Voluntary Severance – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This document relates to the University's general ongoing position on Voluntary Severance.

What is Voluntary Severance [VS]?

VS is part of the University's normal business processes and has been used effectively for many years. It is entirely voluntary for both parties.

A 'voluntary severance payment' is any payment in connection with a mutually agreed and voluntary early ending of the employment relationship.

VS offers opportunity for some members of staff to leave the University to pursue other career or personal interests as well as being in the interests of the University.

Is an approach made to all staff asking them to consider VS?

Staff may be approached directly about VS. Staff may also be alerted via Staff News, or local communications that VS opportunities are available.

VS is entirely voluntary, and no pressure will be placed on any individual to apply for VS. If you have any queries about the process, you may contact the HR Helpline.

If I am interested, am I guaranteed VS?

There is no automatic right to VS and it will normally only be offered where the University needs to make savings in a specific area.

Often VS is not an option, either because it does not suit individuals' personal circumstances or because it is important to retain the member of staff in the organisation. However, in some situations voluntary severance may work for both the University and for individuals, depending on the savings that can be achieved and the member of staff's individual circumstances.

If I am interested, how do I enquire about VS?

All staff employed by the University may enquire about VS by making an approach to their manager to discuss/note their interest. Alternatively, staff may contact the HR Helpline in confidence. There is no automatic right to a severance package and only cases that are in the University's best interest will be recommended for approval.

Are all staff offered the same financial 'package'?

Financial 'packages' will vary because they are dependent on the needs of the University and the member of staff's individual circumstances.

Can I find out how much I might be offered?

As stated above, packages will vary from person to person and there will need to be a discussion between you, your line manager and an HR Partner – Advisory to discuss any potential offer. However, you may speak to the HR Helpline in the first instance.

If the University runs a central Voluntary Severance scheme, a calculator will usually be made available which will assist staff in calculating the package they would be offered.

Is VS available on an ongoing basis?

VS is part of the University's normal business processes and has been used effectively for many years and is expected to continue to be. But availability is dependent on funding being available and certain individual circumstances.

VS packages are funded by the employing College/PSG, however, when the University runs a University-wide VS scheme, alternative funding arrangements may be put in place. If you have a query about VS in general you should contact your line manager in the first instance, or you may contact the HR Helpline in confidence.

Are staff on external funding eligible for VS?

In principle, yes. However, VS will normally only be offered where the University needs to make savings in a specific area and that would not usually relate to external funding, so it is less likely that a VS case for an externally-funded member of staff will be in the University's interests. Therefore, applications that do not generate savings due to being externally funded are therefore unlikely to be approved. During Voluntary Severance schemes staff should refer to eligibility criteria provided as part of any such scheme.

Can I enquire for VS again if previously refused?

Yes – circumstances change and you can discuss this with your manager at any time but, as ever, there is no guarantee that it will be approved.

Can I reduce my working hours before leaving under VS?

This is not typically covered by the VS arrangements but this is something that can be explored/discussed with your manager.

What is a Settlement Agreement?

VS agreements will normally be subject to the completion of a 'Settlement Agreement'. A Settlement Agreement is a legally binding agreement, following the agreement of termination of employment. The Settlement Agreement will provide a full breakdown of the 'package' you are receiving. The University pays a contribution of £500 plus VAT towards legal fees incurred solely in connection with the advice received by the member of staff on the terms and effect of entering into the agreement.

What happens once I have been offered VS?

HR will process the appropriate documentation for the offer to proceed. The documents will include details of the terms and conditions discussed and agreed. Once you sign and return the documentation this forms an agreement committing you to acceptance.

What if I indicate interest but then change my mind?

Registering an interest and obtaining a pension estimate (if applicable) is entirely without prejudice and does not mean you are committed to proceeding with voluntary severance.

Where can I obtain Financial Advice?

The University cannot promote or endorse individual financial advisors. It can provide details

of some organisations that individuals may decide to approach but uptake is entirely at the discretion of the member of staff.

A list of financial advisors can be sourced at www.unbiased.co.uk/ and click on the link to find an IFA.

Does the University pay for independent financial advice?

No.

What happens to my pension entitlement if I take VS?

The University operates/supports various pension schemes and staff wishing to enquire about pension options, in the event that they are considering applying for or accepting a Voluntary Severance offer, should contact the University Pension Office.

If I take VS, can I apply to work for the University again in the future?

Re-employment to the same, or essentially the same, job in the same School/Department is not allowed. Normally, re-employment to another job in the University will not be allowed for a specified period (usually 3 years) without repayment of all or part of the VS package. This will be specified in the settlement agreement.