



Northern Ireland
Assembly

SECTION 1.03

Secondment Policy

Introduction

1. The Assembly Commission is committed to the development of staff, both to assist them in their current roles and to equip them for the challenges and changes of the future. The Secondment Policy recognises the unique contribution that each person's experience, knowledge and skills can make to the organisation.

Purpose

2. The purpose of the Secondment Policy is to ensure that a structured, consistent approach is taken in relation to inward and outward secondment arrangements. It sets out the arrangements to be followed when staff are seconded to an external organisation, as well as guidance for inward secondment arrangements.

Definition of Secondment

3. A secondment can be defined as any voluntary posting for a limited period of time and can be broken down as follows:
 - Outward secondments, including interchange opportunities and inter parliamentary arrangements. This is where a member of staff avails of a posting at another location (the Host Organisation).
 - Inward Secondments, i.e. where an employee from another organisation comes to work for the Assembly Commission for a set period of time.

Benefits of Secondment

4. A secondment must benefit both staff member and the Assembly Commission, for example through the exchange of expertise and innovative techniques and must:

- Enable staff to broaden their experience, to develop new skills and bring these back to the Assembly Commission;
- Promote mutual understanding between different organisations;
- Provide the Assembly Commission with a flexible means of importing expertise at time of constraints on staff resource; and
- Provide the Assembly Commission with a flexible means of developing staff resources.

Scope/Eligibility

5. To be eligible to be considered for a secondment you must:
 - be a permanent Assembly Commission staff member; and
 - have satisfactorily completed your probationary period (this qualifying period may be waived at the discretion of the Human Resources Office in cases of domestic emergency).
6. The granting of a secondment is discretionary and not an entitlement. A secondment will not normally be approved if a member of staff is being managed under the Capability Policy or is subject to live disciplinary warnings at the time that a secondment is being considered.
7. Each application will be considered on its own individual merits and in light of the circumstances which prevail in the particular Business Area and in the given grade/specialism to which the applicant belongs. Secondments may, therefore, have to be refused or delayed where there are overriding business considerations. Reasons for refusal will be given to you.
8. Secondments will not be facilitated where a conflict of interest may arise between the Assembly Commission and the proposed external organisation. Where a potential conflict has been identified, a determination on whether the secondment can proceed will be made by the Head of Human Resources.
9. This Policy does not cover job shadowing or short-term volunteering opportunities so staff should refer to the Job Shadowing Policy and the Employer Supported Volunteering Policy on the Staff Handbook if such opportunities are of interest to them.

Duration of Secondments

10. For the purposes of this Policy, a secondment can be either short term or long term. Staff who have availed of a long-term outward secondment will normally be expected to return to the Assembly Commission for a period of 12 months before applying for another outward secondment.

Short Term Secondments

11. A short-term secondment may be defined as lasting up to three months' duration. Other flexible approaches to secondment may also be considered under this category for example, a secondment arrangement for one day per week for a defined period.

Long Term Secondments

12. A long-term secondment is defined as a full-time move to another organisation which will last longer than three months' duration but will normally be limited to a period of two years.

OUTWARD SECONDMENTS

How External Secondment Opportunities are initiated

13. The Human Resources Office publish outward secondment and Interchange Opportunities on their External Opportunities page on AsslSt [here](#).
14. Outward secondment opportunities may also be initiated by staff. This might include for example, a shorter-term arrangement in which staff spend some time working with another organisation to develop their knowledge and understanding in a specific field.
15. In the event that staff become aware of a secondment opportunity that has not been published by the Human Resources Office, the details must be referred to the Human Resources Office who will consider if the opportunity should be published to all Assembly Commission staff.

Applying for an Outward Secondment Opportunity

16. An application for a secondment should be made to your Head of Business using the Secondment Application Form. You should also make your line manager aware of your application. The role of the Head of Business is to comment on your application taking account of how any secondment will affect the Business Area. This information will be considered by the relevant Director who will decide on whether your application is approved.
17. In the application form, you should provide a clear rationale for applying for the secondment, clearly explaining the benefits that the secondment will provide to you and the Assembly Commission. You may also be required to complete an application form by the Host Organisation to demonstrate how you meet the eligibility criteria for the post.
18. The primary consideration in deciding whether an outward secondment can be facilitated, is the business need within the Assembly Commission. There is therefore no guarantee that you will be able to take up a secondment opportunity. If your secondment application cannot be granted, your Director will provide an explanation as to why they have reached this decision.

19. If you have reasonable adjustments in your current post which will also be required whilst on outward secondment, the Human Resources Office will (with your consent) discuss these with the Host Organisation.

Payment of Salary while on Outward Secondment

20. If you are successful in attaining an outward secondment opportunity which is at a higher salary than your substantive salary, then you may be entitled to receive the higher salary, paid for by the Host Organisation. **However, at the end of the outward secondment, you will return to the Assembly Commission at your substantive grade and appropriate salary point.**
21. If your substantive salary is higher than that of the secondment post, the Human Resources Office will clarify with the Host Organisation if they will meet the shortfall. If the Host Organisation will not do so, in exceptional circumstances the Assembly Commission may decide to meet the salary shortfall. This decision will be made by the Head of Human Resources, in consultation with the Head of Finance, by weighing up the benefits of the secondment to the Assembly Commission against the increased costs associated with the secondment and budget availability.
22. Before an outward secondment commences, the exact terms of the secondment will be agreed between the Human Resources Office and the Host Organisation and written confirmation of the arrangements will be provided to you.

Planning for the End of an Outward Secondment

23. The Human Resources Office will liaise with the Host Organisation before the secondment is due to end to either confirm the end date or to establish if an extension is being requested. Should the Host Organisation request an extension to the secondment, the decision whether to approve or decline the extension request will be made by the relevant Director.

Termination of Outward Secondment

24. While outward secondments are normally for a set period of time, they can be terminated early. In any event, an outward secondee will return to the Assembly Commission to a post at their substantive grade. However, you should note that a return to the post which you occupied prior to secondment is not guaranteed.

Terms and Conditions during an Outward Secondment

25. During a period of outward secondment:
- The Assembly Commission's terms and conditions, including the Standards of Conduct Policy, remain applicable to staff members;
 - Any additional terms and conditions of the Host Organisation which will apply to the secondee will be notified by the Host Organisation;

- Management of performance will be the responsibility of the receiving manager in the Host Organisation for the duration of the secondment. At the end of the secondment, the Host Organisation will be required to provide a formal report on the secondee's performance to the Human Resources Office.
- Annual leave allowance will remain the same;
- If a secondment is outside of Northern Ireland, normal Public and Privilege holidays will apply. However, the secondee will be required to use annual leave to cover additional Public and Privilege holidays that apply within the Host Organisation; and
- Time spent on an outward secondment will not affect continuity of service.

Keeping in Touch

26. During a short-term secondment, you are required to maintain contact with your line manager. For long-term secondments, contact will be with the Human Resources Office. Prior to taking up a secondment, you should agree the regularity and form of contact with your line manager or the Human Resources Office.

27. The purpose of this contact is to:

- Allow management to communicate any significant changes within your own Business Area or the Assembly Commission;
- Ensure any problems are highlighted and addressed quickly; and
- Ensure you are notified of any recruitment competitions and other important notices.

INWARD SECONDMENTS

Initiating Inward Secondments

28. An inward secondment involves an employee from an external organisation (the Employer Organisation) taking up a vacant post within the Assembly Commission for a temporary period. Inward secondments will only be considered if the Assembly Commission is satisfied that it will benefit from the arrangement and the requisite specialist skills and expertise for the post are not readily available internally. Usually, an inward secondment opportunity will be for a time-bound project or specific piece of work, therefore permanent recruitment to the post would not be suitable.

29. Requests to fill a vacant post via inward secondment must be made in writing to the Head of Human Resources and must clearly set out the business need for the secondment arrangement.

30. The business need should include:

- An outline of the main duties and responsibilities;
- The reasons why a secondment is appropriate;
- Grade and salary range;
- Any additional costs/allowances;
- Confirmation from the Head of Finance that funding is available;
- Estimated duration of the secondment; and
- Suggested organisations from which to invite expressions of interest.

31. If the inward secondment opportunity is approved, the Head of Business, in conjunction with Human Resources Office, will be responsible for preparing a full job specification and expression of interest paperwork. A formal selection process will normally take place to identify the most suitable person. If an inward secondee has reasonable adjustments in their substantive role, the Assembly Commission will endeavour to facilitate these during the secondment. The onus to provide information on reasonable adjustments is on the individual or the Employer Organisation and this must be done before the inward secondment commences.

32. An inward secondee remains an employee of the Employer Organisation and the Assembly Commission reserves the right to terminate a secondment arrangement at any time.

Payment of Salary while on Inward Secondment

33. If the inward secondee's substantive salary is higher than the pay scale of the Assembly Commission's vacancy, the Human Resources Office will clarify with the Employer Organisation if they will meet the shortfall. If the Employer Organisation is not prepared to do so, in exceptional circumstances the Assembly Commission may decide to meet the salary shortfall. This decision will be made by the Head of Human Resources in consultation with the Head of Finance by weighing up the benefits to the Assembly Commission and the associated increased cost.

34. During their period of secondment with the Assembly Commission, the inward secondees salary will continue to be paid by the Employer Organisation. The Assembly Commission will reimburse the Employer Organisation for salary and employer costs, plus any other costs incurred on Commission work for example, overtime or travel. The Employer Organisation will invoice the Assembly Commission quarterly in arrears.

Planning for the End of an Inward Secondment

35. The Human Resources Office will liaise with the Employer Organisation before the inward secondment is due to end to either confirm the end date for the secondment or, if necessary, to seek an extension for a further defined period of time.

Terms and Conditions for Staff during an Inward Secondment

36. Before an inward secondment commences, the exact terms and conditions will be agreed between the Human Resources Office and the Employer Organisation.
37. During the period of inward secondment, the secondee must comply fully with the Assembly Commission's Standards of Conduct Policy and Corporate Values. If an inward secondee wishes to raise a concern or complaint during their secondment, they should in the first instance discuss the matter with their line manager in the Assembly Commission. Alternatively, they may seek advice from the Human Resources Office.

Evaluation of Secondments

38. Evaluation is a key part of the secondment process (outward and inward). Following an outward secondment, it is essential for you and your Host Manager to discuss the secondment, highlight aspects that have been beneficial to both parties and possible areas for improvement in the management of future secondment arrangements.
39. On your return to the Assembly Commission, you should meet with your line manager to discuss your experience, what you have learned and to agree how to share the knowledge with colleagues. This will also provide an opportunity for feedback and sharing of ideas.
40. At the end of an inward secondment, the Human Resources Office will prompt the relevant line manager to consider and document the benefit obtained by the Assembly Commission through the arrangement and send to the Human Resources Office.

Related Policies, Guidance & Forms

41. A number of documents are referenced in this Policy and can be found in the Staff Handbook or in the relevant area on AsslSt [here](#).