



Guidance on Fixed Term Contracts

Introduction

It is the overall aim of the University to employ staff on open ended contracts where possible, and avoid the use of successive fixed term contracts. The aim of this guidance is to provide help for managers when making decisions about the appropriate use of fixed term contracts.

Definition

A fixed-term contract is one that ends on a specified date or on the occurrence of a particular event such as the loss of funding or the completion of a task.

Use of Fixed Term Contracts

Our Policy and Procedure on Contracts of Employment sets out the circumstances in which fixed term contracts can be offered. These are:

- to provide temporary replacement cover for situations such as secondments, study leave, long-term sickness absence, maternity leave, parental or adoptive leave
- to allow for input from specialist practitioners
- where the employment is for the sole purpose of completing a particular task or project
- where it is known in advance that a particular job or task will definitely come to an end on a specific date
- where the post is a research position underpinned by external funding and the fixed term is for four years or less – we do not generally award fixed term contracts for longer than four years.

Generally fixed term contracts should not be used in the following circumstances:

- to assess an individual's suitability for a post
- for existing staff currently employed on a permanent contract (a secondment should be used instead)
- as automatic replacements for existing fixed term contracts – a review should always be undertaken to determine the appropriate contract type at the point of hiring.
- where the need for a role will be long term and the contract is likely to be renewed at the end of the initial term.

Each case should be considered on its own merits. Advice will be available from Human Resources.

When using fixed term contracts, managers should:

- identify the reason for the fixed term contract
- keep under review the use of any fixed term contract at renewal to identify if there is a permanent need for the role. Where a contract is not expected to end at the of the fixed term contract, managers should consider whether it is more appropriate to offer a permanent contract.

The process for the ending of a fixed term contract is set out in our Policy and Procedure on Contracts of Employment.

Secondments

Prior to advertising for a fixed term contract managers should consider whether it is suitable to offer an internal secondment. More information on our approach to secondments can be found [here](#).

Secondment opportunities will also normally be of a fixed term nature in that they have a defined end date which might also be linked to funding or a specific project or event (e.g. a maternity leave cover arrangement). Where a member of staff undertakes a secondment to another role at the University, they will, at its conclusion, return to their substantive post as detailed in their contract of employment.