

**VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE SCHEME**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Occasionally there may be changes at the College, for example in the curriculum, organisational structure or in working practices which mean that the particular skills of a staff member are no longer required.  In these circumstances the relevant employment policies will be followed, for academic and professional services staff.

1.2 These policies commit the College to averting redundancy where possible. This might be through alternative cost-saving measures; natural wastage; restrictions on recruitment; curtailing of overtime; voluntary reductions in hours, etc; or through redeployment to another role within the College.

1.3 Where redeployment is not possible, and as an alternative to the provisions of the relevant employment policies, employees, may request via Human Resources that the College’s Special Reward Panel consider them for a severance payment as appropriate, on the terms set out in sections 6 & 7 below.

1.4 It is a requirement of this scheme that a binding settlement agreement must be entered into whenever a severance payment is agreed.

1.5 This scheme, including but not limited to the amount of any severance payment, is non-contractual.  Following consultation with the recognised trade unions, the College reserves the right to amend this scheme at any time or to discontinue it in its entirety.

1.6 In considering any application for Voluntary Severance under this scheme, the College will wish to maintain an appropriate level of services to students, staff and clients, and this will need to be taken into account before any such application is approved.

**2. SCOPE**

2.1 This scheme applies to all permanent, full and part-time staff of the Royal Veterinary College.

2.2 To ensure its fair and consistent application, and that the College meets its obligations under relevant Equalities legislation, the procedures set out in sections 4, 5 and 8 below must be followed in all cases.

2.3 Staff who are not considered eligible include:-

* 1. those who have already submitted a letter of resignation prior to any ‘call for volunteers’ (see Section 4 below).
	2. those whose employment is time-limited, having a notified or anticipated end-date.
	3. those who are subject to final stage disciplinary proceedings which are yet to be concluded.
	4. those other staff who fail to submit their formal application to be considered for voluntary severance within any deadline associated with a ‘call for volunteers’.

**3. RE-EMPLOYMENT & CONSULTANCY ARRANGEMENTS**

3.1 As a public body, the College is accountable to its Council and regulatory bodies for the proper use of its funds.  Accordingly, any re-employment or consultancy arrangement entered into with an individual following termination of employment must be fair and proper in all the circumstances.

3.2 In order to ensure that any re-employment or consultancy is appropriate, no such arrangement will be permitted within 52 weeks of a termination of employment under this scheme. Re-employment or consultancy after this period will be permitted, but for the following 52 weeks is subject to the written approval of the Principal.

3.3 Former employees are able to apply for any vacancies at the College from 1 August 2022 and will be treated in the same way as any other applicant.

**4. ‘CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS’**

4.1 For strategic, organisational or other reasons, the College may, from time-to-time, and at its absolute discretion, offer employees across the institution the opportunity to volunteer for a severance package under this scheme. Any decision to apply for such a package would be at the discretion of individual employees. However, to assist with such decisions, the College will indicate, as appropriate to the circumstances pertaining at the time, any operational areas from which applications would be welcomed, and any from which applications are unlikely to be approved.

4.2 It therefore follows that in these circumstances any employee would be eligible to apply, but there would be no ‘guarantee’ that such an application would be approved by the College. All applications would be assessed against the criteria outlined in section 5 below, and any others pertaining at that time.

 Such a Call for Volunteers would normally be time-limited, and all terminations of employment would be expected to have been completed within a further 60 working days.

**5. CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS**

5.1 Written requests by an employee for voluntary severance will be considered by the Special Reward Panel (SRP), which is responsible for all the College’s locally determined non-contractual pay arrangements.  Any severance payment arrangement is invalid unless considered and approved by the SRP.

5.2 The Special Reward Panel is comprised as follows:

* The Principal (Chair)
* The Chief Operating Officer & Secretary to Council
* The Director of Finance
* The Director of Human Resources

Other members of the College Executive Committee are ex-officio members of the SRP, and may attend its meetings on an ad hoc basis. Where appropriate, for example where guidance may be required in terms of costs, independent members of Council may be co-opted onto the SRP.

5.3 The Panel meets on a termly basis but to expedite strategic management decisions can convene as appropriate outside its normal cycle of meetings. Without exception all requests for voluntary severance must be sent to the Panel via Human Resources.

5.4 No decision will be taken by the SRP without the Chair’s express approval.

5.5 Whether or not a severance payment will be offered to an employee is a decision for the SRP.  When making this decision the Panel will consider all the relevant facts, including, but not limited to, the following three criteria:

* 1. the net saving which will be made – viewed in the context of the costs to be incurred;
	2. whether making that saving is in the best interests of the College’s academic, clinical, support or business activities;
	3. whether it is in the College’s interests overall, including consideration of its duties as a higher education institution.

5.6 Before they are enacted, and in accordance with the current requirements of the relevant College Statutes and procedures, all decisions taken by the SRP in respect of voluntary severance agreements with academic members of staff must first be considered by a Redundancy Committee of Council. The Redundancy Committee will make a recommendation to the full Council as to whether such voluntary severance agreements should be approved.

**6. SEVERANCE PAYMENTS**

6.1 The SRP will decide whether or not to approve an application for a severance payment and, if approved, the amount of any such payment will be calculated as outlined in 6.2.

6.2 One month’s pay for every completed year of service as at 13 May 2021 (the closing date of the scheme) with a minimum of five months’ pay and a maximum of ten months’ pay or £90k, whichever is the lower. Severance payments are inclusive of a payment in lieu of contractual notice.

| Number of years’ service  | Severance payment |
| --- | --- |
| Up to and including 5 years of service | 5 months’ pay |
| 6-9 years of service | 1 month’s pay for each completed year of service |
| 10+ years of service | 10 months' pay to a maximum of £90k |

6.3 Under current HM Revenue & Customs guidelines, up to £30,000 of this payment can be made tax free and without deductions for National Insurance contributions. However, payments in lieu of notice will be subject to statutory deductions.

6.4 It is a condition of any voluntary severance payment made under this scheme that in accepting it, the employee agrees to waive all entitlements, including financial entitlements, under the College’s Statutes and procedures, including the Redundancy Procedure. In the event of conflict between the provisions of the various Statutes, procedures and schemes, the provisions of this document would take precedence for the purposes of any voluntary severance agreement.

6.5 For the purposes of calculating the payment, pay will be determined on basic salary and London Weighting only and will not include any additional allowances or supplements.

6.6 Individuals can, under the rules of the scheme, take retirement as long as they meet the criteria of the USS/SAUL pension scheme.

**7. APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

7.1 Following a ‘Call for Volunteers’, employees considering making an application under this scheme may contact Human Resources (in confidence if they so wish) for advice on how to do so, and to discuss the value of any payments, benefits or entitlements. Formal applications must be made using the relevant forms, which are available at [www.rvc.ac.uk/hr](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/hr). In order for an application to be considered by the SRP, the relevant Manager and/or Head of Department will need to consider the potential operational and financial impact of the proposal prior to an application being submitted.

7.2 The SRP will meet to consider the applications received in accordance with section 5 above. Decisions will be communicated to employees and their managers within five working days of the meeting (within five working days of Council approval for academic staff).

**8. MONITORING & REVIEW**

 8.1 Application of this scheme will be monitored by the Equality Strategy Working Group to ensure its use

is non-discriminatory and free from bias. It will be reviewed periodically by the Special Reward Panel

and College Executive Committee.

 **Human Resources**

 April 2021