**CAREER BREAK POLICY**

**PURPOSE**

[EMPLOYER’S NAME] understands that there may be times when employees want or need to take an extended break from work. As part of our commitment to long-term career development and retaining talented employees, we allow staff to apply for [a paid OR an unpaid] career break. This policy outlines the circumstances under which such career breaks may be granted.

If a career break is not the most suitable solution for your needs, we may recommend an alternative arrangement. [Career breaks will not be approved for purposes such as taking alternative employment or starting a personal business venture.]

This policy does not form part of any employment contract or agreement for services and may be amended at any time.

This policy complies with all applicable North Carolina state and federal laws, ensuring alignment with employment regulations and any specific state requirements related to career breaks.

**POLICY APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies solely to employees. It does not extend to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers, or interns.

**POLICY MANAGEMENT**

The [Board of Directors (Board) OR [COMMITTEE] OR [POSITION]] holds overall responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Oversight of its day-to-day application has been delegated to the [Head of the HR Department OR [POSITION]]. Suggestions for changes to this policy should be directed to the [Head of the HR Department OR [POSITION]].

For any questions regarding the daily application of this policy, employees should initially contact [their line manager OR the HR Department].

This policy is reviewed annually by the [Head of the HR Department OR [POSITION]] [in consultation with [NAME OF UNION, WORKS COUNCIL OR STAFF ASSOCIATION]].

**ELIGIBILITY**

To be eligible for a career break, you must meet the following criteria:

* Have at least [NUMBER] years of continuous employment [although employees with less tenure may be considered in exceptional circumstances].
* Maintain a good record of performance [as demonstrated in your last two annual appraisals].

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

You should first have an informal discussion with [your line manager OR the HR Department] to explain the reason for your career break request, the proposed length of your absence, and how your workload might be managed during your time away.

To formally apply for a career break, submit a written request to [your line manager OR the HR Department] at least three months before your desired start date. [In exceptional circumstances, this time limit may be waived.] Your application should include:

* The reason for your proposed career break.
* The dates you wish to start and end your career break.
* Details of any previous career breaks you have taken, including the dates.
* Any potential benefits your proposed career break might bring to the organization.
* Your suggestions for managing your work during your absence.

**RESPONDING TO YOUR APPLICATION**

Each application will be considered on its individual merits. You should not finalize any plans until your career break request is formally approved in writing.

When reviewing your application, we will consider factors such as:

* The purpose or reasons for your career break.
* The requested period of absence.
* Your performance history.
* The number and length of any previous career breaks.
* Our business's operational needs.
* The importance of retaining your skills, knowledge, and experience.
* Our ability to cover your responsibilities during your absence.
* Any potential benefits your proposed career break might offer to the organization.

We aim to respond to your written application within [NUMBER] days of receipt.

If necessary, we may schedule a meeting to discuss your request further.

If your request is denied, we will provide an explanation in writing. [If you feel your request was unreasonably refused or you experienced retaliation for making the request, you may raise a grievance under our Grievance Procedure.]

If your request is approved, you will receive written confirmation of your career break's start and return dates, along with details of any changes to your terms of employment. You must sign and return a copy of this confirmation to formally accept the terms. Your career break will not be considered approved until we receive your signed acceptance.

**CONDITIONS FOR TAKING A CAREER BREAK**

Career breaks may be granted for a period of [between a minimum of [NUMBER] [months OR years] and a maximum of [NUMBER] [months OR years] OR up to [NUMBER] [months OR years]].

[To take a career break, you are required to resign from your employment. While we will make every effort to reinstate you to your previous position upon your return, this cannot be guaranteed. If your previous position is not available, we will take reasonable steps to identify a [similar role OR position within the same department] as the one you held prior to your break. [Upon your return, your employment will be treated as continuous from the time before your career break.]]

[[You may not take more than one career break during your employment with us. OR You may be permitted to take more than one career break during your employment with us provided that:

There has been a minimum gap of [NUMBER] months since your return from your previous career break.

The total duration of all career breaks taken does not exceed [NUMBER] months.

A new application must be submitted under this policy for each requested career break.]]

**RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS DURING A CAREER BREAK**

Unless otherwise agreed when your career break is approved, you are not required to work or attend events during your break, nor will you face penalties for declining to do so. Similarly, we are not obligated to offer work during your career break. Any work arrangements must be pre-approved by [your manager OR the HR Department], including tasks and payment details.

You are expected to maintain communication with us during your career break. We will provide updates on company policies, personnel changes, and other relevant developments. You should arrange with [your manager OR the HR Department] to stay informed about important updates.

You must notify [your manager OR the HR Department] of any changes to your contact details while on your career break.

If your role is affected by reorganization, restructuring, or redundancy during your career break, we will consult with you as necessary.

Written approval must be obtained from [your manager OR the HR Department] before engaging in paid work for another employer during your career break.

**RETURNING FROM A CAREER BREAK**

We will make every reasonable effort to provide you with [the opportunity to return to your previous position OR priority consideration for a similar role at the same grade].

When your career break request is approved, we will agree on the timeline for confirming return arrangements, typically [NUMBER] months before your return date.

If you wish to return earlier than agreed, we will consider your request but cannot guarantee accommodation.

If ill health prevents you from returning on the agreed date, you must notify [your manager OR the HR Department] immediately and follow the [INSERT POLICY NAME].

For reasons other than ill health, if you are unable to return as scheduled, contact [your manager OR [POSITION]] promptly. In exceptional cases, we may consider extending your career break, provided the total duration does not exceed [NUMBER] months.

If you choose to resign during your career break, you must provide notice as specified in your contract, unless otherwise agreed.

Upon your return, [your manager OR [POSITION]] will arrange a re-induction process, including training on new systems or procedures and updates on changes affecting your role.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT AND REVIEW**

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (employee name), acknowledge that on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (date), I received and reviewed a copy of [EMPLOYER'S NAME]’s [NAME OF POLICY]. I understand that it is my responsibility to familiarize myself with the policy and adhere to its terms.

I also acknowledge that this policy is not intended to create an employment contract or alter my at-will employment status, unless otherwise specified in a written agreement signed by an authorized representative of [EMPLOYER'S NAME]. Any delay or failure by [EMPLOYER'S NAME] to enforce the provisions of this policy does not constitute a waiver of its rights to enforce them in the future.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date