

Shorter Working Year Scheme

Q. What are the details of this scheme?

A. The new scheme will allow public servants to apply for special *unpaid* leave for one or more continuous periods of not less than 2 and not more than 13 weeks at any time during the year. A maximum of 3 periods amounting to 13 weeks in total may be applied for.

Q. Is the scheme replacing the Term Time Scheme?

A. Yes. The scheme supersedes the current term time scheme and will be reviewed in 3 years.

Q. What is the difference between this new scheme and the term time scheme currently available?

A. Some current term time schemes only allows for parents of school-going children up to 18 years of age to take a continuous block of 8, 10 or 13 weeks unpaid leave during the summer holidays so as to have time off with their children. This new scheme, which supersedes the term time scheme, will allow any public servant an opportunity to take up to 3 continuous blocks of not less than 2 and not more than 13 weeks (to a maximum of 13 weeks) unpaid leave for any reason at any time during the year.

Q. What is the effective date for the scheme?

A. The scheme will apply from the date of the new circular.

Q. Will this affect people taking Term Time this year?

A. No. Approved Term Time arrangements for 2009 are not affected by this change.

Q. Who can apply?

A. Any public servant, who is not on probation on the date where it is proposed to take the leave without pay can apply for the Shorter Working Year Scheme. While applications will normally be facilitated where possible, Agencies can refuse applications where business delivery could be affected.

Q. Can salary be spread over the year for those who opt for the special leave?

A. Yes. Applications will normally have to be made by a date specified by your Agency in the previous calendar year to allow arrangements to be made to spread salary payments over the year. If applications are not made in the previous year, the leave will have to be taken on an unpaid basis.

Q. Do I decide what weeks to take?

A. You must indicate on your application the period and time of year that you wish to take special leave. However the business needs may preclude the granting of some or all of the special leave. You must be prepared to discuss alternatives, if feasible.

Q. Can an application for this scheme be refused?

A. Every application for special leave under this scheme must be considered by line managers. While it is expected that the majority will be granted, an Agency may exercise its discretion to refuse an application if it would have an adverse effect on an Agency's business needs.

Q. Will this scheme be offered again next year?

A. Yes. The scheme will run for an initial period of 3 years.

Q. What are the next steps?

A. Applications will have to be made in writing to the line manager by a certain date determined by your Agency. Applications to participate in the scheme must state the period and time of the year that it is proposed to take the special leave. Your Agency may permit applications for leave up to 8 weeks under this scheme to be taken in 2009; the spreading of salary will not be possible and any leave approved will have to be on an unpaid basis.

Q. How is it intended to maintain services in the light of an increase in departures arising from the Incentivised Scheme of Early Retirement (ISER) and other schemes while a moratorium on recruitment, promotion and acting up is in place?

A. The ISER, Incentivised Career Break and Shorter Working Years Schemes will be applied in a manner consistent with the moratorium. The Minister for Finance has consistently said that staff in the public service will be allocated and redeployed in the future to areas of highest priority.

Q. Who do I contact if I have any further questions?

A. You should contact the Personnel Unit in your parent Agency.