

Ending Fixed Term Contracts

Parts of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 came into effect on 1 August 2025. These strengthen the legal duties of universities in relation to free speech and academic freedom. Regulation of the new duties is undertaken by the Office for Students (OfS), which has published regulatory guidance on the topic.

The University is fully committed to securing and promoting freedom of speech within the law for staff, students and visiting speakers in all activities relating to academic life. The University's [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#) sets out the University's values, approach and associated procedures in detail.

This guidance is currently being reviewed against the OfS' regulatory guidance. Any amendments arising from the review will be subject to approval being sought through the University's normal governance processes. In the meantime, **this guidance is to be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the Code of Practice; in the case of any perceived conflict, the provisions of the Code of Practice will take precedence insofar as that is lawful and reasonably practicable.**

For further information on the new legislation, please see the [Governance and Compliance Division website](#).

1. Introduction

This is a quick and simple guide to the procedures for ending fixed term contracts that must be followed for **all staff with limited tenure across the University**. This includes research staff (who make up the majority of our staff on fixed-term contracts and are supported by external sponsors) and all other staff employed on fixed-term contracts (for example those engaged to provide short-term cover, and trainees).

The Employment Act 2002 (Dispute Resolution) Regulations 2004, came into force on 1 October 2004 and set out a statutory minimum dismissal procedure which must be applied to all staff. The Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002 came into force on 1 October 2002 to ensure that staff on fixed term contracts are not treated less favourably than staff on similar permanent contracts. In addition, the Regulations confirm that the expiry or non-renewal of a fixed term contract is a dismissal in law on the grounds of redundancy. Therefore statutory dismissal procedures apply to staff on fixed term contracts.

This means that from October 2004, employers have been required to follow a minimum three-stage process when ending any fixed term contract. Simplified, the required process is as follows:

1. Written invitation to consultation meeting
2. Consultation
3. The right to appeal

If an employer fails to follow the minimum 3 steps the dismissal could **automatically be deemed as unfair** and taken to tribunal.

As a result of this legislation the University has developed a procedure for ending fixed term contracts that incorporates both the minimum steps required to comply with dismissal legislation when ending a fixed term contract and internal procedures intended to provide support to staff in these situations, such as redeployment.

2. Procedure for ending fixed term contracts

Human Resources forward notifications of fixed term contracts, of one year or over in length, that are due to cease to the head of each department approximately six months prior to their end date (for contracts that are under one year in length this notification will be sent two months prior to the end date). As the time frame required to end any employees fixed term contract should allow for consultation and notification, this gives managers sufficient notice to plan when to start this procedure.

1. Informally notify all staff of the situation preferably at least four months prior to the end date of their contract (although notice need not be given, it is good practice to give prior notification). Please see [Ending of Fixed Term Contracts Schedule](#).
2. Set up a consultation meeting with all staff where there is a possibility that their contracts will not be extended. The invitation should be in writing, advising staff of their right of representation. Please see [Invitation to consultation sample letter](#).
3. Complete the [CHRIS/43](#) record of consultation form and forward it to Human Resources immediately after each meeting.
4. After the consultation period, write to each member of staff (copied to HR) giving them formal notification of the end of their contract. In accordance with best practice, to allow for adequate consultation and assistance with redeployment, it is recommended that the letter is sent in line with the member of staff's contractual notice period (for example, this could be as much as twenty weeks prior to the contract end date in instances where contractual/statutory notice is three months), confirming the date that their contract will end and that they have the right to appeal against the decision. Please see [Formal notification sample letter](#) and [Appeals Procedure](#).
5. Continue to consider redeployment opportunities within your institution; liaising with the Human Resources Division regarding opportunities throughout the University.
6. Keep in regular contact with staff up until their last day.
7. You should process the individual as a leaver within CHRIS yourself to terminate employment. Please see [Leaver Administration](#) for more information.

It is essential that you notify Human Resources during the early stages of this process. This enables your HR Business Manager or HR Adviser to contact the employee about providing redeployment assistance and to write to the employee notifying them of any redundancy payment due to them. See [Redeployment guidance and process](#).

3. Additional note

It is important to follow these procedures even when it is still not definite that a fixed term contract will cease (e.g. when waiting for the outcome of a grant application). It is safer to extend the contract at the last minute than to fail to properly consult with the member of staff.

Failure to consult can result in a grievance or unfair dismissal claim, where as a minimum you may be required to pay compensation on top of any redundancy payment.

Periods of appointment and reappointment must not be used as a way of dealing with problems, e.g. as a means of avoiding the need to address conduct or performance issues. This practice would be contrary to legislation; in particular the Fixed Term Employees Regulations 2002 which state that the use of fixed-term contracts must be objectively justified.

When a member of staff is on maternity or long term sick leave these procedures must still be carefully followed. In these circumstances please contact your HR Business Manager or HR Adviser in advance of the contract end date for guidance on the best way of conducting the consultation process.

4. Employee information regarding the redeployment process

If your contract of employment (or series of contracts) was for a fixed term and is due to come to an end, the Human Resources Division will take steps to assist you to seek an alternative post if you so wish.

If you do not wish to seek redeployment in the University, you will be asked to indicate this intention on the CHRIS/43 Record of Consultation on Ending of Fixed Term Contract.

Normally the timeframe during which the redeployment process will operate will continue until either alternative employment is obtained, or the existing employment is due to come to an end.

If you indicate that you request assistance in finding an alternative post you will be contacted by the Human Resources Adviser (HRA) for your School who will provide information and the opportunity to arrange a meeting with you to discuss your redeployment options.

5. Information for further guidance

If you are in doubt about any aspect of this procedure then do not hesitate to contact your HR Business Manager or HR Adviser.

Other sources of information are:

- [Background to the Procedures for the Ending of Fixed Term Contracts](#)
- [EU Directive on Fixed Term Working](#)
- [Guidance on the Dispute Resolution Regulations](#)
- [Redundancy Pay: Notes of Guidance](#)