

# Short-term assignment policy design

The use of short-term assignments and policy which sets out the terms and conditions that apply to this assignment type is increasing.

Short-term assignments are typically defined as taking between three months and one year, although six months might be deemed the minimum linked to taxation issues.

## REMUNERATION OPTIONS

A home-based approach to pay is usually taken. This is because assignees are only working abroad for short periods. Upon completion of the assignment, the employee usually returns home.

Host-based and global pay approaches are less likely to be used for short-term assignments. However, if the assignment is planned for a year, a host-based pay system might apply.

A series of short-term assignments can form part of graduate mobility training programmes or as part of

middle manager leadership development interventions. Under these, assignees may progress from one assignment to the next and/or have just a short debriefing period back home.

Global pay structures might be applied to mobile graduate trainees and others undertaking successive short-term assignments but this approach is uncommon.

## ALLOWANCES & BENEFITS

Short-term assignments are usually undertaken unaccompanied. Allowances/benefits provided reflect this.

Assignees undertaking short-term assignments to fill skills gaps and/or train local staff are likely to have different allowances and benefits from graduate trainees on developmental short-term assignments. Graduate trainee programmes are likely to provide fewer benefits than for more senior staff and those moving for operational reasons.

Besides salary, short-term assignment policies typically include allowances/benefits in relation to: housing (such as serviced apartments); travel and local transport; medical, health, security and welfare issues; cost of living, location and mobility allowances; and support with compliance.

Short-term assignees must complete their assignment objectives quickly and their productivity will be hampered if they are not able to operate effectively in their new culture. Cultural training should also be provided.

## COMPLIANCE

One of the key issues in managing short-term assignments relates to the number of days spent in the host country. Policy should address tracking days spent in the host country for tax and immigration purposes.

## FAMILY SUPPORT

When assignees leave family behind, this can be beneficial for dual career couples who can continue in their respective careers. It also means that children's schooling is not disrupted. However, family separation causes stress and can damage relationships.

Organisations should support families to reconnect. Employee assistance programmes can prove beneficial in supporting employees separated from their families when they are on assignments that are too far from home to enable trips back.

Longer short-term assignments (such as those planned for a year) may be accompanied by the family. If so, the policy will reflect this in respect of factors such as children's educational provision.

## POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS

Assignees need to adjust to their host country culture if they are to be fully productive and gain cultural competencies. Short-term assignments do not always provide sufficient time for this.

Short-term assignments are also disruptive to family life and this can affect the profile of employees willing to undertake them, with consequent negative effects on assignee diversity.



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