

Special Paid Leave

Policy Principles

Special paid leave is not an entitlement. Heads of Department/Post, however, have discretion to grant special leave with pay for both domestic (e.g. family emergencies, bereavement) and non-domestic (e.g. study leave, reserve forces training, voluntary public service) reasons.

This guidance provides further details of the circumstances in which special leave might be granted and relevant limits. It also provides advice on how to apply for special leave and recording procedures.

Unless stated otherwise any annual limits for special paid leave should be based on the annual leave year i.e. January to December.

Scope of Policy

To all FCO staff working in the UK or overseas.

Staff seconded/loaned or on interchange to the FCO on FCO terms and conditions.

Policy Procedure

1. How to apply
2. Recording
3. Appeals
4. [REDACTED]
5. [REDACTED]
6. [REDACTED]
7. [REDACTED]
8. [REDACTED]
9. [REDACTED]
10. [REDACTED]
11. [REDACTED]
12. [REDACTED]
13. [REDACTED]
14. Volunteering
15. Voluntary public service
16. Voluntary public service training courses
17. Youth Leadership training courses
18. Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award
19. [REDACTED]
20. [REDACTED]

1. How to apply

Before making any sort of commitment which may lead to a request for special leave, staff should first discuss their requirements with their line manager. Formal applications for special leave should be made, in writing, in advance to the Head of Department or Post via your line manager. It is recognised that staff may have no choice when court attendance or jury service is concerned. Special paid leave should normally be pre-authorized, but where circumstances make this impossible it may be authorised retrospectively.

In cases where there may be a conflict of interest with official duties and responsibilities, the Head of the Department can seek further advice on the propriety of the proposed arrangement from HRDirect.

2. Recording

Staff should keep a record of any special leave granted on Prism self-service. Line managers will approve the leave via Prism.

Staff in a Post with no access to Prism should keep a record of any special leave granted on their leave card (XP 81) (preferably on the back). When they transfer to a new Department/Post with access to Prism they should enter the details of any special leave into Prism. Line managers should also keep a record and initial their staff member's leave card.

3. Appeals

Special paid leave is not an entitlement and any disagreement between individuals and managers about whether it can be granted in a particular case is best resolved locally. If staff feel that any particular factor has not properly been taken into account, then they can ask their Head of Department or Post to reconsider the matter. If they remain dissatisfied they may appeal using the grievance procedure which is set out in Dispute Resolution Policy and Procedure.

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14. Volunteering

Staff who undertake volunteering activities may be granted a minimum of three days special paid leave. www.do-it.org.uk/ has details of volunteering opportunities available (NB page may not load on Firecrest).

15. Voluntary public service

Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 requires employers to allow their staff reasonable time off for public duties. The Civil Service has actively supported voluntary public service by allowing paid and unpaid special leave for voluntary public duties. The amount of special leave granted will need to be consistent with the needs of the FCO. However, a closer examination of the individual circumstances also provides an opportunity to meet the specific needs of a member of staff.

Although there is no statutory right for this time off to be paid, special paid leave may be granted within the limits set out below. It is for Heads of Department or Post to decide whether it is desirable for a member of staff to serve on any such body where there is a special relationship between the Department and the body concerned, or where there may be a conflict in the public view between the official function of the member of staff and his/her unofficial duties.

In view of the large number of voluntary organisations (small local organisations to large charities), it is not possible to give a comprehensive list of those for which special leave would be considered. However, staff and Heads of Department or Post may wish to take into account the following points when making or considering an application for special leave:

- there should be no conflict of interest between Foreign Office work and the work of the voluntary organisation involved
- volunteers should be able to provide details of the aims and objectives of the organisation
- volunteers should be able to demonstrate what their role would be, and how their time will be spent
- organisations whose prime objective is campaigning or lobbying should be avoided
- the volunteer should be able to provide an account of how their time was spent during their period of special leave (oral report to line management, or a more formal written account)

If there is any doubt about the propriety of the proposed arrangement, advice should be sought from HRDirect.

Staff who are members of a local authority and a member of other authorities, e.g. a Regional, District or Area Health Authority, Community Health Council, etc may be allowed an overall maximum of special paid leave of 24 days in any leave year. Any requests for special unpaid leave in addition to special paid leave should be referred to HRDirect for consideration.

Public Service Annual Limit

Public Service	Maximum Number of days paid leave per year
Magisterial duties/Justice of the Peace (plus reasonable time for travelling, to permit up to 26 attendances)	18 days
Local Government work	18 days
Elected member of a local authority including Mayors in their Mayoral year and Chairman of Councils	This total may be increased to 24 days if the Department is satisfied that the duties equate to those of a Lord Mayor
Lord Mayor and Lord Provost in Mayoral	24 days
Attendance at meetings and other essential business of bodies such as National Health Service (e.g. Health Authorities and Family Practitioner Committees)	6 days
Prison Visiting Committees and Boards of Visitors	6 days
Committees of Local Authorities	6 days

Managing or Governing Body of Educational Establishment School or College Council	6 days
Attendance at meetings of fee paying bodies, such as Industrial Tribunals, provided an undertaking is given not to claim or accept any compensation other than for travel or subsistence purposes	3 days

Consideration will be given to granting special paid leave for other public services not listed above. Heads of Department or Post have discretion to grant up to five days' special leave with pay for public/private sector voluntary work with special leave granted for certain post holders. This initiative aims to encourage closer partnership between voluntary organisations and the public sector.

16. Voluntary public service training courses

For initial training course for members of the Special Constabulary, Auxiliary Coastguard Service and the Royal Navy Lifeboat Institution, up to five days' special paid leave may be granted to staff.

17. Youth Leadership training courses

Up to five days' special paid leave may be granted to staff who are part-time youth leaders and assistant youth leaders who undertake courses in youth leadership run by various national voluntary organisations such as:

- British Red Cross Society
- Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme
- The Guide Association
- Outward Bound Trust
- St John's Ambulance Brigade
- Scout Association

18. Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award

Special paid leave may be granted to staff to enable them to be presented with the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award.

[REDACTED]