

Secondments at LSE

Guidance for managers: offering and managing a secondment

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Deciding if a recruitment opportunity is suitable for a secondment

If you have a vacancy in your team, think about whether it could be filled as an internal secondment. Not only will this help to keep your recruitment costs down, you'll be bringing in someone who already knows the School and who may also be available at shorter notice.

Of course, the suitability of a secondment depends on the circumstances. Try not to second guess whether any current employees will be interested - an employee may have career development aspirations that they have not yet revealed to their line manager or colleagues.

Many fixed-term vacancies are potential secondments, such as:

- Cover for a period of maternity or other family leave (this is a common reason for a secondment).
- Cover for a period of extended sickness absence.
- A project or new initiative which has an expected end date.

Discuss with the HR Partnering team if you are unsure whether a particular vacancy is suitable for a secondment.

Recruiting a secondment

A secondment is a formal change to an individual's contract of employment, which means that you should normally follow the School's standard recruitment process – i.e. advertise the role on the School's job webpages, carry out a rigorous shortlisting process, and hold a formal interview to determine which applicant is most suitable for the role.

Depending on the circumstances, you may consider recruiting for the vacancy as a development opportunity, in which case you could use less than the full job description. For example, if you are recruiting to cover a management post, consider widening the potential pool of applicants by welcoming applications from individuals who do not have previous management experience but are keen to acquire some.

I have a particular individual in mind; can I just give them the secondment?

You can, in theory, create a secondment with one individual in mind and then offer it to that individual. First, though, you should make sure that you have thought about the implications of not advertising the opportunity to a wider audience. Advertising the role, even if it is only within your organisational unit, means that you can choose from a bigger pool of applicants which improves the likelihood of appointing the best person for the role. You should also have specific reasons if you decide not to advertise the role more widely, for example if the secondment requires very specific skills or experience for which the individual in question is a close match.

Advertising a secondment

Secondments should normally be advertised on the School's [jobs webpage](#) so that all staff can see them and have the opportunity to apply. A vacancy can be advertised specifically as a secondment opportunity, or instead the advert can simply include a statement that applications to undertake the role as a secondment are welcome.

However, in some situations you can target a specific group of staff:

- Where the role itself is very specialist and only a minority of staff are likely to have the skills and experience required, or
- Where posts in a particular area are at risk of redundancy, in which case employees who are at risk should have first sight of any vacancies.

In some circumstances you can 'target' a particular individual for a secondment opportunity. You should speak with the HR Partnering team if you are thinking of doing this, or any other approach which means less than fully advertising a particular vacancy.

Why should I advertise a secondment across the School?

The secondment process has a level of flexibility and there are occasions when a secondment can be filled without being advertised across the whole School. At the same time, as a recruiting manager you will normally benefit from advertising the

opportunity as widely as possible so that everyone who might be interested has the opportunity to apply. Not only can you recruit from the widest talent pool, you also help to promote secondments as a positive development experience that motivate staff and enable the sharing of skills across the School.

Deciding on a shortlist

After the closing date has passed, assess the applications that have been received and interview shortlisted candidates in the normal way – i.e. against the essential criteria for the role. Depending on the number of applications you have received, this may involve drawing up a shortlist or selecting one individual for interview. If none of the applications meet the essential criteria sufficiently, or if you receive no applications, you can decide to re-advertise the opportunity or discuss with your HR Partner or Adviser about other ways of filling the vacancy.

You should use the School's recruitment system to send out interview requests to the shortlisted applicant(s). It's also recommended that you provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants, which can be verbal or written; your HR Administrator can provide some template responses.

Should I provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants?

Secondments can be a fantastic learning and development opportunity and it is important to make the experience as positive as possible for everyone involved. This includes providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants, especially if they are internal: this enables them to learn from the experience, which they can then feed into further discussions with their own line managers regarding their career development.

Confirming the offer of a secondment

Where an employee is successful at interview, you need to ask for the approval of their substantive line manager before any paperwork is issued. The line manager will normally only withhold their approval if there is a significant resourcing reason for doing so. Once

you have the line manager's approval, contact the HR Operations Team and they will send a change of contract letter to the employee.

Before the start of a secondment

If the secondee is an existing School employee, a brief induction can help them to settle into their new role quickly. Although the secondee already knows the School, they may not be familiar with how your department works (such as any departmental meetings), or what specific objectives and achievements are required from them and the rest of the team. You can find a suggested induction checklist for an internal secondee in Appendix B.

If the secondee is joining from outside the School, you should follow the standard induction checklist used by your department. You also need to liaise with HR's Immigration and Compliance team so that any necessary right to work checks are completed on or before the first day of the secondment.

Managing a secondment

During the secondment, you manage the secondee in the same way as you manage anyone else. This includes regular meetings throughout the secondment to review progress. You should also arrange a formal performance review if the secondee's annual performance and development review is due during the secondment. Depending on the timing, this may include liaising with the substantive line manager to undertake a split review, in which the manager of the team where the employee has spent the majority of the time undertakes the performance review, and the other manager sets the objectives. The rating submitted should reflect the entire year's activity and should be agreed by both managers.

You should discuss with the secondee and their substantive manager if at any point you feel that the secondment is not working, in which case your HR Partner can advise on next steps.

Extending a secondment

You can extend a secondment provided that the extension is agreed by all of the parties involved (i.e. the secondment manager, the substantive manager and the secondee). The extension should be approved by the budget holder for the area and Finance Division, in consultation with an HR Partner and the individual's substantive line manager.

Secondments should not normally be approved for a period longer than 12 months in total and they should only be extended if you have a reason to do so.

Secondments are most effective when they are for a defined period of time; this allows the work to be planned properly. Similarly, any extension to a secondment should be for a specific reason with a clear revised end date, for example to cover an extended period of maternity leave. Before you propose an extension, it's worth taking a moment to think about your reasons for doing so. Bear in mind that a secondment which lasts too long might make it more difficult for the secondee to integrate back into their substantive role.

If you have considered this and still think that an extension is necessary, you should discuss this with the secondee and the manager of their substantive role well in advance of the secondment's current end date. Remember that the other manager needs to consider how an extension might impact on any arrangements that are in place to cover the secondee and also on the workload of colleagues.

If you do not see a realistic end date for the work, you could consider making the role permanent. If the secondee was initially offered the role as part of a competitive recruitment process, you can offer them the permanent role provided that a) their performance has been satisfactory, and b) their substantive line manager is happy with the decision. However, if the secondee was 'placed' into the secondment, you should advertise the permanent role - the secondee can apply for the vacancy alongside other applicants. Talk with your HR Partner or Adviser if you are unsure.

Before the end of a secondment

An important part of making a secondment a success is how the employee uses their new skills and knowledge when they return to their substantive role. It is therefore recommended that you meet with the secondee before the secondment ends to discuss their experience. You can find a template for recording this discussion here [[link to secondment report template](#)]. This record can then feed into the discussion which the

employee has with their substantive manager when they return to their substantive role, as well as their future one-to-ones and performance and development reviews.

After a secondment ends

The employee is encouraged to discuss their experience with their substantive line manager when they return to their substantive role. Where this discussion is captured in writing, you may find it useful to ask for a copy so that you can review the secondment and think about what might be done differently in the future.

You may also be asked to contribute to the employee's subsequent performance and development review if it includes the secondment period, in which case you should agree with the substantive line manager on the overall rating.



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

HR

The London School of Economics
and Political Science
Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE

Email: humanresources@lse.ac.uk

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7955 0000

lse.ac.uk/HR



The information in this brochure can be made available in alternative formats,
on request. Please contact: humanresources@lse.ac.uk

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