

Carnegie Mellon University

Human Resources

Guidance for the Use of Fixed Term Positions

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INTRODUCTION

Carnegie Mellon University's 2025 Strategic Plan outlines a key goal of "A Concentration of World Class Talent." Effective processes related to fixed term positions (including fixed term remote positions) support this goal by enabling business units to fill unique or business critical roles, in rare and exceptional circumstances, with fixed term positions. The purpose of this guidance document is to provide an overview of the criteria/requirements and the approval process for fixed term positions for staff within the United States. If a fixed term position request involves (or might involve) remote work outside of the United States, please work with your HR business partner, who will consult with the Assistant VP for HR, International Finance, Payroll and the Office of General Counsel to address your request.

Scope

- The guidance included in this document applies to all employees of Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) hiring into a fixed term position with the following characteristics:
 - Instructional and adjunct staff
 - Staff – fixed term
 - Interns
 - Recent CMU graduate – transitional job
 - Seasonal
 - Postdoctoral associate/fellow
 - Faculty with an annual contract
 - Faculty with contract of less than a year
 - Exempt or nonexempt
 - Full time or part time
 - With a CMU work location in the United States
 - on a CMU campus or in a satellite office
 - With a Remote Working Arrangement
- This guidance does not apply to the following:
 - Emeriti
 - Faculty – international contract
 - Faculty – multi-year contract
 - Faculty – tenure track
 - Faculty – tenured
 - Staff – regular
 - Unpaid courtesy
 - Student Worker – CMU student
 - Contingent workers
 - Employees covered under a collective bargaining agreement
 - Employees based in CMU work locations outside the United States
(Requests from Rwanda and Qatar should be directed to the local Human Resources representative.)

Key terms are defined below. For a complete list of definitions, please see the [HR Glossary of Terms](#).

A **fixed term position** is a position that offers employment for a specified period. Appointment to a fixed term position includes a stated start and end date.

A **Remote Working Arrangement (RWA)** is a documented agreement between CMU and an employee that permits the employee to work away from an assigned CMU office or a defined workspace located on CMU property (i.e., CMU campus, satellite office, etc.) while communicating with the office on a regular basis. Please see CMU's [Flexible Work Arrangement Guidelines for Staff \[pdf\]](#) for more information. Additional approval is required for employees who wish to work from an international location.

For the purposes of this document, when we refer to an **employee**, we mean an employee of Carnegie Mellon University in a full-time or part-time position.

We use the term **supervisor** to mean anyone who directly supervises an employee.

The Role of the HR Business Partner

As representatives of the Office of Human Resources within colleges and divisions, [Human Resources \(HR\) business partners](#) are often the first point of contact for supervisors/business leaders looking for guidance when considering whether a fixed term position is most appropriate for a particular business need.

- HR business partners assist in reviewing the business rationale and work with the Office of General Counsel to assess the appropriateness of a fixed term position.
- HR business partners review written offers, including offer letters and letters of extension, for appropriate usage and compliance with university policy and guidelines.

The Fixed Term Position — An Overview

The fixed term position at CMU is intended for employment that is truly limited in duration and funding. As the name suggests, fixed term positions offer employment for a specified period. Fixed term positions can be either part-time or full-time and can, depending on the characteristics of the position, be exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) or nonexempt. The work location of a fixed term position can be one of CMU's campuses, a satellite office or an approved remote work area (with a Remote Working Arrangement).

Continuation of a fixed term appointment is conditioned on the continued availability of sufficient funding to support the employee's work, satisfactory performance, visa status, and compliance with university policies.

Fixed Term Position Guidelines

1. Fixed term positions must comply with CMU policy and guidelines, including but not limited to the [Compensation Guidelines—Staff \[pdf\]](#) and the [Guidelines for Hiring Staff \[pdf\]](#). No guidance in this document should be interpreted otherwise.
2. Fixed term positions provide employment for a defined duration. **Best practice dictates that the initial term for these positions should not exceed one year.** A fixed term position may be extended or the employee may be reappointed for subsequent terms.

3. Changes to the standard hours per week of a fixed term position must be documented in writing using one of the fixed term offer-letter templates if the change results in a time type change (i.e., the employee goes from full-time to part-time or vice versa).
4. Should business needs necessitate a longer term, two options are available:
 - a. The fixed term appointment can be extended using the Fixed term Appointment Extension Letter Template if all the following apply:
 - i. The employee is in a staff position. (Faculty and special faculty positions cannot be extended using the Fixed term Extension Memo Template.)
 - ii. The extension is for shorter than the original term.
 - iii. The terms and conditions of the position are reviewed as part of the extension process.
 - iv. Any changes to the terms and conditions of the extended position, including the new start and end date, are documented in the extension offer letter.
 - v. The new extension offer follows the fixed term position approval process outlined below.
 - b. The fixed term appointment can be reappointed using the Fixed Term Reappointment Letter Template if all the following apply:
 - i. The reappointment term is of the same length or longer than original term.
 - ii. The terms and conditions of the position are reviewed as part of the reappointment process.
 - iii. Any changes to the terms and conditions of the reappointed position, including the new start and end date, are documented in the reappointment offer letter.
 - iv. The new reappointment offer letter follows the fixed term position approval process outlined below.
5. Offers for fixed term positions must be extended in writing, using one of the following offer-letter templates:
 - Offer-Letter Template: Fixed term, Exempt
 - Offer-Letter Template: Fixed term, Nonexempt
 - Fixed term Extension Template if the extension is shorter than the original term
 - Fixed term Reappointment Template if the reappointment is of the same length or longer than the original term
6. If the employee will be working from a US remote location, the offer must include a Remote Working Arrangement (RWA), and the offer letter must include the terms and conditions of the RWA. Please consult your HR business partner for assistance drafting an RWA for a fixed term offer letter.
7. Job offers for fixed term positions must state a specific start and end date in the offer letter.
8. To help the department and the supervisor manage expectations and performance throughout the duration of employment, all fixed term offer letters must include the following language:

"Continued Employment during Term and Renewal: *Although you have been offered employment for a fixed term, your employment may be terminated during the term for cause as determined at the university's sole discretion. Among other potential reasons for termination, the continuation of this position for the full term is conditioned on the continued availability of*

sufficient funding to support your work, satisfactory performance, attendance, continued work authorization, and compliance with all laws, including applicable U.S. export controls and sanctions laws and regulations, and university policy. The same conditions apply to any renewal."

Performance Management for Fixed Term Positions

Performance management of employees in fixed term staff positions should follow [Staff Performance Management Guidelines \[pdf\]](#).

Whether or not to include eligible fixed term positions in the annual merit process is left to the discretion of the department.

Fixed Term Position Offer Letter Approval Process

New Hires

All job offers for new staff, including those being hired into fixed term positions, are approved through Workday, CMU's applicant tracking system. Please refer to the [Guidelines for Hiring Staff](#) for more information on the Workday process of extending and approving a job offer for a fixed term position.

Post-Hire Employment Actions

Changes to the terms and conditions of employment after an individual is hired (i.e., post-hire employment actions) occur outside of Workday. The following post-hire employment actions related to fixed term positions require written documentation (i.e., an extension or reappointment letter), which is approved in Workday as part of the Change Job business process:

- Fixed term position extensions or reappointments
- Time Type Change (part-time to full-time or full-time to part-time)

Note that requests for new fixed term staff positions or fixed term staff extensions with a duration of more than six months in total and a funding designation of General Operating Budget, Designated Operating, Unrestricted Endowment or Temporary Restricted Operating require justification and additional approval. Refer to the [Staff Hiring Approvals page](#) for more information.

The steps below outline the established process for extending a fixed term appointment or initiating a time-type change for a fixed term position outside of Workday.

Action	Responsible Party
1) Obtain departmental buy in for the extension or time-type change.	Supervisor
2) Contact your HR business partner for guidance on extension requests and/or on changing the terms of a fixed term staff position.	Supervisor

Action	Responsible Party
3) For faculty positions: ensure the appropriate fixed term offer letter or extension letter templates are being used for the situation. Request help from your HRBP or OGC in reviewing your draft letter(s).	Faculty Offer Letter Templates are available on the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty website.
4) Initiate the Change Job business process in Workday , attaching the extension/reappointment letter for approval.	HR generalist
5) As part of the Change Job standard approval flow, review the fixed term offer letter for compliance with university policy and guidelines, federal, state and local laws and regulations. Discuss legal and other HR implications with International Finance, Payroll and OGC as needed.	Standard Change Job Approval Flow: 1) Supervisor 2) Next-level supervisor 3) Financial approver
6) If not supported/recommended , communicate your concerns to the supervisor, and work with the supervisor on revisions or other potential solutions to the business need. If supported/recommended , approve the request.	HR business partner
7) The fixed term offer letter (extension/reappointment) is auto generated through Workday and the HR generalist will make edits as necessary prior to submitting to the employee for acknowledgement.	Workday

Note:

- Supervisors should contact their [HR business partner](#) for guidance re: the appropriate offer (reappointment/extension) template.
- Supervisors are asked to refrain from communicating changes to a fixed term appointment to the employee until the Change Job business process is complete and all approvals have been obtained.

Roles & Responsibilities

HR Business Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance on the use of fixed term positions to meet the department's business needs. • Assist in reviewing the business rationale and work with the Office of General Counsel to assess the appropriateness of a fixed term position. • Review written offers for appropriate usage and compliance with university policy and guidelines/federal, state and local law.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist departments with guidance on the process for fixed term extensions, reappointments, rehires, and approval steps. • In partnership with the HR generalist, facilitate staff fixed term extensions and reappointment requests in Workday, including sending extension/reappointment letters to employees once requests are approved through the appropriate channels. • Act as a resource to departments to review adjunct, postdoc, and special faculty fixed term offer letters for accuracy before the letters are delivered by the department.
Office of General Counsel (OGC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee compliance with contractual, university, and federal guidelines as well as compliance with any state and local laws. • Provide recommended language for offer letters (extension/reappointment), as needed, to address location- or position-specific topics. • Act as a resource to departments to review faculty letters for accuracy.
Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to extending a verbal or written offer, obtain departmental approval via the offer letter approval process in Workday (new hires) or the Change Job business process in Workday. • Monitor and manage the performance of the fixed term employee for the duration of the employment.
Assistant Vice President of Human Resources, People and Organizational Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that this guidance document is kept up to date and otherwise maintained.
Chief Human Resources Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive oversight of the fixed term position approval process.
Recruiter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts as primary point of contact for the recruitment process for posted staff fixed term roles. • Handles intake meetings with hiring supervisors, provides guidance on effective interviewing and hiring practices for fixed term staff roles, handles approval process for staff fixed term offers, delivers fixed term offers to selected candidates, and closes the hiring process.

RELATED RESOURCES

[HR Glossary of Terms](#)

[Human Resources Team](#)

[Fixed Term Position Management](#)