

Secondments at LSE

Guidance for managers: supporting
employees on secondments

REQUIRES ROBOTO FONT

Please install Roboto via
the Software Centre



ABCDE
abcdef



ABCDE
abcdefg

Responding to interest in a secondment

Secondments can come in a number of shapes and sizes, and there are a number of ways in which an employee could become interested in one.

The employee may:

- Have seen a secondment advertised for which they would like to apply.
- Be interested in whether an existing internal vacancy would be considered as a secondment.
- Be interested in making a speculative application to a particular organisational unit or team.

Alternatively, the secondment may be an opportunity which either you or the employee have identified as a result of previous discussions that you have had about career development.

Whatever the source of the secondment, employees are advised to have a discussion with their line manager before applying. This should take the form of an open and supportive conversation about the employee's motivations and how the secondment might benefit their career development. This approach not only encourages the employee to be proactive about their career development, it also means that you are involved in the process from the outset.

You are not expected to make a formal decision at this stage; however, you should let the employee know if you have identified a potential issue which may affect your approval of the secondment. An open approach like this gives the employee an opportunity to respond to any issues that you have identified, so that they feel involved in a constructive discussion about their career development.

Being asked to approve a secondment

If the employee applies for a secondment and is successful at interview, you will be contacted (normally by the recruiting manager) to ask whether you approve the secondment. A secondment is a formal change to an individual's role at the School, so it is important to really think about the implications of what is being proposed.

What you think about depends to an extent on the circumstances of the role and the team.

It may, though, include:

- How you might plan and organise cover for the employee's substantive role if you were to approve the secondment.
- If the employee's substantive role is fixed-term or has limited funding, think about whether a lengthy secondment is the most suitable option.
- If the employee currently has line management responsibilities of their own, think about how these might be impacted by a secondment and how they might be covered, whether within the team or by appointment from outside the team.
- You could also think about how any skills gained during the secondment might benefit the employee's substantive role and the team as a whole.

There are a number of ways of making a secondment work well, both for the employee and the team. For example, this might be a good opportunity for someone else in the team to 'act up' during the employee's absence. Or, if some of your team work part-time hours, you could see whether any of them would be interested in taking on more hours to share the work. You could also consider whether the employee's absence potentially provides another secondment opportunity for someone else in the team. This can benefit the team's development and motivation; at the same time, you should be aware that creating a 'chain' of secondments brings its own challenges. It's recommended that you discuss the situation with an HR Partner if you are considering this option.

You can turn down the request provided that you have considered all of the above and still cannot approve the secondment. This will normally happen where:

- There is urgent work which cannot be covered or where the employee has specialist or technical knowledge which would be difficult to replace on a temporary basis, or
- You have significant concerns about the employee's performance in their substantive role.

You should speak with your HR Partner before making your final decision, especially if you are thinking of declining the request. If you have concerns related to the employee's performance, you should discuss these with your HR Partner; the concerns will normally be significant enough to have been raised previously. If you decide to decline the secondment request, you should meet with the employee to explain your reasons; your HR Partner can

advise how best to handle this meeting and also how the news should be communicated to the recruiting manager.

If you do not approve a secondment request, you should not finish the conversation at that point. By expressing an interest in a secondment, the employee has identified an area of work which they would like to develop or learn more about. It is important to work with the employee on other ways in which their interests could be met in the future. For example, job shadowing might be a good alternative where an employee is interested in a type of work or area of the School in which they have no previous experience. The [PSS Career Development](#) webpage shows all of the other options that are available.

One of my employees has requested a secondment. What support is available to my team if I approve the request?

An important part of the approval process is making plans to cover the employee's substantive role during their secondment. If you have been asked to approve a secondment, the HR Partnering team can advise how to cover the employee's absence. HR can also help if you subsequently find that an employee's absence is having a bigger than anticipated impact on your team's resources. Having to organise cover should not by itself be reason enough to decline a secondment request – at the same time, an employee going on secondment should not leave your team struggling.

Before a secondment starts

You should have a brief handover with the employee before their secondment starts so that there is a smooth transition for covering their absence. You may also find it useful to discuss the employee's learning objectives for the secondment; these objectives can later form the basis of a post-secondment debrief. You could also agree on how (if at all) the employee will communicate with their substantive team during the secondment – for example, whether they will still receive all-team emails or updates.

During a secondment

For the duration of the secondment, the secondee is managed by the line manager of the seconded post. That manager may contact you during the secondment, for example where:

- They have concerns that the secondment is not working and would like to discuss whether or not the secondment should continue. In this case, you will need to come to an agreement on the best way forward, depending on the circumstances. If the secondment is to be ended early, you'll need to agree on how to manage the secondee's return to their substantive role, and/or
- They wish to extend the secondment and would like to discuss whether you are happy with this.

Extension of a secondment

The manager of the secondment should approach you before they formalise an extension. There are a number of things to consider if you are asked for your approval. When appropriate, an extension can enable the employee to further develop new skills and experience that can enhance their return to the team when the secondment ends. At the same time, think about how an extension might impact on any ongoing cover arrangements as well as on the workload of the rest of the team. Also, keep in mind that a secondment which lasts too long might make it more difficult for the secondee to integrate back into their substantive role after the secondment ends.

If you see any difficulties with agreeing to an extension, for example in covering the secondee's substantive role, you may find it helpful to discuss the situation with your HR Partner. You can turn down the request if there isn't a reasonable way of covering the employee's substantive role. As always, you should provide a clear reason or reasons for the decision to everyone involved.

End of a secondment

A successful transition back into the substantive role is key to making secondments work, and there are a number of ways in which you can help to make the transition as smooth as possible. This should include meeting with the employee on the first day of their return.

The written record [link] of the employee's final meeting with the secondment manager can form the basis of this discussion.

You should also:

- Arrange a team meeting so that colleagues can update the employee on developments in their areas of work.
- Make sure that the employee is included in any department-wide communications from their first day back in the team (depending on the circumstances, the employee may already have been receiving such communications during their secondment).

Make sure that you continue to discuss any development or outcomes gained as a result of the secondment during future one-to-ones and performance and development reviews (as relevant); this includes reviewing any objectives that were agreed prior to the secondment. Where the employee's next performance and development review includes the secondment period, the secondment manager should contribute to the report and you should both agree 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

The London School of Economics and Political Science is a School of the University of London.
It is a charity and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Acts
(Reg no 70527).

The School seeks to ensure that people are treated equitably, regardless of age, disability, race, nationality,
ethnic or national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation or personal circumstances.

Design: LSE Design Unit (lse.ac.uk/designunit)
Photography: Nigel Stead, LSE School Photographer.