A secondment is an arrangement between two departments or faculties where a staff member is temporarily transferred to another position within the University.

The University encourages secondments to provide development opportunities for staff and to assist the university with managing its resources and achieving its strategic objectives. It is recognised that individual skills and knowledge may be enhanced by secondments. Secondments also have organisational benefits including exchange of information and ideas, promotion of organisational relationships and investment in organisational effectiveness.

This resource provides some guidelines and information to assist with secondments within the University. It will assist managers to ensure high quality secondments.

Objectives

The objective of a secondment is to contribute towards achieving the University’s strategic objectives and to provide development opportunities that may have been identified in Development discussions.

Specifically, this involves:

- promoting greater mobility of staff within the University, to increase collaboration and understanding of the entire University and its complexities
- linking secondment opportunities with the competency framework of the University and the learning needs of individuals
- encouraging staff to share expertise
- increasing the transparency and openness of secondment opportunities
- effective use of expertise and resource for projects.

When to use a secondment

Where a staff member is expected to acquire new skills consistent with their agreed career/professional development plans.

For example, the person:

- has developed theoretical understanding but has little practical experience
- has practical hands-on-experience but needs to put this into a strategic or conceptual context
- has expertise in an area of speciality
• has project management training or experience in smaller projects and could take on a project management or leadership role

• will be "stretched" by an acting-up role, for example experiencing higher levels of leadership and accountability

• will benefit from working in a different or more complex role in another area of the University.

Sometimes a secondment will be a good choice because opportunities arise, that have not necessarily been previously agreed in a career or professional development plan. They may allow a staff member and department to acquire insights into other departments, to transfer knowledge, and to contribute to University-wide outcomes.

Secondments, can also be used to fill department’s short-term capability requirements, for example

• to build internal capability by:
  a. resourcing projects
  b. bringing in specialist skills; and/or
  c. transferring knowledge

• to fill positions during a staff absence; eg parental leave

• during a period of organisational change, when business requirements are being determined

• to provide back-up cover while a vacancy is being advertised and filled.

When secondments are not appropriate

Secondments should not be used:

• as a means of "shifting" a performance problem

• for use as a trial before making a permanent appointment or for individuals to use as a trial before applying for a job

• when other learning interventions for the individual would be more suitable.

How to organise secondments

The secondment arrangements are tripartite, taking into account the requirements of the staff member, the home department and the host department.

Secondments are not to be seen as a quick fix. Careful consideration is needed at each stage of the process to ensure that all parties are satisfied with the result. Of particular importance in the secondment is that the development needs of the staff member are likely to be met.

Advice should be sought from:

• Finance, about cost recovery expectations
- Human Resources, to ensure the secondment agreement meets all requirements, including policies and obligations

**Strategies to mitigate the risks of secondments**

A secondment may pose potential risks. However, there are strategies to address the risks and at the same time increase the quality of the secondment experience for all concerned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risks</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The home manager is reluctant to let the person be released on secondment due to:</td>
<td>Enable other staff to demonstrate unutilised skills. Use internal secondments to replace secondee. Use an external secondment or contractor. Ask for the secondees input on how best to back fill their position. Suggest an exchange from another area of the University. Prior to the secondment being confirmed you should discuss how you will utilise your annual leave you have accrued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Concerns about filling the secondee’s position</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Work pressures</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Accumulation of annual leave</td>
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<tr>
<td>The secondee is not satisfied on return to their previous position due to:</td>
<td>From the outset of the secondment, manage and plan for the secondee’s return, ensuring expectations are clear. Identify how to build on the secondee’s experience gained during the secondment, so that the likelihood of the secondee returning and being satisfied increases. Keep in touch with the secondee during the secondment and brief them on what is expected. Build on the experience gained on secondment by expanding the secondee’s role into more complex or higher profile work areas if possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Concerns about returning to a position at the same or similar level than before their secondment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Benefits of their experience on secondment not being realised</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondee does not come up to speed quickly.</td>
<td>Ensure the secondee is inducted in a structured way.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| The secondment may not work out | Keep in regular contact. Often the best learning opportunities are the most challenging.  
Ensure the secondee discusses any issues with the host manager.  
Use conflict resolution provisions if required. |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The project in the host area changes or is no longer viable. | Discuss options with the host manager.  
The secondment may need to be terminated. |
| The secondee does not return. | Keep the secondment duration to a reasonable length. The longer the duration, the less likely the secondee will return.  
If the secondee does not return, maintain contact with them. They may come back at a later date with better skills and experience. |

**Evaluation**

It is important that the secondee and the host department formally evaluate the secondment at its completion. Evaluations highlight the lessons learned from the secondment, and any potential improvements in the secondments process.

The following questions give you an idea of what should be discussed at the Evaluation.
## Suggested Evaluation Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Host Manager</th>
<th>Was a secondment the appropriate means to meet the business need?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did the nature of the work change? In what way?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was the secondee a good fit for the business need?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What worked well with the secondment? With the secondee?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What didn't work so well with the secondment? With the secondee?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What would you do differently with the next secondment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Manager</td>
<td>Was a secondment the appropriate development initiative for the individual?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How did the back-filling arrangements go?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Did the secondee enhance their competencies and performance as a result of the secondment?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How has the home department used the experience gained on secondment?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What worked well with the secondment? With the secondee?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What didn't work so well with the secondment? With the secondee?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What would you do differently with the next secondment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondee</td>
<td>Was the secondment worthwhile for you?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Was it a successful development opportunity?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you use what you learnt on secondment in your current role? If so, how?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Has your home faculty/department built on the experience gained as a result of the secondment? If so, how?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What worked well with the host faculty/department? With the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faculty/department? What didn’t work so well with the host faculty/department? With the home Faculty/department? What would you do differently with the next secondment?</td>
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