



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

# Requesting a Temporary Change to Current Conditions of Service

## Protocol

<b>Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty</b>	HR
<b>Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager</b>	Director of HR
<b>Date</b>	February 2014
<b>Status</b>	April 2022: Confirmed by HR to be current

---



## Protocol for the Approval of Staff Requesting a Temporary Change to Current Conditions of Service

### 1. Background

From time to time, staff may alter their current conditions of service and appointment, usually under the following conditions:

- 1.1 Staff requesting to take a period of unpaid leave for a variety of reasons;
- 1.2 Staff taking up a joint appointment<sup>1</sup>;
- 1.3 Staff taking up a research Chair for a contract period;
- 1.4 Staff being seconded to another area of the University for a period of time, linked to a fixed term appointment; and
- 1.5 Staff being seconded to other institutions for a period of time, linked to a fixed term appointment.

While this document recognises that such changes to the current conditions of service and appointment may be at the request of the institution, this document deals with requests made by staff.

### 2. Considerations for the Approval of such Requests

In the approval of requests, irrespective of the nature of requests, the following should be considered:

- 2.1 *Duration of the proposed arrangement:* In the case of joint appointments, research Chairs and secondments, approval would normally be for periods of 3 years or less, with an extension possible under certain circumstances e.g., appointment to a National Research Foundation Chair. In the case of unpaid leave for personal circumstances<sup>2</sup>, approval would normally be granted for no more than 3 months;
- 2.2 *Impact on the department:* Consideration would need to be given to how disruptive the arrangement will be for the department, how current levels of service delivery or the academic programme will be maintained, and how the absence of the staff member will impact the effective functioning of the team, the ease with which temporary staff can be found to replace that staff member (given the geographic location of Grahamstown) and the costs associated with this. This recognises that in most situations temporary staff usually do not contribute as fully as a permanent, productive staff member. The department would also need to consider what arrangements can be made to cope with the absence of the staff member concerned. In this regard, the concept of reasonable accommodation shall apply<sup>3</sup>. Consideration would also be given to the impact of the request on leadership arrangements e.g. if an Office Administrator wanted to take unpaid leave but a new HoD was due to start at this time who was also new to the institution and to the role of HoD, it is unlikely that this request would be granted.;

---

<sup>1</sup> This involves being employed by Rhodes University for a percentage of time and being on contract to another employer for the remainder of time.

<sup>2</sup> Such personal circumstances would be the death or severe illness of a spouse/partner, parent or child.

<sup>3</sup> The principles of reasonable accommodation recognises the ongoing relationship between the staff member and the institution and seeks to accommodate requests from the staff member that would not create unjustifiable hardship for the institution and/or department.

- 2.3 *Ease of replacement:* Consideration would need to be given to the scarcity of people within the area/discipline concerned both in terms of replacing that staff member in the short-term with a temporary staff member but also in terms of replacing that staff member in the long-term;
- 2.4 *Benefit to individual, department and institution:* Consideration would be given to the benefit that the altered conditions of service would provide to:
- 2.4.1 The individual as regards their personal well-being, career or professional development and/or professional standing;
- 2.4.2 The department as regards the contribution that the individual is likely to make as a result of their exposure to other organisations and experiences during for example, a joint appointment and the likelihood of the individual returning to employment at Rhodes University; and
- 2.4.3 The institution as regards potential exposure and reputation through association with the individual as well as the goodwill generated through being able to accommodate the individual.  
The institution would favour requests that are mutually beneficial.
- 2.5 *Unpaid leave to pursue employment opportunities elsewhere:* Consideration would not be given to individuals seeking to have unpaid leave from Rhodes University for a period of time in order to pursue employment opportunities elsewhere except where this is a secondment that is of direct benefit to the institution.

It must be recognised that while the above will be considered where a request has been made, the actual decisions taken may differ across departments due to the particular dynamics and needs of a department.

### **3. Application Process**

Where a staff member wishes to change their current conditions of service for a fixed period of time, the following process shall be followed:

- 3.1 A formal letter of application should be written by the staff member to the Head of Department. In the case of staff in academic departments, this should be forwarded to the Dean of the Faculty. In the case of support staff in service divisions, this should be forwarded to the Head of the Division;
- 3.2 The Dean of the Faculty or Head of Division should consult with the Head of Department based on the principles outlined in point 2 above. The Dean may also choose to consult with other staff in the academic department;
- 3.3 The Dean or Head of Division should discuss the matter with the HR Director before a final decision is taken between the Dean/Head of Division and HR Director. In arrangements of excess of 6 months, the HR Director should discuss these with the Vice-Chancellor; and
- 3.4 The Dean or Head of Division (or the HR Director on behalf of these individuals) will then communicate the decision to the academic member concerned and the HoD. Such final approval may be contingent on the University's ability to attract someone on a short-term or long-term contract basis. Bearing this in mind, applications should be made in good time.

### **4. Conditions associated with the Arrangement;**

Where a request has been approved, the following should be clarified in writing:

- 4.1 The period for which the approved arrangement shall last;
- 4.2 Whether the person will continue to contribute to the pension or provident fund at the appropriate rate recognising that the employer's portion will be adjusted accordingly to

recognise the reduced work hours or whether the administration fee will be paid to retain membership of the fund;

- 4.3 Whether or not the person will remain on the University's medical aid recognising that the employer's portion will be adjusted accordingly to recognise the reduced work hours;
- 4.4 That in the case of academic staff, there will be no accrual of academic leave. In the case of support staff, there will be no accrual of sick leave, annual leave or in the case of support staff on grades 6 and above, long leave;
- 4.5 That should the person elect to resign during this period of time, the resignation period required; and
- 4.6 In the event of a joint appointment, arrangements related to the payment of that portion of the individual's salary by the other institution or Rhodes University, contingent on the actual arrangement.

**Last revised: February 2014, Director: Human Resources**