

Career Breaks and flexible working: Guidance for reviewers.

The assessment of MRC funding applications frequently involves appraisal of the applicant's track record. In making this appraisal, review panels take into account time spent outside the active research environment, whether through career breaks or flexible working.

Impact of Career Breaks and Flexible working

In assessing the effects of career breaks or flexible working, panels will note the applicant's career trajectory and potential at the beginning of a break, relative to the stage of the applicant's career. In assessing applicants, panels will recognise that the effects on productivity of a career break, or a period of flexible working, may continue beyond the return to work. The following areas may be affected*:

- Presentation and publication record
- Track record of securing funding, including time to obtain preliminary data
- Maintaining networks of research contacts and research collaborations
- Recruitment of staff
- Time required for training
- The ability to take up opportunities in different geographical locations
- The ability to take up courses, sabbaticals, 'visits', placements and secondments

Definitions of Career Break and Flexible working

Career breaks are defined as a substantive period of time spent outside research.

Reasons may include* the following:

- Personal reasons
- Trying out a new career
- Parental leave
- Ill health, injury or disability
- Caring/domestic responsibilities
- Study/training/further education

Flexible working describes any working arrangement where the number of hours worked, or the time that work is undertaken, vary from standard practice and could include* the following:

- Reduction in full time hours
- Long term partial return to work
- Job Sharing
- Compressed working hours
- Term-time only working
- Annualised hours

Career breaks and flexible working: Guidance for applicants

Applicants should make clear any substantive periods of absence from research within their application. Further details on the nature of the absence and how it has affected track record, productivity and career progression may be provided if desired¹.

Information provided will be used only to make appropriate adjustments when assessing an individual's track record, productivity and career progression.

¹ The Information provided in response to this question helps the MRC in assessing how effective our policies and procedures are in promoting equal opportunities. This information may be used anonymously for statistical purposes and any publication would be on aggregate level. The information is treated in confidence and in line with the Council's data protection procedures.

*Lists are not exhaustive