

Voluntary Severance Scheme FAQ's

About the Scheme

What is Voluntary Severance?

Voluntary Severance is a term which is used to describe a situation where an employee receives a payment from their employer in connection with a mutually agreed and voluntary early departure from their employment.

The decision to apply for, accept voluntary severance and mutually leave employment is an employee's voluntary decision.

When can I apply for voluntary severance?

The Voluntary Severance Scheme will be open from 9am on 6 March 2024 and will close at 12 noon on 8 April 2024. You can apply at any time during this period. Applications received after the closing date will not be considered.

Are the voluntary severance terms the same as those previously offered in other Voluntary Severance Schemes?

The University does not have a set Voluntary Severance Scheme. The terms of each Voluntary Severance Scheme will vary depending on the circumstance. This Scheme is more generous than the most recent Voluntary Severance Scheme offered by the university during the pandemic period.

Do I need to speak to anyone before applying for voluntary severance?

Firstly, it is important to read the eligibility criteria to see if you are eligible to apply. It is not compulsory to discuss your application with anyone before you apply, though you may wish to seek advice.

If you are eligible and would like to apply, you can have a discussion with your School Manager or Line Manager (for Professional and Technical Services staff) or with your Head of School or Line Manager (for Academic and Research staff).

For any voluntary severance process questions, you can either email in confidence or request an appointment with a member of staff from the HR Voluntary Severance team by contacting the team at: VS-questions@qmul.ac.uk.

For any pension-related questions, you can either email or request an appointment with a member of staff from the Pensions team by contacting the team at Pension@qmul.ac.uk.

Have the details of the Voluntary Severance Scheme been shared with the trade unions?

The details of the Voluntary Severance Scheme were sent to the trade unions on 28 February 2024 and then discussed with the trade unions at the JCF Sub-Committee meeting which was held on 4 March 2024.

Does the Faculty have a target of how many staff it needs to take up voluntary severance?

The Faculty does not have a target for the number of staff that it needs to take voluntary severance. This is a voluntary scheme which has been introduced for staff to consider and apply for given the current and foreseeable financial circumstances the Faculty faces. The future salary savings of all successful applications will help towards the Faculty's overall medium-term financial position. The costs of the Scheme are being covered by central university funds, with no lower or upper limit.

Will the Faculty be undertaking future reorganisation processes if there is insufficient take up of the Voluntary Severance Scheme?

The Faculty is embarking on a multi-year programme of change addressing many areas of our academic and financial strategy. A Voluntary Severance Scheme is being introduced now to help support flexibility in our delivery model and mitigate against further action.

Is the Voluntary Severance Scheme only open to staff from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences?

Yes, the Voluntary Severance Scheme is only open to eligible staff who work within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Eligibility to apply**Who is eligible to apply?**

Employees of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences who have one year's continuous service with Queen Mary at the time of submitting their application on 8 April 2024.

Employees who are employed on permanent or fixed term Contracts of Employment and are paid from core University funds.

Who is not eligible to apply?

Staff on casual and/or agency contracts.

Employees who have already given notice of their intention to leave the University and their resignations or retirements have been accepted.

Any type of role which would ordinarily have been eligible but has a fixed term contract end date which will come to a natural end before or by the latest voluntary severance exit date (31 July 2024) and where there are no funded plans to extend an employee's contract.

Employees who are funded solely by external research grants and do not hold a core funded substantive post.

Employees who are named researchers on a project and whose departure would adversely impact on the funding and/or completion of the project.

I have read the eligibility criteria, and I am not sure if I am eligible to apply. Who can I talk to for clarification?

You can speak directly to your School Manager, Head of School or Line Manager. You can also contact the HR VS Team in confidence at: VS-questions@qmul.ac.uk.

If I have more than one role, can I apply for voluntary severance for either role?

Employees who have multiple posts can apply in relation to any of their post(s) if they meet the eligibility criteria for that post.

I am on sick leave, can I apply?

Yes, provided you meet the eligibility criteria and you have not already given notice of your intention to leave the University and your resignation or retirement has been accepted.

I am on Maternity/Adoption/Parental Leave, can I apply?

Yes, provided you meet the eligibility criteria and you have not resigned or declared in writing your intention to leave the University at any point prior to 31 July 2024.

Employees on maternity/adoption/parental leave who are considering applying for voluntary severance do need to consider the following:

- If your application is accepted, you would be voluntarily ending your maternity/adoption/parental leave early and would leave employment by 31 July 2024.
- Your voluntary severance payment will be calculated based on what your substantive grade salary would have been had you not taken maternity/adoption/parental leave as of your last day of service.
- The University will make a payment for any outstanding Statutory maternity/adoption/parental pay that is owed.
- There will be no requirement for you to refund any enhanced maternity/adoption/parental pay that has already been paid.
- Payment in lieu of notice would be paid at the rate of full pay based on what your substantive grade salary would have been had you not taken maternity/adoption/parental leave as of their last day of service.

I am on secondment, can I apply?

Yes, provided you meet the eligibility criteria and you have not resigned or declared in writing your intention to leave the University at any point prior to 31 July 2024. Your voluntary severance application will be based on your substantive role. (For clarity, this is the role you undertook prior to your secondment).

I am on Sabbatical Leave, can I apply?

Yes, provided you meet the eligibility criteria and you have not resigned or declared in writing your intention to leave the University at any point prior to 31 July 2024.

I am on unpaid Leave, can I apply?

Yes, provided you meet the eligibility criteria and you have not resigned or declared in writing your intention to leave the University at any point prior to 31 July 2024.

If I apply for voluntary severance, is my application guaranteed to be approved?

All eligible staff can apply for voluntary severance, but these applications are not guaranteed to be approved. The decision to agree to a voluntary severance request will be in line with the assessment criteria outlined in the Voluntary Severance Scheme. Decisions will be based on the future needs of the university.

I am on a fixed term contract, am I eligible to apply for voluntary severance?

Yes, provided you:

- meet the eligibility criteria.
- have not resigned or declared in writing your intention to leave the University at any point prior to 31 July 2024.
- So long as your fixed term contract is not due to expire prior to 31 July 2024 and the University has confirmed its intention not to renew your fixed term contract beyond its current expiry date.
- So long as you are paid from core University funds.

My post is funded by an external research grant. Can I apply for voluntary severance?

Employees who are funded solely by external research grants and do not hold a core funded substantive post would not be eligible to apply.

Employees who are named researchers on a project whose departure would adversely impact on the funding and/or completion of the project are not eligible to apply.

If I decide not to apply for voluntary severance this time, will there be an opportunity to apply for voluntary severance later?

The University and Faculty of Humanities of Social Sciences does not plan to offer another Voluntary Severance package on these terms. Most organisations open such Schemes occasionally and only for a short period of time. Queen Mary is no exception. There are no guarantees that another Scheme will be offered again in the near or distant future. Furthermore, Queen Mary does not have a set Voluntary Severance package or terms so should there be another Voluntary Scheme in the future the package and terms of a future Scheme would be different.

Line Management responsibilities.**I am a line manager, and a team member is asking me about the Voluntary Severance Scheme. What should I tell them?**

You can signpost employees to the dedicated HSS Voluntary Severance intranet pages where they will find all the information about the Scheme.

Several FAQs have been drafted to support employees and line managers in answering questions. It is recommended that you have a look through the FAQs to see if there is an answer to the question/s being asked.

For any general queries regarding the scheme, process or pensions-related questions you can signpost them to the HR Voluntary Severance team by contacting the team at: VS-questions@qmul.ac.uk. Questions can be emailed to the team or employees can arrange to meet with a member of the team.

For any pensions question, employees can either email or request an appointment with a member of staff from the Pensions Team by contacting the team at Pension@qmul.ac.uk.

I am a line manager and I have employees who are not currently at work due to being on maternity, sabbatical, sickness absence or other leave. Should I make them aware of the Voluntary Severance Scheme?

As a line manager, it is important that you ensure that all your direct reports are aware of the Scheme, particularly those who are currently away from work e.g. on sabbatical leave, maternity, adoption, parental leave, long-term sickness absence or those staff who may not have regular access to their QMUL email account. You should notify HR if you have any team members on leave so that they can ensure that notification is sent. Should managers require further guidance or support with this they should contact HR colleagues supporting the Scheme at: VS-questions@qmul.ac.uk.

The Voluntary Severance Package

What is the Voluntary Severance Package?

The terms of the HSS voluntary severance package are outlined in the table below. For employees within the School of English and Drama (SED) and the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film (SLLF) an additional 10% will be applied to the basic package.

The Package Details

Continuous Service Criteria	Voluntary Severance Package (including notice)
1 and up to 3 years' continuous service	4 months' basic salary
Over 3 years' and up to 8 years' continuous service	7 months' basic salary
Over 8 years' continuous service	9 months' basic salary

Employees will not have to work their contractual notice periods. Employees will receive payment in lieu of notice. The package will therefore be inclusive of employee's contractual notice period.

Depending on an employee's grade and continuous service, contractual notice periods will range from 1-3 months.

The contractual notice element of the package will be subject to Tax and National Insurance deductions.

There will be a 10% uplift added to the voluntary severance package for employees whose applications are approved from the following Schools:

- The School of English and Drama
- The School of Language, Linguistics and Film

The 10% uplift will be applicable to both Academic, Professional Services employees and Researchers within these two Schools.

The 10% uplift of the total Voluntary Severance package (the combined elements of payment in lieu of notice and Voluntary Severance pay), will be added to the Voluntary Severance pay.

The rationale for applying a 10% uplift to the package for staff within these Schools and no other Schools is because the Faculty foresees that these schools will require future realignment in resourcing, academic delivery, and Professional Services support for a secure and sustainable future.

What tax implications do I need to be aware of regarding the Voluntary Severance Package?

Voluntary severance payments which are £30,000 or under will not be subject to Tax or National Insurance deductions, as the payment is under the threshold of the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003, sections 402A(1) and 403.

Any amount of a voluntary severance payment which exceeds the £30,000 threshold, will be subject to Income Tax and National Insurance deductions in line with the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003, sections 402A(1) and 403.

Voluntary severance payments are inclusive of staff's contractual notice periods. The contractual notice payment will be subject to Income Tax and National Insurance deductions in line with the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003, sections 402A (1) and 403.

Application, Assessment and Decision-Making processes.

How do I apply for voluntary severance?

If you are interested in applying for voluntary severance, you will need to complete an application form. Please read the instructions carefully before completing your application. All completed applications should be sent to the following email address: VS-questions@qmul.ac.uk, no later than **12 noon on 8 April 2024**.

What are the criteria for assessing Voluntary Severance applications?

The assessment and decision making of all voluntary severance applications will be based on the following criteria:

- Strategic and operational priorities of the Department/School/Faculty will not be significantly impacted by the loss of a post.
- Posts which are agreed for voluntary severance will not be replaced on a like for like basis or with a similar role.

- That the underlying costs of staffing in the School/Department must reduce by the amount expended within one academic year.
- That via reprioritisation and/or effective realignment of the work of an area, the departure of an individual(s) would not materially impact on the workload of remaining staff in the area.

Who will be involved in the decision-making process?

All submitted voluntary severance applications will be forwarded to the School Managers (for all Professional and Technical Services applications) and to the Heads of Schools (for all academic and research applications). School Managers and Heads of Schools will make an initial recommendation for either supporting or declining an application.

The School Managers' and Heads of Schools' recommendations will then be discussed at a Moderation Panel.

The Moderation Panel will consist of the following members:

Professor Frances Bowen, Faculty Vice-Principal (Chair)

Professor Dan Todman, Faculty Deputy Vice-Principal

Lucie Langley, Faculty Director of Operations

Elizabeth Gillow, Dean for Education

Professor Galin Tihanov, Dean for Research

Professor Jo Martin, Deputy Vice-Principal for Health, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry

Professional Services Representative from another Faculty

Alex Prestage, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Sonia Sookhan, Faculty Strategic HR Partner and Sheila Collins, Strategic HR Transformation Partner will be present to advise on process.

The Moderation Panel will make all reasonable efforts to gather the information needed to make an informed decision on each application, including inviting Heads of School or School Managers to present to the panel where deemed necessary.

The Vice Principal for the Faculty of HSS will share the voluntary severance outcomes with President and Principal for ratification, as chair of SET.

If I submit my voluntary severance application earlier than another colleague will my application be given priority?

No. All applications will be considered initially by either your School Manager (for Professional and Technical Services roles) or your Head of School (for all academic and research roles) during the same timeframe. After this, all application recommendations will be considered by the Moderation Panel and final decisions on all applications will be made.

When will I find out the outcome of my application?

It is anticipated that all employees who have submitted a voluntary severance application will find out the outcome of their application from mid-May.

If my application is declined, do I have the right to appeal the decision?

If a voluntary severance application is not approved, there is not an appeals process.

Where there is still a strategic or operational need for a role, a voluntary severance application may not be approved as there is still a requirement for the role to be undertaken.

If my application is not approved, what happens next?

Any employee whose application is not successful will continue working for Queen Mary in their existing role. We recognise that you may have prepared yourself to leave and may have made plans for your future and therefore will be disappointed. It is advised that, should you wish, you can meet and speak with your School Manager or Head of School regarding your thoughts in relation to your future career at the University. Should you wish you can also seek assistance from the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). See the Key Contact information on the dedicated VS intranet site.

Exiting Queen Mary, Settlement Agreements and the future

If my application is successful, when will I be expected to leave the University?

All employees whose voluntary severances applications are accepted will be expected to leave the University by 31 July 2024. There may be a few exceptions where the university's needs require staff to remain beyond 31 July 2024.

Will I have to work my contractual notice period?

Employees do not have to work their contractual notice periods but instead will be paid in lieu of their notice periods.

What does pay in lieu of notice mean?

Pay in lieu of notice is the amount of your contractual notice period which you are not required to work but will be paid instead for your contractual notice period.

Will I be paid for any annual leave that I have outstanding if my voluntary severance application is approved?

Employees whose applications are approved must take any outstanding annual leave prior to their departure from the University as any outstanding accrued annual leave will not be paid and will effectively be lost.

If my voluntary severance application is approved and I have taken more annual leave than I am entitled to what will happen?

Any annual leave taken in excess of accrued entitlement will be deducted from your final pay.

What is a Settlement Agreement?

A Settlement Agreement is a legally binding agreement which records the terms on

which the termination of employment by mutual agreement takes place. Both the employee and a nominee from Queen Mary signs the Agreement and in so doing both parties agree to the terms of the agreement.

Do I have to seek legal advice in relation to my Settlement Agreement?

All staff whose voluntary severance applications are accepted are required to seek independent legal advice before signing a Settlement Agreement. As part of the terms of your Settlement Agreement, your solicitor is required to provide the University with a Solicitor's Certificate. The Solicitor's Certificate confirms that they have provided you with independent legal advice and that in signing the Agreement you have understood the advice given and agree to the terms of your Settlement Agreement.

Do I have to pay for the legal fees for my Settlement Agreement?

Queen Mary will pay a contribution of £350 plus VAT towards an employee's Settlement Agreement. This sum is normally sufficient to cover the legal advice costs. Your legal representative will invoice the University directly for the costs of the legal advice they have provided and therefore you will not have any upfront costs to pay.

How will I receive my Voluntary Severance payment?

Once you have signed and returned your Settlement Agreement together with your Solicitor's Certificate, your voluntary severance payment will be paid directly into your bank account within 28 days of the termination of your leaving date.

Can I change my mind once I have submitted my application?

Yes, you can change your mind up until the point you have signed your Settlement Agreement.

Am I able to return to work for Queen Mary in the future?

Employees whose applications are approved under the Voluntary Severance Scheme will not be eligible to undertake any paid work for Queen Mary for five years from their final date of employment. This includes returning as an employee, contractor, agency worker or on a casual basis.

I am an academic, is it possible to apply for an honorary title with Queen Mary, should my voluntary severance application be accepted?

Academic employees who leave Queen Mary may be nominated for an honorary title.

If my voluntary severance application is accepted, and I choose to retire can I apply for the title of Emeritus/Emerita Professor/Reader?

Professors and Readers whose applications are approved and choose to retire would be eligible for the title of Emeritus/Emerita Professor/Reader under to the university's normal process for these titles.

Will Queen Mary provide me with a reference if I take voluntary severance?

Yes, Queen Mary will provide you with a reference which can be used for future jobs. An Agreed Reference between Queen Mary and you will form part of your Settlement Agreement terms.

Confidentiality

I understand that a confidential email has been created for staff to ask any questions regarding Voluntary Severance Scheme. Who will be managing this confidential email?

The confidential email [VS-questions@qmul.ac.uk] will be managed only by HR colleagues who are supporting this specific Voluntary Severance process. There may be some questions which will require input from outside of the HR VS team. In such circumstances, the employee's permission will be sought before any approach is made.

Who will know that I have applied for voluntary severance?

Throughout the Scheme employees applying for voluntary severance will remain confidential to the individuals administering the Scheme and those making recommendations and decisions on the voluntary severance applications. Applications from employees which are not accepted for voluntary severance will be destroyed once the process has been completed.

If I apply for voluntary severance and my application is not accepted, will it affect my career at Queen Mary?

If an application for voluntary severance is not accepted this will not affect your prospects for being considered for any future employment opportunities within the University, for promotion or for staff bonus recognition.

Pension FAQs

Would the amount I receive as a voluntary severance payment affect my pension or the lump sum in anyway?

Your USS or SAUL pension would not be affected by the amount you receive as a voluntary severance payment.

Can part or all my voluntary severance payment be paid directly into my pension scheme by Queen Mary?

If you have a USS pension, you can pay additional amounts into your pension up to the amount of your annual salary.

SAUL members can buy units of pension. As to how much you can buy will depend on your age and how much you want to pay in as result of your VS payment.

If I am in USS or SAUL Pension Schemes and I take Voluntary Severance will there be any implications on my pension?

For USS members who are aged 55 to 66 and decide to take VS there will be no impact on their pension. You have the option to either draw on your pension which will be reduced for taking it early (if you are under 66 years of age) or you can decide not to draw your pension until the normal retirement age of 66 and in which case your pension will not be reduced.

For SAUL members who are aged 55 to 66 and decide to take voluntary severance there will be no impact on their pension. You have the option to either draw on your pension which will be reduced for taking it early (if you are under 66 years of age) or you can decide not to draw your pension until the normal retirement age of 66 and in which case your pension will not be reduced.

If I leave QM at age 66 or above, do I have to draw my pension?

Once a USS or SAUL member reaches age 66 and has left Queen Mary, they will be entitled to receive their pension, but they do not have to take it.

If I am in the USS or SAUL Scheme and I take Voluntary Severance, will I be entitled to receive the full lump sum of my pension when I decide to retire?

Taking voluntary severance and then drawing on your pension, you will have the option to take a lump sum and pension. If you are in USS and under 66 then your lump sum /pension could be reduced.

If I draw my occupational pension upon leaving Queen Mary and later take up employment with an employer who offers the same pension scheme, can I re-join my occupational pension scheme?

If you are a USS member you can re-join the USS pension scheme.

For SAUL members who retire before age 66, if you rejoin SAUL with another employer and are full time SAUL can reduce or suspend your pension. SAUL will look at this on an individual basis and decide.

If I defer drawing my occupational pension upon leaving Queen Mary and take up employment with an employer who offers the same pension scheme can I continue to contribute to my occupational pension scheme?

Yes you can for both the USS and SAUL Pension Schemes.

Where can I view my pension statement which will show my current accumulated benefits?

If you are in the USS Pension Scheme you can view your accumulated pension benefits by logging into: myuss which can be found at: <https://www.uss.co.uk/login>.

For SAUL members there, there is not an online portal. SAUL members can ask the Pensions Team for a quote which they will request on your behalf from SAUL.

