organisation.

However, it may be necessary to adjust the hours and days of work and some public holidays, particularly in those secondments that involve an international exchange of staff. Note that some expenses are deemed taxable by the Inland Revenue and have to be paid via a payroll.

Once all terms and conditions, roles and responsibilities have been agreed these must be recorded, usually by the HR person who has been managing the process, using the pro-forma letters, either the Secondment from the British Council Partner Agreement Letter (for British Council member of staff who is being seconded to another organisation) or the Secondment to the British Council Partner Agreement Letter (for member of staff from another organisation who is being seconded to the British Council), amending as and where necessary. See Supporting documents below. These letters set out the terms and conditions for the secondment.

### **Renewing a secondment**

- Renewals are the exception rather than the norm but, if required, must follow the same planning and authorisation procedures as the initial secondment.
- You need to ensure that this is truly a renewal of the same process. If there is a change of duties or required competencies then the 'renewal' should be viewed as a new secondment and treated as such.

### **Filling the temporary vacancy in the secondees' substantive post**

Staff who go on secondments for one year or less normally return to their previous job, unless they are successful in applying for an alternative post. The temporary vacancy created by the secondment should be filled using the British Council recruitment procedures. See Recruitment Procedures.

Where the secondment is for more than one year, the vacancy may be filled on either a temporary or permanent basis. If the job is filled permanently, the secondee will not be guaranteed a specific post on their return, and will have to apply for advertised posts. The senior manager of the department responsible for the secondment or their delegate will be responsible for managing the secondee's return until they find a permanent post, as this person may be displaced. See *Creating and Suppressing Jobs*.

### **Returning from secondment**

**Note:** This section is primarily for British Council staff who have been seconded to other organisations, but managers may adopt the advice for secondees into the British Council.

- As secondee, you should begin to apply for posts during the last six months of your secondment (and/or in the batch recruitment which advertises vacancies for the time the secondee is due to return).
- As manager of a secondee, you should encourage and support this process. You should ensure that the secondee has access to information on all advertised vacancies and is up-to-date with the current recruitment policy. Where necessary, you should arrange for job application training. See the HR staff *development* website. You should also ensure that the returning secondee has access to any mandatory training that they may have missed while on secondment (for example, Fire awareness or Diversity training).

### **Evaluating the secondment**

- As manager of a secondee, you must ensure that clear objectives are set at the outset of the secondment, which must be reviewed and revised as necessary during the course of the secondment.
- Ideally, you should plan the evaluation before the secondment begins. Depending on the objectives, it may be necessary to have a multi-staged evaluation process which may begin during the course of the secondment and continue up to one year after the secondment is completed.
- Senior managers, who have either authorised or recommended the secondment, are responsible for ensuring that the evaluation process is both planned and completed, and communicated to the appropriate SMT member. The SMT member must report to Operations Group on any secondments that meet the following criteria:
  - The secondment is intended to last for more than one year.
  - The secondment is with a key strategic partner.
  - The secondment is part of or is likely to become an on-going exchange of staff.
  - The secondment involves an international exchange of staff.

## **Terms and Conditions of Service ~ Secondments**

### Overview

This section provides guidelines to the terms and conditions of service associated with a secondment. The advice applies equally to secondees into or out of the British Council.

### Audience

This policy applies to UK-appointed staff. It can provide good practice guidance for country/territory TACOS and/or English and Exams staff contracts, subject to local law and conditions.

### Responsibilities

These guidelines are primarily the responsibility of managers wishing to arrange a secondment.

### Policy

- You need to consider the following points when you are planning a secondment into or out of the British Council.
- You may have to negotiate some of the points (marked \*) with the partner organisation.
- Secondments that involve an international transfer require expert input in order to protect the legal rights of the individual. At the initial planning stage, you must consult the HR Overseas Consultant and HR International Assignments Team (HR IAT) if it is likely to be a UK-appointed person who is seconded.

Term or condition of service	Recommended action for secondees	Comments
Salary	If secondment is at the same payband or grade as the secondee's current post, salary remains the same.	Consult HR adviser for advice on payband/grading.
Salary	If secondment is at a higher payband or grade as the secondee's current post, normal promotion rules will apply.	Consult HR adviser for advice on payband/grading.
Annual leave*	Remains the same as secondee's current contract with originating organisation.	For secondees into British Council: if British Council annual leave is more generous than that of partner organisation then this amount of leave can be given to secondee, if partner organisation agrees.
Public/privilege holidays*	Remains the same as secondee's current contract with originating organisation.	May need to be adjusted for international exchanges.
Maternity and Paternity leave	Remains the same as secondee's current contract with originating organisation.	The host organisation must be briefed on the required reporting procedures.
Sick leave	Remains the same as secondee's current contract with originating organisation.	The host organisation must be briefed on the required reporting procedures.

Special leave	Remains the same as secondee's current contract with originating organisation.	The host organisation must be briefed on the required reporting procedures.
Disciplinary procedures	Remains the same as secondee's current contract with originating organisation.	Induction of secondee must include briefing on Codes of Conduct, policies on use of Internet and other electronic equipment.
Travel expenses	Should be paid directly to secondee at the rate used by the host organisation.	Some expenses are taxable under UK law and therefore need to be paid through the originating organisation's payroll, who will then invoice the host organisation as necessary. For non-UK secondments you must check the local legislation.
Relocation and related expenses*	Should be paid directly to secondee at the rate used by the host organisation.	If the partner organisation does not have policies for these (particularly in the case of international exchanges) it may be necessary to use the British Council policy.