



External Secondment Guidance for colleagues and managers

1. Purpose of the Guidance

This guidance has been developed to support employees, line managers, and other stakeholders in understanding and implementing the External Secondment Policy. It provides practical information on the considerations, processes, responsibilities, and approvals associated with external secondments.

The guidance is intended to help colleagues and managers navigate the application process and understand how requests are assessed and managed in practice and ensure that requests are managed consistently and effectively across the University.

As a reminder, neither the policy nor guidance identifies, sources, or provides external secondment opportunities; responsibility for identifying a suitable secondment opportunity sits with the employee. Once an opportunity has been identified, this guidance should be used alongside the policy to support the consideration, approval, and administration of the secondment.

2. Relationship Between the Policy and Guidance

The External Secondment Policy sets out the University's principles, eligibility requirements, roles and responsibilities, approval arrangements, and the framework governing external secondments. It establishes what must be followed when considering and managing an external secondment.

This guidance complements the policy by providing additional practical information on how the policy should be applied in practice. It includes explanatory information, examples, and process guidance, to support consistent decision-making and implementation. Where there is any difference between the guidance and the policy, the policy takes precedence.

3. External Secondments

What is an External Secondment?

An external secondment is a temporary arrangement in which a university employee undertakes a role with an external organisation or a UoM Spin-out for an agreed period of time, while maintaining a formal relationship with the University. It is different from university or private consultancy work and from an internal secondment.

What do we mean by University or Private Consultancy?

- University Consultancy refers to consultancy carried out through the University. This is where an employee provides a service to an external organisation based on their existing expertise and experience, as part of a contract between the University and the client. More information can be found at the [University Consultancy Policy](#).

- Private Consultancy refers to consultancy activity carried out by an employee of the University in a personal capacity, completely independent of the University. The full terms and policy for this sort of activity are outlined in the [Work for Outside Bodies Policy](#)

What do we mean by Internal Secondment?

- An internal secondment is a temporary arrangement in which a colleague moves to another role within the University for an agreed purpose and period. More information can be at the [Internal Secondment Policy](#).

What are the benefits of an External Secondment?

External secondments can create significant benefits for employees, the University, and host organisations. They support the University's ambition, set out in Manchester 2035, to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, knowledge exchange, and external collaboration by enabling colleagues to apply their expertise in different environments and bring valuable experience, networks, and insights back into the University.

Benefits for Colleagues

External secondments provide an opportunity for employees to broaden their experience, develop new skills, and gain exposure to different ways of working. They can support personal and professional development by allowing colleagues to:

- Develop leadership, commercial, and strategic skills.
- Gain experience of working within industry, public sector organisations, charities, partner institutions, or spin-out companies.
- Build professional networks beyond the University.
- Develop a deeper understanding of innovation, entrepreneurship, and knowledge exchange.
- Apply their expertise in a different organisational setting whilst retaining a connection to the University.
- Return with new perspectives, knowledge, and experiences that can enhance their future contribution within the University.
- Explore career development opportunities that may not be available within their current role.

Benefits for the University

External secondments support the University's strategic ambitions by strengthening relationships with external organisations and encouraging the exchange of knowledge, skills, and expertise. They can help the University to:

- Advance the ambitions of Manchester 2035 by supporting innovation and entrepreneurial activity.

- Strengthen partnerships with industry, public sector bodies, charities, and other external organisations.
- Encourage the transfer of knowledge and expertise between the University and external partners.
- Enhance the University's reputation as a leading institution for innovation, research impact, and collaboration.
- Support the development of future leaders with experience of different organisational and commercial environments.
- Increase opportunities for research impact, knowledge exchange, and external engagement.
- Deepen links with University of Manchester spin-out companies and support the wider innovation ecosystem.
- Benefit from the skills, networks, and insights employees bring back following a secondment.
- Contribute to a culture that encourages innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurial thinking.

Benefits for External Partners

External organisations can gain access to specialist expertise, knowledge, and experience from university employees. This can help to accelerate innovation, address organisational challenges, and strengthen collaborative relationships. External secondments may enable host organisations to:

- Access leading academic, research, technical, and professional expertise.
- Benefit from new perspectives and evidence-based approaches to problem solving.
- Strengthen links with the University and identify future opportunities for collaboration.
- Develop joint research, innovation, or knowledge exchange activities.
- Accelerate the translation of research and innovation into real-world impact.
- Access specialist skills that support growth, development, and organisational capability.
- Support talent development within emerging University spin-out companies and other strategic partner organisations.
- Build long-term relationships that create mutual benefit for both organisations.

4. Eligibility requirements and considerations

The policy applies to all university employees, including colleagues on fixed-term contracts and finite-funded permanent contracts, however there are several additional key factors that employees need to consider, which may affect eligibility.

Before applying for an external secondment, employees should consider the following factors:

Employment Status

- For employees on fixed-term contracts or finite funding permanent contracts, the duration remaining on an employee's contract should not automatically be a barrier to

approving a request. The length of time remaining will need to be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis, as to whether the business area could reasonably support the application and any potential contractual implications.

- Employees on fixed-term or finite-funded permanent contracts should be aware that their return arrangements remain subject to the end date and funding conditions of their substantive role. Where the substantive role ends during the secondment, a return to a role cannot be guaranteed.

Probation

- Professional Services employees are required to have completed at least 12 months' service and successfully passed their probation before applying.
- Academic employees are normally expected to have successfully completed probation. In exceptional circumstances, applications may be considered earlier where satisfactory progress through probation has been demonstrated.

What might be considered exceptional circumstances?

- Academic employees are normally expected to have successfully completed probation before undertaking an external secondment. Exceptionally, an application may be considered earlier where satisfactory progress through probation has been demonstrated and there is a compelling reason why the opportunity should be considered before probation is completed, for example a strategically important, time-limited opportunity that may no longer be available once probation has been completed.
- Consideration should be given to the individual circumstances of each request, including the employee's progress through probation, the nature and timing of the opportunity, the anticipated benefit to the University and the individual, and whether appropriate arrangements can be put in place to support the employee's ongoing probation requirements.

Immigration and Right to Work Considerations

- Additional requirements may apply if the external secondment involves overseas working or if the employee holds a Skilled Worker or Global Talent visa.
- Employees are required to contact the [Global Mobility Team](#) at an early stage of the application process to seek advice on overseas working, and/or to understand any potential visa implications, which may impact their secondment request.
- **Failure to engage with the Global Mobility Team at an early stage may result in complications that could prevent the secondment proceeding.**

Pension and Tax Implications

- Employees considering an external secondment must contact the [Pensions Team](#) at an early stage of the application process to understand any potential pension implications and take these into account when deciding whether to proceed with their external secondment application.

- Where an external secondment involves a period of unpaid leave from the University, there may be implications for the employee's tax arrangements. Employees are responsible for seeking advice directly from HMRC about their individual tax position.

Funding and Grant Requirements

- If the role is wholly or partially funded through a grant or external award, the terms and conditions of the funding may affect whether a secondment can take place.
- As part of the application, written confirmation must be obtained from the funding body that the terms and conditions of the funding or grant do not include any restrictions that would prevent or limit the proposed secondment.
- Employees should consider both current and incoming grants/funding.

Research, Teaching and Operational Responsibilities and Delegation

- Employees should consider whether they have any existing contractual obligations to an external organisation, such as a research council or partner institution, that could affect their ability to undertake the secondment. Where these exist, employees must obtain confirmation from the relevant organisation that they can be released from those obligations for the duration of the secondment.
- Employees must consider whether their responsibilities can be appropriately covered or delegated during the secondment period, or whether there may be any limitations on where this is possible. This may include but is not limited to; teaching commitments, research activity, leadership responsibilities, professional services duties, grant management responsibilities, or PhD supervision.
- For some roles, certain duties and responsibilities may be difficult or impractical to delegate, particularly where they relate to ethical or regulatory requirements. Delegation of responsibilities linked to clinical trials should be avoided. Where suitable arrangements cannot be put in place to manage an employee's responsibilities during the secondment, it may not be possible to support the request.
- Employees requesting a full-time secondment who are PIs or have PhD supervisory responsibilities are required, with the support of their Head of Department/Division, to put a delegation plan in place. Other colleagues may also choose to use the delegation plan where they feel it would be helpful in identifying how their key responsibilities will be managed during the secondment. The Head of Dept/Div will retain oversight to ensure the delegation is appropriate and effective.
- Where PhD supervision needs to be delegated to another colleague, the proposed arrangements must be discussed with the affected PhD student(s) to ensure they are comfortable with the change.
- Where an Academic employee engages a Postgraduate Researcher to work for a company they are involved with (such as a spin out company) this is entirely separate from the University of Manchester and therefore is not covered by any University policies or contractual arrangements. The employment relationship is not with the University.
- Outside employment should not detract from a PGRs main goal of completing their programme of research within the prescribed length of their programme and their funded period.

Conflicts of interest and Register of interest

- Employees must declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest associated with the proposed secondment so that these can be considered and, where possible, appropriately managed. Where a conflict of interest cannot be adequately managed or mitigated, the secondment may not be able to proceed.
- If a secondment is approved, employee's must ensure that any relevant interests arising from the arrangement, such as becoming a director of a commercial company, are declared through the University's Register of Interests.

Using Host Organisation Facilities and Resources

- When undertaking secondment-related activities, employees are expected to use the host organisation's premises, facilities, systems and resources. University premises, facilities or resources should only be used for secondment-related purposes where this has been agreed in advance with the Head of School.

5. Deciding which external secondment arrangement is the most suitable

The most appropriate arrangement will depend on the nature of the proposed secondment and the employee's circumstances. Employees should discuss the options with their line manager and Head of Department/Division as part of the application process. Once agreed, the terms of the secondment, including any changes to their university terms and conditions, will be formally documented before the secondment begins.

The table below provides an overview of the different secondment arrangements to help employees and line managers consider which option may be most appropriate, taking into account the nature of the secondment, the hosts requirements and the employees individual circumstances.

	Full-time secondment: Salary Recharge	Full-time secondment: Unpaid Leave	Part-time secondment: Salary Recharge	Part-time secondment (reduction in hours at UoM). Direct employment by host organisation
Employment status with UoM	Employee remains employed by UoM and substantive contract remains in place	UoM substantive contract remains in place, but colleague takes unpaid leave	Employee remains employed by UoM and substantive contract remains in place	Remain employed by UoM, but contractual hours are reduced.
Employment with host company	N/A	Yes – employed directly by the	N/A	Yes – employed directly by the host

		host organisation		organisation for the part-time seconded hours.
Who pays the employee salary	UoM	Host organisation pays the colleague directly	UoM pays the employee for their full contracted hours at UoM and recharges the host organisation for the seconded part-time hours	Both – UoM pay for contracted UoM hours. Host organisation pays colleague directly for seconded hours.
How secondment costs are dealt with	Recharge back to the host organisation	Unpaid leave arrangements from UoM apply. Host pays employee	Recharge part-time seconded hours back to the host organisation	Reduction in hours from UoM. Host pays employee direct for seconded hours
UoM working arrangements	Colleague is seconded for 100% of their time	Colleague is seconded for 100% of their time	Colleague works part-time for UoM and part-time for host organisation during the secondment	UoM contractual hours are reduced to enable the colleague to undertake the part-time secondment
Change to UoM terms and conditions	Substantive contract remains in place	Unpaid leave arrangements apply	Substantive contract remains in place	Reduction in contractual hours results in a change to terms and conditions
When might this arrangement be relevant	Secondment to an external organisation where a recharge can apply	Typically, where a spin-out requires the colleague to become its direct employee on a full-time basis	Secondment to an external organisation where a recharge can apply	Typically, where the spin-out requires the colleague to be directly employed for the part of their time spent on secondment

How long can a secondment last?

As a general expectation, external secondments should normally last between six months and two years and can be undertaken on either a full-time or part-time basis for the duration of the agreed secondment period.

Requests to extend a secondment beyond two years may be considered in exceptional circumstances and will require additional approval as outlined within the policy. Employees should be aware that they would not normally retain the right to return to their substantive role beyond two years, unless an extended right to return has been exceptionally agreed and formally documented. Please note, this may not be possible in all cases.

Terms and conditions during the secondment

Employment Services will issue employees with a secondment letter confirming the agreed terms of the secondment, including any changes to their university terms and conditions that will apply during this period. Depending on the nature of the secondment, this may include arrangements relating to pay and pay progression, annual leave, pension contributions, working hours and other contractual benefits.

Employees should read the letter carefully to make sure they understand the arrangements that will apply during their secondment and raise any questions before the secondment begins.

What happens if circumstances change?

If circumstances change during an employee's secondment, for example if they wish to extend the secondment, return earlier than planned, or the host organisation wishes to end the arrangement early, they should discuss this with their line manager at the earliest opportunity. Any proposed changes to the duration or agreed arrangements will need to be considered and, where applicable, formally agreed and documented before taking effect.

6. Manager considerations

Line managers, alongside Heads of Departments/Divisions play an important role in supporting employees who are considering an external secondment and in ensuring that any proposed arrangements are workable for the individual and the University.

Managers are encouraged to approach requests positively and discuss them with the employee at an early stage. The initial conversation should help both parties understand the proposed secondment, its potential benefits, and any practical arrangements that would need to be put in place.

Considering a request

When discussing a proposed secondment, managers should consider:

- the purpose, nature and proposed duration of the secondment;
- For secondments to spin-out companies, consider whether the spin-out's anticipated cash flow can financially support the proposed duration of the secondment;

- the potential benefits for the employee, the University and the external organisation;
- whether the employee meets the relevant eligibility requirements;
- whether there is any funding, contractual or other commitments that may affect the secondment;
- the impact of the employee's absence on their School, Department or Directorate;
- how the employee's key responsibilities could be covered or delegated;
- whether temporary backfill or other arrangements may be required; and
- whether any specialist advice or input is needed before the request can progress.

Managing the operational impact and business need

- When considering an application, the School, Department or Directorate will need to assess whether the proposed secondment can be accommodated alongside its operational requirements. This may include the availability of appropriate cover, business continuity, any ethic and regulatory implications, workforce planning requirements and any potential impact on service delivery.
- Requests should be considered constructively, and operational considerations should not, in themselves, be regarded as a barrier to supporting a secondment. Managers should work with the employee to explore whether any potential challenges can reasonably be addressed through early planning, appropriate cover, delegation or other suitable arrangements. A request should not be unreasonably refused unless there is clear evidence that the secondment would result in significant operational impact.
- Requests for secondments lasting more than two years may be considered in exceptional circumstances. Employees would not normally retain the right to return to their substantive role beyond two years. However, exceptionally, an extended right to return may be agreed with the approval of the Faculty Dean or relevant Professional Services Executive Director, together with a member of the People Directorate. Any agreement to extend the right to return beyond two years must be formally documented.

Nature of the external organisation

- Managers should consider whether the proposed host organisation is suitable for the secondment. Appropriate University due diligence requirements must be completed, and any concerns identified should be considered before the request is approved.
- Managers should seek advice from BEKE for external organisations or UMIF where the proposed secondment is to a University of Manchester spin-out company.

Backfilling the substantive role

- Where temporary cover is required during the secondment, managers may consider backfilling the role on a fixed-term basis. The reason for the fixed-term appointment should be clearly communicated to candidates during the recruitment process, including that the appointment is to provide temporary cover while the substantive postholder is undertaking an external secondment.
- Where a substantive role is backfilled on a fixed-term basis, managers should consider from the outset what may need to happen if the secondment ended earlier than planned. The fixed-term appointment may not automatically be able to end when the secondee returns, and consultation with the fixed-term employee may be required. The

School, Department or Directorate may therefore need to factor in the potential requirement to accommodate both employees and the associated costs for a period of time. Advice should be sought from the People team before any action is taken.

Keeping in touch during the secondment

- Where an employee is undertaking a full-time secondment, managers should agree with them in advance how appropriate contact will be maintained during the secondment. This should include the frequency of contact and any relevant University, School, Department or Directorate updates that will be shared
- If your employee is undertaking a part-time secondment, managers should continue to maintain a normal level of contact with them during their secondment period.
- Managers should discuss and review return arrangements with the employee at least three months before the agreed end date of the secondment to support their return to their substantive role. This should include discussing whether the secondment is expected to end as planned or whether an extension to the secondment is being considered by the employee.
- Where an extension is being considered, this should be discussed and agreed in accordance with the Policy **before** the existing secondment end date. Where an extension would take the total period of secondment beyond two years, the employee must be made aware that they would not normally retain the right to return to their substantive role beyond this point. Any extension request must follow the relevant approval requirements.

Costing and financial considerations

- External organisation secondments: These will normally be charged at a rate determined by the Head of School or relevant Professional Services Executive Director, in line with the University's pricing policy. Advice should be sought from BEKE and the relevant Finance Business Partner, including in relation to any VAT implications.
- UoM spin-outs and REF impact secondments: These are costed on an incremental-cost basis, covering the relevant direct costs of the secondment
- Financial viability: Before supporting the arrangement, consider whether the host organisation has sufficient finance to fund the proposed secondment. For spin-outs, this should include consideration of whether anticipated cash flow can support the proposed duration.
- Where the secondment is being funded through a recharge to the host organisation, managers should seek advice from their Finance Business Partner on the appropriate recharge and invoicing process. Further information is available on the [Request an invoice / Customer Setup / Credit Note | Directorate of Finance | StaffNet | The University of Manchester](#) page.
- Financial savings: Any financial saving arising from the secondment should be made available to the relevant Head of School or Professional Services Executive Director to support appropriate cover for the colleague's substantive duties.