Returners’ Support Programme
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1. Introduction

1.1. Newcastle University is committed to supporting development of all staff and recognises that returning from long term leave can be a challenging time for many.

1.2. The Returners’ Support Programme offers additional support, if needed, to enable academics and researchers on all three career pathways (Teaching & Research, Research & Innovation, Teaching & Scholarship) to minimise the impact of extended leave on the delivery of their teaching, research and scholarship activities, thus enabling continued career development.

1.3. The programme supports the University’s commitment to Equality & Diversity, removing barriers to people’s ability to do their job effectively and offering greater flexibility and opportunity. This will benefit the performance of individuals, Schools, Institutes and the University overall and is key to ensure the University is able to meet its research objectives.

1.4. It is open to academic, teaching or research staff:

- who have taken some time off work due to caring responsibilities
- who have team members who are off work due to caring responsibilities

2. Who is eligible?

2.1. To be eligible to apply to the Returners’ Support Programme, the returning member of staff must fulfil the following criteria:

- Be an existing member of academic, teaching or research staff
- Have been working for the University for 12 months prior to commencing leave
- Be returning from a leave period of a minimum of 18 weeks (If on a fixed term contract, have at least 6 months remaining on their contract following their return from leave). If you feel you do not meet all the eligibility criteria but would like to discuss your circumstances, please contact your Faculty HR Team.
- In the case of maternity leave, have completed the Maternity checklist:
  \[\text{http://www.ncl.ac.uk/hr/assets/documents/maternity-managers-guidance-final.pdf}\]

2.2. If seeking support to cover for a team member who is absent the following criteria must be fulfilled:

- The member of staff who is absent must be returning from a leave period for a minimum of six months (If on a fixed term contract, have at least 6 months remaining on their contract following their return from leave)
2.3. The programme does not cover periods of Academic Sabbatical Leave or Career Breaks.

2.4. If you have any questions, please contact your Faculty HR Team to discuss your case further.

3. What support does the Programme offer?

3.1. If returning from leave:

Your line manager and your School/Institute department have a responsibility to help you plan your leave and return to work effectively. There are a range of considerations that you will need to discuss with your manager for example:

- Will replacement cover be required?
- Who will take over supervision of PhD students?
- Will you use Keeping in Touch days? (for those on maternity, adoption or shared parental leave)

3.2. Your manager also has a responsibility to support you in getting your research or scholarship back up to speed. There may be a number of things that could help you in doing this including:

- Appointment of fixed term technician, support with teaching or similar support for up to 12 months during long term leave or for up to 6 months on return or
- Reduction in admin/teaching for up to 6 months on return
- Rescheduling of teaching work or project work
- Attendance at a conference or training course
- A phased return to work (e.g. part time for an agreed number of weeks, increasing to full time)
- Covering additional childcare costs for conference and/or training attendance

3.3. Everybody’s circumstances are different and it may be that there are other things to make your return to work easier - for example working from home where this is practicable, or permanently reducing your hours. Please refer to the Flexible Working Policy, and discuss with your line manager and School/Institute Manager what options may be available to you within an agreed timescale.

3.4. If you feel that any of the above options would help you to get your academic work back up to speed, then your line manager and School/Institute Manager will advise you on how your School/Institute can support you.
4. Funding

4.1. The Returners’ Support Programme (RSP) provides funding of up to £10,000 to contribute towards supporting an additional post, or up to £5,000 funding is available for other forms of support. This is administered by each faculty.

If the period of leave is due to a disability or due to caring for a disabled dependant then the financial limit does not apply and any reasonable adjustments will be made. For guidance on reasonable adjustments see the Enable web page.

5. The Application Process

5.1. Applications for funding and support should be made within a reasonable period of time in the run up to a return to work from extended leave. Normally such a request will be made around 8 weeks prior to return to work but there is flexibility for schools and services to allow later requests. However, requests made at short notice may mean that the support requested is not in place immediately on return to work.

5.1. The Faculty Director of Diversity, the School/Institute Manager in conjunction with Faculty Human Resources will then review and process the application as appropriate. The programme has a limited amount of funding and consequently applications will be considered on their merit.

5.1. The Institute/School Manager will confirm the amount to be awarded and the dates it is to run to the individual, their Head of Unit and the Faculty HR Manager.

5.1. It should be noted that if a member of staff significantly changes their expected return date after the University has committed to a start date for the additional post (if applicable), it may not be possible to alter the duration of the additional post.

5.1. For monitoring purposes the Equality and Diversity Adviser will send the applicant, their Head of Unit and School/Institute Manager an evaluation to complete 3 months after the Returners’ Support Programme funding has ceased. They will be asked to reflect on how beneficial the support has been. Evaluation will help us ensure that the programme is beneficial to Schools and Institutes as well as individual staff.

Applications must be made by the member of staff planning long term leave (section one of the form) and their Head of Unit (section two of the form).

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<th>Policy Area Lead</th>
<th>Leslie Platt</th>
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