

# Dual careers: Policy elements

Dual careers are known to present a barrier to international mobility. Organisations can include elements within their international assignment policies to support couples where each partner is committed to pursuing individual career goals.

## DUAL CAREER BARRIERS

When one partner is offered an international assignment, the working spouse/partner may wish to continue with their career when accompanying the assigned employee abroad. Barriers to this include: work permit/work visa restrictions; lack of career/job opportunity; qualification differences; language difficulties; lost career growth and reduced future pension provision.

It is important to provide organisational support to reduce dual career barriers and enable couples to engage in global mobility. A written international assignment policy should

address dual career issues as this can encourage the widest range of talent to apply for global opportunities.

## PRACTICAL SUPPORT

International assignment policy design assist employed spouses/partners with CV/résumé preparation and interview training. These are particularly valuable when cultural differences mean that local employers expect applications and face-to-face discussions to match local customs.

Assistance in securing work permits/visas is particularly helpful for partners seeking to work abroad if they are unable to take up employment using the working visa of the assigned employee.

Links with local employers, job clubs and networking groups can be valuable in identifying local paid employment opportunities or voluntary work.

Career counselling is valuable to assist partners to determine their career direction both on going out to a new country and also on repatriation.

Support might also be given with updating qualifications and language training. Mentoring can be very helpful in providing support and guidance with career opportunities and progression.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

It is not expected that employers compensate for loss of earnings if spouse/partners are unable to find work abroad but they can provide financial support with activities such as further education. Payments made towards computer equipment to enable remote working are very much appreciated by accompanying partners.

## ASSIGNMENT TYPES & DUAL CAREER ACTIONS

Employers may wish to consider changing the assignment type/pattern. For example, the assignee may undertake the

assignment unaccompanied (on a short-term, commuter, frequent flier/rotational assignment), leaving the partner behind to continue their career. However, this creates separation, marital stress and potentially can affect employee productivity.

Employers might therefore consider career co-ordination approaches such as employing the accompanying spouse, working with other organisations to seek two compatible international roles for both partners, and co-working if both partners are employed by the same organisation.

Employers might also consider altering their selection methods such that positions abroad are advertised and employees can apply for these such that couples who are willing to undertake international mobility put themselves forward.

## LOBBYING FOR CHANGE

Organisations can consider becoming involved in lobbying for improved work permit/visa access for accompanying partners to benefit not only couples going on assignment but also employing organisations as they can increase their talent pool.

Dual career couples bring a wealth of talent to local economies and so there are positive economic implications for the receiving host country in supporting the employment of dual career couples.

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