

The Special Incentive Career Break Scheme

Q. What are the details of the scheme?

A. This career break scheme does not supersede any existing career break schemes. With this new scheme, it is proposed to pay officers who opt for an incentivised career break **of three years** one third of their normal yearly salary (i.e. less allowances, overtime, etc) subject to a maximum of €12,500 per annum. Those working part time will receive a pro-rata equivalent. The payment, which is taxable and subject to the income levy, will be paid quarterly in arrears.

Q. Who can apply?

A. In order to be eligible for the Special Incentive Career Break Scheme, an officer must have completed two years' continuous service. An officer who is currently on a career break is not eligible to apply. While applications will normally be facilitated where possible, Agencies can refuse applications where there would be a significant impact on business delivery.

Q. Can a person currently on a career break re-apply and be paid the incentive?

A. No. As mentioned above they will still be subject to the scheme they signed up for.

Q. What if officers don't want to go on a career break for 3 years?

A. The special incentive scheme will only apply to officers who are prepared to take a career break for the full 3 years. Those who would like to go on a career break for a shorter period can continue to apply under the usual scheme for an unpaid career break or under the shorter working year scheme that has also been announced.

Q. When will officers have to start the career break?

A. Officers approved to take part in this scheme will have to start their career break by 1 October 2009, with limited exceptions (e.g. those on maternity leave or where for business needs, a later starting date is required).

Q. How long will the career break last?

A. A career break under this scheme will last for 3 years. Officers can apply to extend their career break for a maximum of two more years. **No incentive payment will be made for any period of extension nor any period awaiting resumption of duty.**

Q. Can a career break be taken for any purpose?

A. A career break can be allowed for family reasons, other domestic purposes (e.g. care of a relative), travel abroad, self-employment and educational purposes. Officers on career break are still public servants, and must make sure that anything they do does not conflict with that status or will not compromise their official position on return to work.

Q. Can I take up a job in the State while on a career break?

A. No. As stated above a career break can be allowed for family reasons, other domestic purposes (e.g. care of a relative), travel abroad, self-employment and educational purposes.

Q. Will this scheme be offered again next year?

A. This special scheme is being offered as a once-off measure, for career breaks of 3 years starting in 2009.

Q. Are people who apply for this scheme guaranteed jobs at the end of the career break?

A. Yes. The normal rules concerning career breaks will apply. Agencies must find a suitable vacancy in the Agency within 12 months of the end of a career break.

Q. What happens if the person does not come back at the end of the career break?

A. Officers availing of the scheme must keep in contact with their parent Agency. If they fail to make contact with their parent Agency indicating their intention to return at the end of a career break, and cannot be contacted following reasonable efforts, they will be deemed to have resigned from their position.

Q. Can applications for a career break be refused?

A. While Agencies are asked to facilitate applications for career breaks as far as possible, the needs of the work may require that some applications will have to be refused; the operation of the career break scheme is subject to the operating requirements of Agencies not being significantly adversely affected. An Agency may, for stated business reasons, prioritise between applications, having regard to the level of saving achieved by granting certain applications, the location or business area of the person(s) applying, and any other relevant matter.

Q. Will I be eligible to participate in internal/interdepartmental promotion competitions?

A. No. Staff on a career break may however apply for open recruitment competitions for which they are eligible. The career break and related incentive allowance will end if an appointment is accepted. However, if you are on an existing promotion panel on the date of the commencement date of your career break and if the panel is still in place when you resume work, you may be offered a place from that panel (your participation in the panel will be suspended until your career break ends).

Q. How is intended to maintain services in the light of an increase in departures arising from the Incentivised Scheme of Early Retirement (ISER) and other schemes while a moratorium on recruitment, promotion and acting up is in place?

A. The ISER, Incentivised Career Break and Shorter Working Years Schemes will be applied in a manner consistent with the moratorium. The Minister for Finance has consistently said that staff in the public service will be allocated and redeployed in the future to areas of highest priority.

Q. What are the next steps?

A. Applications have to be made to the Personnel Officer in the parent Agency and copied to the line manager by 14 August 2009. The career break will start no later than 1 October 2009 with limited exceptions (e.g. those on maternity leave or where for business needs, a later starting date is required).

Q. Who do I contact if I have any further questions?

A. You should contact the Personnel Unit in your parent Agency.