

External Secondment Policy

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Fostering a culture of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at The University of Manchester

1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1 Through [Manchester 2035](#), the University is committed to becoming a powerhouse of innovation and the university of choice for aspiring entrepreneurs—whether that’s through launching a University of Manchester (UoM) spin-out company, developing a social enterprise or working in partnership with external organisations.
- 1.2 We recognise the immense value that both new and serial founders bring. Their experience, networks, and entrepreneurial mindset create lasting benefits for the University, the wider innovation ecosystem, and society. In support of this, we are committed to fostering an environment in which external secondments are encouraged and supported, enabling colleagues to develop new skills and build partnerships that benefit the University and wider communities, while contributing to impact at both local and global levels.
- 1.3 An external secondment is where a university employee undertakes a temporary role with an external organisation, such as a UoM spin-out company or partner organisation, for an agreed period of time, whilst maintaining a formal relationship with the university.
- 1.4 The purpose of this policy is to provide both employees and managers with clear information and guidance on the management of external secondments

2. Scope and eligibility

- 2.1 The scope of this policy and accompanying guidance covers external secondments within the UK and overseas. For information on internal secondments please refer to the [Secondment Policy](#).
- 2.2 This policy applies to all University of Manchester employees, including those colleagues on fixed term (FTC) and finite funding permanent contracts (FFPC).
- 2.3 Where an employee’s role is either for a fixed duration, and/or the role is linked to external funding (whether fully or partially), then this may affect eligibility. In such cases, the length of the contract must be considered, alongside any funding conditions, when assessing the suitability and duration of the secondment.
- 2.4 **Professional Services colleagues** are required to have completed a minimum of 12 months’ service and have successfully passed their probation before being eligible to apply for an external secondment.
- 2.5 **Academic colleagues** are normally required to have successfully passed their probation before being eligible to apply for an external secondment. In exceptional circumstances, an earlier application may be considered, provided that the colleague’s progress through probation to date has been assessed as satisfactory.

- 2.6 This policy does not apply to University or Private consultancy work. For activities of this kind, please refer to the [University Consultancy](#) and [Work for Outside Bodies](#) policies for further detail.
- 2.7 This policy is non-contractual and can be amended at any time

3. Definitions

- **External business/organisation** – This is a company or organisation that is external to the University but can include ones we may already partner with e.g. other academic institutions, government departments, national agencies, charitable organisations, industrial or commercial businesses. This list is not exhaustive.
- **External Secondment** – This is where a University of Manchester employee is seconded out of the University to either a UoM spin-out, or an external business/organisation for an agreed period of time, whilst maintaining a formal relationship with the university.
- **Host institution** – spin-out or external business/organisation where the secondment is to be held.
- **Home institution** – Faculty or Professional Service Department where the substantive role is held.
- **Incremental costs** – These are the **direct gross costs** of employing an individual at the university, including (but not limited to), gross salary, employer taxes, pension contributions and employer related levies such as the apprenticeship levy. Incremental costs do not include indirect or overhead costs incurred by the university in connection with employment.
- **Intellectual Property (IP)** - Intellectual Property relates to the ownership, protection and use of rights that arise in creative works, such as inventions, industrial processes, software, databases, written work, designs and images. Those rights include, for example, patents, copyright, trademarks and design rights.
- **Research Excellence Framework (REF)** - The Research Excellence Framework is the UK's system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions.
- **UoM spin-out** – A UoM spin-out company is a private company typically created by one or more academic or research employees, with the aim of commercialising research carried out at the University of Manchester. It is also where the University holds equity, and University owned IP has been licensed or assigned to the company.

4. General Principles

- 4.1 Any external secondment must be approved by the Head of School within Faculty, or the Executive Director within the relevant Professional Services Directorate before the secondment can proceed.

- 4.2 If the employee's role is linked to funding or an external award (whether full or partial), the Principal Investigator (PI) named on the grant will need to secure written confirmation from the funding body that the secondment is not restricted by any terms and conditions linked to their grant.
- 4.3 The duration of a secondment is dependent on the nature of the request and will be agreed on a case by-case basis. As a general expectation, secondments are expected to be for no less than six months and no more than two years, regardless of whether they are undertaken on a full-time or part-time basis.
- 4.4 In exceptional cases, applications for more than two years may be considered but would require approval from either the Faculty Dean, or the relevant Professional Services Executive Director, in addition to a member of the People Directorate.
- 4.4 Employees on permanent contracts will retain the right to return to their substantive post for secondments of up to two years. For secondments that extend beyond two years, employees will no longer retain the automatic right to return to their substantive post. In these circumstances, the University will make every reasonable effort to identify a suitable alternative role through the redeployment process, however where none is available, this may result in redundancy.
- 4.5 A request for a secondment may be declined if it is deemed that there is a conflict of interest that cannot be adequately mitigated.
- 4.6 All external secondment arrangements must be formally documented, using the appropriate secondment agreement, prior to commencement. This is to ensure that the terms and conditions of the secondment are clearly defined and agreed by all parties.

University of Manchester Spin-out companies

- 4.7 A UoM spin-out is a company that has been created based on intellectual property (IP) generated through the University's research and in which the University has an equity stake. If you are unsure if the company you are discussing a secondment with is a University of Manchester spin-out, please contact UMIF at contact@uominnovationfactory.com.
- 4.8 Any requests for an external secondment to a UoM spin-out company should seek input from a [University of Manchester Innovation Factory](#) (UMIF) Project Manager in the first instance. If you haven't sought advice from UMIF about a spin-out company, you can contact them directly at contact@uominnovationfactory.com.
- 4.9 Approval of an external secondment to a UoM spin-out company is also subject to the spin-out having sufficient finance available to fund the secondment.

External Organisations

- 4.10 Secondments to an external organisation are subject to the University's standard due diligence processes, ensuring that all relevant statutory and regulatory requirements and restrictions are observed. A secondment request may not proceed if it is deemed that the organisation is unsuitable for partnership. Any request for a secondment to an external organisation should seek the advice of the [Business Engagement and Knowledge Exchange \(BEKE\) team](#).
- 4.11 Approval of a secondment to an external organisation is also subject to the external organisation having sufficient finance to fund the secondment.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Employees

- 5.1 Employees must inform their line manager, and where applicable their Principal Investigator (PI), of their intention to apply for an external secondment.
- 5.2 Where possible, employees should discuss and submit their request for an external secondment at least six months before the proposed start date. This is to provide the School/Department with enough time to consider the request and, if approved, put appropriate support in place, such as temporary role backfill or reallocating duties.
- 5.3 Employees, alongside their line manager/PI are required to review the terms and conditions of any current or incoming grants and consult with their external funder to understand whether there are any restrictions that would prevent or limit an external secondment taking place.
- 5.4 Any employee requesting a full-time secondment and who is also a PI and/or has PhD supervision will be required, with support from their Head of Department/Division, to put a clear and robust delegation plan in place, which identifies which colleague(s) will assume the PI role for their grant(s) and any PhD supervision/responsibilities.
- 5.5 Employees must identify if they have any existing contractual commitments to another external organisation (including an external research council or partner institution) and obtain confirmation from that organisation that they can be released from those obligations for the duration of the secondment.
- 5.6 It is the employee's responsibility to contact the [Pensions Office](#) to clarify if there will be any changes to their pension status during the secondment period.
- 5.7 It is the employee's responsibility to contact the [Global Mobility team](#) for advice on any aspect of overseas working, which is related to their external secondment. Employees who hold a Skilled Worker or Global Talent visa must also speak to the team to understand if there are any visa implications that may affect their ability to undertake an external secondment.

- 5.8 If an employee is seconded for 100% of their time, they are required to maintain an agreed level of contact with their line manager during their secondment period. Employees seconded on a part-time basis are expected to maintain their normal level of contact with their line manager.
- 5.9 As part of the application process and to ensure transparency, employees are required to declare any perceived or actual potential conflicts of interest which may relate to the secondment e.g. they are a shareholder of the external company.
- 5.10 If a request for an external secondment is approved, employees must ensure that they declare any relevant interests via the University's [Register of Interests](#) e.g. Directorship of a commercial company.

Head of School within Faculty/Executive Director within the Professional Services Directorate

- 5.11 The Head of School within the Faculty or the Executive Director within the relevant Professional Services Directorate is responsible for assessing the suitability of an external secondment request, and should give due consideration to any operational, regulatory and ethical impact.
- 5.12 The Head of School, or the Executive Director, is responsible for approving requests. Requests should not be unreasonably refused unless there is clear evidence that the secondment would result in significant operational impact.
- 5.13 Heads of School/Executive Directors should work with the employee's Head of Department/Division or Line Manager to understand the potential operational impact and how this could be mitigated, for example, through temporary role backfilling, or reallocating duties.

Head of Department/Division/Line Managers

- 5.14 Assist the Head of School/Executive Director in determining the operational impact of the secondment and how this may be mitigated where possible.
- 5.15 Provide support to the employee in developing a clear and robust delegation plan if they are a Principal Investigator (PI) and/or hold PhD supervisor responsibilities that need to be assigned to another colleague.
- 5.16 Maintain an agreed level of contact with your employee during the secondment, irrespective of whether it is on a part-time or full-time basis.

Principal Investigator

- 5.17 Principal investigators are required to consult with the relevant funding body to establish whether the terms and conditions of any current or incoming grants include restrictions that may prevent or limit a secondment. Written confirmation of this position must be obtained prior to a secondment being approved.
- 5.18 Principal investigators are responsible for the ethical and regulatory conduct of their research project. Where the PI role is delegated to another colleague, the PI must ensure that all terms of ethical approval and any regulatory requirements will continue to be met throughout the delegation period.

People Directorate

- 5.19 The Global Mobility team within People will provide employees and line managers with relevant advice and guidance in relation to overseas external secondment arrangements. Additionally, they will advise on any visa implications for employees who hold a Skilled Worker or Global Talent visa.
- 5.20 The Pensions team within People will advise employees on any potential implications an external secondment may have on their university pension.
- 5.21 The People Directorate will issue the relevant secondment agreement to the employee and update any Terms and Conditions where applicable. The agreement will make clear the responsibilities of the host and home institution and will vary according to the individual circumstances and case.

6. Application Process

- 6.1 There are several ways in which an employee can be seconded to an external organisation including to a UoM spin-out company, as outlined in the table below. Employees, together with their line manager and Head of Department/Division, should consider which option is most suitable, taking into consideration the type of secondment being proposed, the employees' circumstances, and the operational needs of the business area.

Type of Secondment	Option 1	Option 2
Full-time secondment (1 FTE)	Remains a university employee (salary recharged) The individual remains an employee of the University and their substantive contract remains in place. They would be paid by the University, and the cost of the secondment is recharged back to the UoM spin-out/external organisation.	Employed directly by the external organisation/spin-out (University contract placed on unpaid leave). The employee is employed by the UoM spin-out/external organisation and paid directly by them. The individual remains an employee of the University and their substantive contract remains in place (for a period of up to two years – see point 5.4), but they take a period of unpaid leave for the duration of the secondment to maintain continuity of service with the university. This option would typically only be chosen if the UoM spin-out requires the employee to be a direct employee of the company on a full-time basis.
Part-time secondment (less than 1 FTE)	Reduction in hours, but remains a university employee (salary recharged) The individual remains an employee of the University and their substantive contract remains in place. The employee would work part-time for the University and part-time on the secondment. They would be paid by the University for their full FTE as normal, and the cost of their part-time secondment is recharged back to the UoM spin-out/external organisation.	Reduction in university hours and employed directly by the external organisation/spin-out The individual remains an employee of the University but reduces their contractual hours to undertake a part-time external secondment. This reduction in hours would result in a change to terms and conditions. The employee would be paid by the University for the part-time hours/days they are contracted to work for at the University. They would be employed separately by the UoM spin-out/external organisation for the seconded part-time hours/days and paid directly by them. This option would typically only be chosen if the UoM spin-out requires the employee to be a direct employee of the company for the part-time basis spent on the secondment.

6.2 Employees must discuss their application with their line manager and Head of Department/Division for initial approval, prior to it being submitted to the Head of School/Executive Director for final consideration and sign-off. These discussions should ideally take place at least six months before the

proposed start date of the secondment; however, applications submitted within a shorter timeframe can still be considered where circumstances allow.

- 6.3 Employees will normally be informed of the outcome of their application by their Head of School/Executive Director, no later than one month of their application being received.
- 6.4 Once an application has been approved by the Head of School/Executive Director, colleagues must submit their approved external secondment request via this [Connect](#) form. This is required to formally record the period of external secondment leave and enable Employment Services to issue an external secondment letter confirming the agreed arrangements, including any changes to the colleague's terms and conditions.

7. Costings

- 7.1 The University is committed to supporting employees who wish to undertake an external secondment, and we aim to work constructively with host organisations to enable these opportunities.
- 7.2 Secondments to an external business/organisation will normally be charged at a rate determined by the Head of School within Faculty, or Executive Director within Professional Services in line with the University's pricing policy.
- 7.3 When considering costing, the Head of School or Executive Director should seek the advice of the [Business Engagement and Knowledge Exchange \(BEKE\) team](#). They should also consult their Finance Business Partner to ensure that any potential VAT implications are fully considered.
- 7.4 Secondments to a UoM spin-out company will be costed on an incremental cost basis. The University will not seek to recover any funds from a UoM spin-out company beyond the direct costs incurred, e.g. direct salary costs, including; tax, National Insurance, pension contributions and apprenticeship levy.
- 7.5 Employees who are seconded into an external organisation with the specific purpose of supporting work on REF impact assessment activities will also be costed on an incremental cost basis.
- 7.6 The financial savings from the secondment should be made available in full to the Head of School within Faculty or Executive Director within Professional Services to ensure appropriate cover can be made for the secondees duties.

8. Policy Review

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed after 12 months in operation following publication; it will subsequently be reviewed every three years.