



UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
OF GEORGIA

Reduction in Force

CITATION REFERENCE

OFFICIAL TITLE	POLICY ON REDUCTION IN FORCE (RIF)
VOLUME	HUMAN RESOURCES
RESPONSIBLE OFFICE	USG HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE
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Policy Statement

The University System of Georgia is committed to providing a stable and secure environment for its employees to work, and each institution shall have the authority to determine the appropriate staffing levels to meet the mission of the institution. However, under certain circumstances, it may be necessary to temporarily reduce work hours or permanently eliminate employee positions through a reduction in force (RIF).

Situations where workforce reduction measures may be appropriate include the following examples:

- A budget reduction and/or funding changes (including but not limited to Financial Exigency);
- Elimination or decrease in services due to programmatic changes;
- Reorganization resulting in a shift or elimination of certain tasks or responsibilities altogether;
- Emergency conditions or events that prevent regular operations of an Institution (including reduced operations) or official closure;
- Other organizational changes that might impact staffing levels; and
- Significant business process improvements or new technologies rendering a position(s) obsolete.

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In an effort to avoid permanently reducing employees due to budget cuts, funding changes, or emergency conditions affecting regular operations, each institution should analyze the potential cost-savings effectiveness of a temporary reduction of work hours (e.g. temporary layoff, furlough, or other such programs) to achieve the necessary budget reduction. Employees should only be terminated through a permanent RIF after examining other available alternatives.

If it is determined that a significant organizational objective or cost-savings can be achieved through a temporary or permanent RIF, the president (or their designee) will submit a RIF proposal to the USG System Office for approval prior to implementation.

This policy is not for use in removing an employee if the sole reason is substandard performance, incompetence or misconduct (including demotion, suspension or dismissal as may be appropriate). See [HRAP](#) on demotion, suspension, or dismissal.

This policy provides institutions with guidelines for developing and implementing RIF plans that are necessary to meet University System policies and State and Federal regulations and laws; support the University System and Financial Management goals; address emergency conditions or events; and ensure consistency among University System institutions to achieve fair and equitable treatment of employees in the application of RIF plans.

Applicability

All units of the University System of Georgia are covered by this policy.

Who Should Read This Policy

All institutional Human Resources staff, managers, supervisors, and employees within the University System of Georgia should be aware of this policy.

Definitions

Temporary Reduction in Force: A partial or full reduction in employee work hours that allows an institution to implement programs to achieve necessary budget reductions during an emergency situation without permanently eliminating positions (e.g. furloughs and temporary layoffs).

Permanent Reduction in Force (RIF): A permanent separation from employment. It occurs when there is a reduction in headcount and a position is eliminated without the intention of recall or rehire. A RIF can be accomplished through permanent layoff or by means of attrition.

Process and Procedures

Temporary Reduction in Force – RIF Plan

- Intent to RIF: When the possibility of a temporary reduction in work hours is identified, a supervisor/manager must submit a written proposal of the temporary reduction in force

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to the designated institutional administrators for approval (for example: Dean/VP, Human Resources Administrator, AA/EEO Administrator, or CEO/COO). The highest level of authority within the business unit, Human Resources, and Legal Affairs (where applicable) must be consulted in the early planning stages and in the development of the Reduction in Force Plan.

RIF plans that are intended to temporarily reduce employee work hours, in order to achieve budget reductions during an emergency or other temporary situation without permanently eliminating positions must include the following components and considerations for approval by the President (or their designee) and the USG System Office:

- Strategic Fiscal/Administrative Objective
- Business Needs Assessment
- Position Selection Criteria
- Impact Analysis/Demographic Data Review
- Communication Plan
- Department of Labor Employer Filing

Temporary Reduction in Force - Plan Details:

- Strategic Objective: The RIF plan must state the strategic business objective to include fiscal or organizational change and justification of need by department. The plan must include alternatives that have been considered.
- Business Needs Assessment should include the following components:
 - Evaluation of current academic/administrative programs, institutional business needs and the organizational structure
 - Analysis of situational impact on operations and expected duration of reduced operations
 - Analysis to determine which entities and functions (units, departments, services, etc.) must be maintained to continue the necessary level of operations
 - Identification and analysis of job classifications and/or positions that will be impacted by the temporary reduction of work hours
 - Identification of expected outcomes (savings, process improvements, etc.)

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- A review of reassignment opportunities for impacted positions/employees when applicable
 - Proposed timeline and effective date
 - Appropriate approval signatures at each level of the organization
- Position Selection Criteria. Positions will be identified based on institutional and/or departmental needs as outlined in the business needs assessment. The decision as to which employee position(s) will be impacted is determined at the institutional level and subject to the approval of administrators identified by each institution. When identifying employee positions for a temporary reduction in force, management should consider the following:
 - Core job functions. An analysis of the core job functions needed to maintain business operations (division, unit, and/or program area) and the resulting position(s) that will be retained or reduced in support of those functions must be conducted.
 - Selection criteria. Define the method for determining the order in which employees will be impacted (e.g. all employees within scope are impacted the same/or differently based on established criteria such as job function/work assignment).
 - Competitive process. If all employees in the same job within an in-scope area will be impacted in the same manner, then a competitive process is not needed. However, if some employees in a job code within an in-scope area will be impacted and others will not, then a competitive process should be established (i.e. appointment type: full time, part time, critical skills, etc.).
- If FLSA-exempt employees will be impacted by a reduction in work hours, prepare communication and change management plans to ensure they will be prepared to adhere to work time limitations and time reporting requirements that apply during workweeks reduced by one or more days. Reference [DOL Fact Sheet 70](#).
- Impact Analysis/Demographic Data Review: All RIF plans are reviewed to avoid adverse impact on employees based on protected classes and limit potential institutional liability. Management is responsible for making RIF decisions using objective factors as deemed relevant and appropriate by the institution and that conform to any applicable legal or regulatory mandates. The appropriate Human Resources official will develop the demographic data report to include race, gender, age, disability status, veteran's status for each employee identified in the plan for use in a review.
- Communications Plan: All employees in affected areas or units should receive some form of communication regarding impending changes as appropriate. A communication plan

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detailing appropriate messaging, timing, and forums (group or individual meetings, emails) must be developed. Impacted employees should be engaged as soon as practical prior to written notice.

- Employee Notice: After receiving approval from institution administrators, the supervisor/manager must notify the employee in writing of the temporary workforce reduction no less than seven days prior to the workweek in which the reduction will take place, using the institutional template provided by Human Resources. The written notice must include:
 - a statement of the conditions requiring a reduction in work hours,
 - effective date and expected duration,
 - information on benefits continuation during the scheduled reduction as applicable, and
 - information regarding employer-initiated unemployment insurance

USG RIF Plan Approval: The completed RIF plan must be approved by the institution's president prior to submission to the USG. Upon approval by the President, the Institution's Chief Human Resources Officer will complete the Reduction in Force Request form and submit the institution's plan to the USG Office of Human Resources for review and approval before executing any aspect of the plan.

Department of Labor (DOL) Employer Initiated Unemployment Claims: Upon USG approval of a plan, institutions may initiate employer-filed unemployment claims for employees who are impacted by a temporary reduction of work hours (full or partial).

- UI Claims: The institution Human Resources Office must complete the Georgia Department of Labor registration process in order to submit claims on behalf of employees.
- Each institution HR office will be responsible for submitting claims to the Georgia Department of Labor in accordance with their standard procedures on a weekly basis. Institutions may incur a penalty for filing late claims, and employees may have a delayed payment.

Benefits eligible employees that are impacted will continue to receive their standard benefits and will be billed for premiums if they do not have sufficient earnings to cover premiums in accordance with Business Procedures Manual section 5.1.8

Record Keeping: Employee actions should be appropriately coded, entered and recorded in the institution's human capital management system as a Temporary Reduction in Force. Records should be maintained in compliance with the USG Records Management Guidelines (7 Years)

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Permanent Reduction in Force - RIF Plan

- Intent to RIF: When the possibility of a permanent workforce reduction is identified, a supervisor/manager must submit a written proposal of the reduction in force to the designated institutional administrators for approval (for example: Dean/VP, Human Resources Administrator, AA/EEO Administrator, or CEO/COO). The highest level of authority within the business unit, Human Resources, and Legal Affairs (where applicable) must be consulted in the early planning stages and in the development of the Reduction in Force Plan.
- All RIF plans that are intended to permanently reduce headcount and/or eliminate employee positions without the intention of recall or rehire in order to achieve fiscal and/or organizational objectives must encompass the following components and considerations for approval by the President (or their designee) and the USG System Office:
 - Strategic Business Objective
 - Business Needs Assessment
 - Position Selection Criteria
 - Impact Analysis/Affirmative Action Review
 - Communication Plan
 - Employee Transition Assistance Plan
 - Discretionary Review
 - Department of Labor Notice

Plan Details – Permanent Reduction in Force

- Strategic Objective: The reduction in force plan must state the strategic business objective (i.e. Fiscal or organizational change).

Business Needs Assessment:

- Evaluation of current academic/administrative programs, institutional business needs and the organizational structure
- Analysis to determine which entities (units, departments, services, etc.) should be reduced
- Identification of the functions that will/must remain within the unit after the reduction (if applicable)
- Identification and analysis of job classifications and/or positions that will be eliminated in a RIF)

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- Identification of expected outcomes (savings, process improvements, etc.)
- Development of a new organizational structure (as applicable)
- A review of reassignment opportunities for impacted positions/employees when applicable
- Proposed timeline and effective date
- Appropriate approval signatures at each level of the organization

Position Selection Criteria: Positions will be identified for elimination based on institutional and/or departmental needs as outlined in the business needs assessment. The decision as to which employee position(s) must be eliminated is determined at the institutional level and subject to the approval of administrators identified by each institution. When identifying employee positions for a reduction in force, management should consider the following:

- *Regular employees* must be retained over employees with temporary, provisional, and time-limited appointments within the same scope/area of impact. Temporary employees, employees funded through sponsored programs and/or contracts, regular employees scheduled less than 20 hours per week, and provisional period employees may be separated without following this policy. Separation of these employees are subject to policies on demotion, suspension, or dismissal and must adhere to institutional policies regarding adverse employment actions.

Faculty. Decisions and actions impacting faculty must be made in accordance with BOR Policy 8.3.4, Notice of Employment and Resignation, and BOR Policy [8.3.7.9](#), Termination/Layoff of Tenured Personnel due to Program Modification. Additionally, a RIF that is in response to a condition of financial exigency as approved by the Board of Regents may result in the layoff, or termination of tenured or non-tenured faculty or other contract employees before the end of their contract term. Such actions must comply with the procedures and notice requirement outlined in BOR Policy [8.5](#), Financial Exigency. Human Resources must be involved to the extent the action involves layoffs or termination of faculty or staff.

All regular employees who have completed their provisional periods are covered by this policy (including full-time and part-time employees).

Job Functions:

An analysis of the job functions needed to move forward in the relevant business area (division, unit, and/or program area) and the resulting position(s) that will be retained or eliminated in support of those functions must be conducted.

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Where multiple positions in the same job classification exist within the department but only a subset of those positions has been identified for the RIF, each employee must be evaluated against the same factors in making a determination in the following order. The factors should include:

- Competencies; Evaluation of each employee's relative qualifications and proficiency levels in the knowledge, skills and abilities required to successfully perform the job.
- Performance; The primary component for determining employee performance should be the most recent two annual Performance Evaluation ratings, unless the employee has been employed for one year or less, in which case there may only be one annual Performance Evaluation available. Additional performance related considerations include:
 - Any active disciplinary action for either job performance or personal conduct;
 - Documented performance difficulties communicated to the employee, but not rising to the level of disciplinary action; or
 - Any other documented indicators of performance deficiencies.
- Institutional Seniority: Review institutional employment to the extent that employees are otherwise equal in skills, qualifications and performance. Seniority is based on the institution's hire date and prorated for periods of part-time employment. In the case where a RIF may be related to a consolidation, the potentially affected employee's hire date at the pre-consolidated institution may be used for seniority consideration purposes.

Impact Analysis: All RIF plans are reviewed to avoid adverse impact on employees in protected classes and limit potential institutional liability. Management is responsible for making RIF decisions using the above factors. This list is not exhaustive and other factors as deemed relevant and appropriate by the institution and that conform to any applicable legal or regulatory mandates may also be considered. The appropriate Human Resources official will develop the demographic data report (i.e. race, gender, age, disability status, veteran's status) for each employee identified -in the plan for use in an impact analysis review.

- Employee Transition Assistance Plan: Each institution must establish an Employee Transition Assistance Plan, which may include the following

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- Re-employment: Employees separated due to a RIF will receive a six-month priority consideration period (immediately following the RIF effective date) for internal positions to which they apply and for which they are qualified. Hiring managers must demonstrate a compelling justification for selecting another candidate.
- Priority Recall: Employees displaced by positions that were eliminated via this policy and reestablished within one year of the RIF shall be notified and given first right of refusal for the reestablished position(s).
- Resume Sharing: Institutions may establish a resume sharing program with other USG institutions. Affected employees may request to participate in the program and submit updated resumes to HR for circulation to other institutions in consideration of open positions for which they are qualified and are interested in applying.

The plan may also include the following components: Flexibility in allowing RIF displaced staff to have opportunities to interview for other USG positions prior to the separation date; information sessions, partnerships with other local university or state agencies; EAP referrals; professional development resources; DOL in-house sessions; and other community resources and services as available.

Communications Plan: All employees in affected areas or units where a RIF will occur should receive some form of communication regarding impending changes as appropriate. A communication plan detailing appropriate messaging, timing, and forums (group or individual meetings, emails) must be developed. Impacted employees should be engaged as soon as practical prior to written notice.

Employee Notice: After receiving approval from institution administrators, the supervisor/manager must notify the employee in writing of the reduction in force using the institutional RIF template provided by Human Resources. Employees will be given a minimum of 60 calendar days' notice that their position will be eliminated. Whenever possible, 90 days' notice should be provided. The notice of layoff or termination shall be written and delivered in person or by certified mail, with return receipt requested. The written notice must include:

- a statement of the conditions requiring layoff or termination,
- effective date,
- a general description of procedures followed in making the decision,
- a statement of the employee's right to request a discretionary review.

Employee Off Boarding: The last day the employee works is the effective date of the reduction in force. The employee must complete the institution's standard clearance procedures. Where

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feasible, Human Resources will assist in processing termination related matters on the employee's behalf.

- Employees who transfer to other USG institutions within 30 days from the RIF effective date will be treated as an external transfer in accordance with HRAP Transfer policies.
- An employee separated by a reduction in force is paid for accumulated vacation leave (as permitted by Board of Regents policy) in the same manner as other separations.

USG RIF Plan Approval: The completed Reduction in Force plan must be approved by the institution's president prior to submission to the USG. Upon approval by the President, the institution's Chief Human Resources Officer will complete the Reduction in Force Request form and submit the institution's plan to the USG Office of Human Resources for review and approval before executing any aspect of the plan.

Department of Labor:

- Mass Layoff: In the event of a mass layoff, as defined by the Georgia Department of Labor as 25 or more employees, the Office of Human Resources will complete Form DOL-402, titled "Mass Separation Notice" (in duplicate) and a copy of Form DOL-402A "Mass Separation Notice (Continuation Sheet)," setting forth the information required thereon (Georgia Department of Labor Rule 300-2-4-.10 and O.C.G.A. §34-8-70), as applicable. Human Resources must also comply with any additional requirements under the federal WARN Act.

Employee-Filed Unemployment Claims: Employees who have permanently separated from employment must file claims directly with the Georgia Department of Labor. These employees are highly encouraged to use the online process to submit a claim. Separated employees may visit the Georgia DOL website or call their local DOL office for information on filing an unemployment benefits claim. Discretionary Review: In accordance with provisions of Board Policy Section 6.2.6 (Application for Discretionary Review), affected employee(s) are afforded up to twenty (20) calendar days from the final decision of the President to submit a written application for review to the Office of Legal Affairs of the Board of Regents. The review of the decision is not a matter of right but is within the sole discretion of the USG Office of Legal Affairs.

Coding and Record Keeping: Employee actions should be appropriately coded, entered and recorded in the institution's human capital management system as a Reduction in Force (RIF). Records should be maintained in compliance with the USG Records Management Guidelines (7 years following the employee's separation from the institution) and applicable state and federal regulations.

Responsible Parties and Contact Information

Party	Responsibility	Phone/Email/URL
Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, USG	Provide guidance to institution human resources officers on effective utilization of this process, monitor campus utilization of this program through annual reports submitted by each institution on the use of this process, update the system as necessary on the use of this process.	404-962-3235 usg-hr@usg.edu
Office of Legal Affairs of the Board of Regents	Evaluate applications on request for discretionary reviews.	270 Washington Street, SW, Atlanta, GA 30334
Institution Chief Human Resources Officers	Ensure appropriate utilization of the USG RIF policy, submit intent to RIF and reports in accordance with the vice chancellor of human resources guidelines, and ensure utilization of this program is in compliance with applicable laws.	See University System HR Officer Listing
Institution Affirmative Action/EEO Offices	Monitor RIF process and its appropriate use to ensure an unbiased and non-discriminatory RIF decisions.	See University System HR Officer Listing
Institution Chief Business Office or designee	Notification; serve as a resource for position funding information to ensure accurate identification of positions funded through grants or other sponsored funds, which therefore are not subject to this policy.	See University System HR Officer Listing

Website Address for This Policy

- None

Appendices (Internal Documents, Forms and Web Links)

- [Temporary Reduction in Force Plan Request Form.docx](#)
- [Permanent Reduction in Force Plan Request Form.docx](#)
- [Reduction in Force Check List](#)
- [Reduction in Force Template Letter](#)
- [Reduction in Force Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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- [Reduction in Force Employee Resource Guide](#)
- [BOR 8.2.21 Policy on Employment Appeals.](#)
- [BOR 6.26 Policy on Application for Discretionary Review.](#)
- [BOR 8.5 Policy on Financial Exigency.](#)
- [BOR 8.3.7.9 Termination/Layoff of Tenured Personnel due to Program Modification.](#)
- HRAP Policy on Dismissal Demotion or Suspension.
- HRAP Policy on Transfers.
- HRAP Policy on Provisional Appointments.

Related Documents and Resources (External)

- [GDOL Rules on Employment Security Law 300-2-4-.10 Mass Separation.](#)
- [Georgia Department of Labor Employer Portal](#)
- [Georgia Department of Labor Unemployment Benefits.](#)
- [DOL Form 402 Mass Separation Notice](#)
- [O.C.G.A. §34-8-70](#)

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