

**Subject:** Instant HR/Payroll: Our Annual Transitions Information...Updated With New Guidelines ... A Must Read!

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**To:** DEPARTMENT-CONTACTS-L@listserv.gmu.edu

### **Transitions Information**

As we head to the end of the academic year, we know some of our faculty and staff will leave Mason (although we hope that number is really low!). Please help us manage the end-of-year process to make the transition as smooth and easy as possible for everyone. We also want to be sure the process is in compliance with federal and state rules. To that end, we thought it would be helpful to provide information, checklists, and sample forms regarding the separation process. If your department has additional procedures, please follow them too. Additionally, *please share this information with supervisors in your department/unit or anyone who handles separations.*

*Please note: Although we send a similar e-mail each year, the 2016 version has some important updates. Take special note of the sections that have been italicized below for they are new or updated this year.*

### **What is a Separation?**

A separation is when someone leaves employment at Mason. If an employee changes positions at Mason, they are not processed as a separation. Sometimes we receive resignation letters from employees who are actually just transferring to another Mason position. If you are sending over a resignation letter for someone who is leaving the position but not Mason, please be sure to indicate the employee is staying with the University in a different capacity. If you also know that the individual will be transferring from Mason to another state agency, please indicate this on the separation form. This will help us avoid erroneously removing your employee from the payroll and/or benefits systems when they are not leaving state service.

### **Steps on the Separation Process**

Below please find the steps liaisons, supervisors and/or managers should follow when separating an employee from Mason.

1. Once you have received the formal resignation letter from the employee, please forward it along with either the [Faculty Separation Form](#) or the [Classified Separation Form](#) to HR & Payroll at MS 3C3. We suggest sending this information as soon as you learn of the employee's plan to depart the University. The sooner we receive this information, the sooner we are able to process the paperwork to ensure both a smooth transition for the employee regarding pay and benefits and a smooth transition for the department and the University, avoiding overpayment and other potential miscommunication. Send an Exit Alert to us at [exitalert@gmu.edu](mailto:exitalert@gmu.edu), to notify HR & Payroll immediately. Please include your contact information and the exiting employee's G#, Name, and last day of work.
2. As part of the exit process, the employee will receive an exit packet which includes pertinent COBRA insurance information. To ensure receipt of this information, please encourage the separating employee to verify or update their forwarding address information in PatriotWeb Self Service by logging into <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/>.

Separating faculty and staff should continue to have an active address in Banner. Do not deactivate their permanent address as we may continue to need it to send various correspondence to them.

3. Please remind any separating faculty and staff that 2016 W-2 forms will be available electronically in PatriotWeb by the end of January 2017, and they should keep their PatriotWeb login information secure and available so they have it handy when they need it. We will not mail a paper W-2 for 2016 unless one is specifically requested.

4. In addition to maintaining an updated address in PatriotWeb, please also request that separating employees update (if necessary) their address in [Employee Direct](#) which houses the Commonwealth's health insurance and flexible benefits information for employees.

5. There are a number of outstanding issues that need to be wrapped up when someone separates from your unit. There are three different forms that should be completed prior to the employee's last day -- one for the [faculty or staff member](#), one for the [supervisor](#), and one to track the return of [equipment and property](#). The [Exit Process](#) webpage is available to help ensure that your separating employees, including Postdocs and graduate assistants, touch base on an array of issues associated with their departure such as:

- university equipment
- building access
- parking passes
- library materials

As well as those issues that impact benefits eligible employees such as:

- leave payout (where applicable)
- benefits
- retirement (including roll-overs)

6. The release of any lump sum due to the employee from such things as leave payouts, comp time, overtime, deferred pay, etc., needs to be addressed prior to the start of the last pay period before the employee's end date. If the employee wants to roll the lump sum due to them into a 403(b) retirement account, a [one-time salary reduction form](#) must be completed, signed, and returned to HR & Payroll prior to their last day. If they would like to roll the lump sum into a 457 account, please have them complete a [VRS One-Time Deferral form](#) and return it to HR & Payroll prior to their last day.

*7. If you have an employee who entered into a cash, leave or other type of retention bonus agreement where they have not fulfilled the time designated on the agreement, the bonus must be repaid in full. Arrangements need to be coordinated with HR & Payroll prior to the employee's last day of work. If the employee is entitled to a leave balance payout, the amount may be deducted from that payment, otherwise repayment arrangements must be made prior to their last day of work.*

8. If you have a faculty member who is separating and has sponsored funding, please ask them to complete a [Sponsored Programs Exit Form](#) and submit it to the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) as soon as possible prior to their last day at Mason. This will allow OSP to assist with the transfer or closeout of their sponsored project. You can also find the form online on our [Exit Process main page](#).

Please don't hesitate to contact our Customer Service Center at 3.2600 if you have any questions. Our Customer Service Center is staffed every day from 8:30am - 5:00pm. Should you receive a recording when you call during regular business hours, it means all of our four incoming lines are in use. We hope you will try again in a few minutes.

For faculty separations questions: Megan Kirk at 3.3551 or via email at [mkirk4@gmu.edu](mailto:mkirk4@gmu.edu)

For classified separation questions: Lauren Lambert at 3.9459 or via email at [llamber5@gmu.edu](mailto:llamber5@gmu.edu)

### **Exit Interviews**

When separating faculty and staff provide us with feedback about their experiences here at Mason as well as their reasons for leaving, we can look for themes that can help us improve overall recruitment and retention. Exit interviews may be completed in one of three ways; online, via paper form, or in person. A brief and confidential survey can be found online at <http://exitsurvey.gmu.edu/>. A paper exit interview form is included in the exit packet that goes out to every separating employee and can also be found on our [Exit Process main page](#) in either a .doc or a .pdf format. The employee may contact the Employee Relations team at (703) 993-3878 if they would prefer to schedule a one-on-one confidential in-person exit interview.

### **9-Month Faculty Members**

If you have a faculty member separating in May who is on a deferred pay schedule (9-months paid over 12 months), please advise them that their final check will be larger than usual because it will include all the money in their deferred pay bucket. Please suggest that they contact a Benefits Administrator in HR & Payroll if they would like to have their final check moved to a Tax Sheltered Annuity (TSA). Certain contribution limitations may apply. You can refer to the Benefits web page at <http://hr.gmu.edu/benefits/retire/supplemental.php> for details.

Please notify HR & Payroll about any end-of-the-academic-year separations (both 9-months paid over 9 months and 9-months paid over 12 months) as soon as possible. It's important to ensure that all of your separating 9-month faculty have designated whether or not they elect to have summer health coverage. ***If we do not hear from a faculty member that they would like to terminate health coverage by May 25th, their coverage will continue through August 31st.***

### **Do You Have 9-Month Faculty Who are Timesheet Approvers?**

Timesheet approval reminder emails will not be generated over the summer for 9-month faculty on a 9 month pay schedule (9 paid 9). If you have 9 paid 9 faculty members who are also timesheet approvers, please ask them to designate a timesheet proxy for the summer (SM 11-16) (26-12 to 26-18). A designated proxy will be able to approve timesheets throughout the summer and ensure employees are paid.

Instructions for setting up a timesheet approver proxy are on the Payroll site under the [timesheets tab](#) or directly at [Creating a Proxy](#).

### **Mason Retirees**

Mason welcomes having Mason retirees stay connected to the university in whatever ways work for them – participant, volunteer, mentor, employee. However, there are some conditions for post-retirement employment at Mason such as:

- The retiree must complete a bona fide break in service and can only return to Mason in a part-time capacity.
- *The bona fide break must be a minimum of **26 weeks** from the effective date of retirement. Reminder: 9-month faculty who retire at the end of the academic year cannot work during the summer after they retire.*
- The retiree must return to a non-covered (e.g. part-time) position. The retiree cannot have the same duties or hours that she/he worked before retiring.
- There cannot be any discussion or agreement of pre-arranging a return from retirement.

### **Wage Positions**

1. As summer arrives, please keep in mind that the status of your student wage workers may have to change. If your student wage (SW) workers continue in their positions after graduation, they will need to be moved from a SW to a regular non-student wage (WG) position via an electronic approval (EPAF). You should then terminate the SW position. Students in a degree program who are returning for the fall semester can remain in the SW position over the summer. Additionally, remember to put a job end date in place for the new assignment when possible. If a job end date isn't possible, please create a termination EPAF once the employee has stopped working. If this is not done, the wage employee's position will continue to appear active in Banner.

Student wage and non-student wage assignments will be automatically terminated after five months of inactivity.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Irvin at 3.2616 or via email at [jirvin@gmu.edu](mailto:jirvin@gmu.edu).

2. *For Affordable Care Act (ACA) compliance purposes, please remember that a 26-week separation period is required before a former Mason employee (including retirees) can be re-hired into any part-time position (i.e. wage, adjunct faculty, etc.) at Mason. The 26-week separation applies to both classified and faculty positions who were employed for 30 or more hours per week (.75 to 1.0 FTE).*

*If you have any questions regarding the required 26-week separation period, please contact Michelle Lim at 3.3665.*

#### **A Reminder on GRA / GTA / Adjunct Positions**

Please remember that if you have a Graduate Teaching / Research Assistant and/or Adjunct in which the incumbent has resigned or ended employment prior to the original end date, an early termination EPAF should be completed. If an overpayment occurs, you will need to notify HR & Payroll as soon as possible as well as alert the impacted former employee.