



Flexible Working Policy and procedures

Flexible working describes a variety of working arrangements which give employees a degree of choice over how long, where, when and at what times they work. A flexible working environment is key in helping the University achieve its corporate and diversity objectives, particularly to attract and retain diverse talent and to address the gender pay gap. There is also well-established evidence that there are significant business benefits to be gained by allowing employees to work flexibly.

This policy provides a framework within which Schools/PSUs can consider how best to enable employees to achieve a balance between work and personal commitments (which go beyond caring responsibilities). We recognise that there are already areas which operate flexible working patterns successfully, so this policy sets a framework to provide a more consistent approach across the University moving forward, and allowing more staff to have a degree of flexibility over their working arrangements.

Where possible, the approach of the University is to agree any flexible working requests or find a compromise, unless there are valid reasons not to.

Policy statement/principles

We are committed to providing an inclusive and flexible working environment for all. We recognise the benefits that flexible working arrangements can bring to both the University and our people, by committing to the following principles:

Performance is more important than presence

Staff performance should be measured by what they achieve rather than how many hours they work or how much time they spend at the workplace.

Flexibility can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our people and the University

When flexible working options are implemented successfully and offered proactively, they can support us to reach our business goals, improve customer service and manage space more efficiently.

Prioritising students, customers and research excellence

All staff are entitled to make a case to work flexibly, but there may be particular situations where a specific arrangement is not feasible because of our commitments to students, customers and research excellence. However, in these circumstances the line manager and the employee are

encouraged to examine whether there are alternative ways of helping the employee gain some flexibility.

Different arrangements work for different departments, services and individuals

There is no one size fits all solution. The best working arrangements are tailored to the role, the individual and the needs of the business.

Flexibility involves give and take

Responsibility for making it work must be shared by the employee and their manager. Together they need to assess opportunities and challenges in any proposed arrangement openly and honestly and look for the best way to make it work.

Flexibility can help us achieve a positive working environment for staff

It can improve work life balance and help create an engaged, happy and healthy workforce. Research by our School of Management and Working Families, one of the leading work life balance charities, has shown considerable business benefits, such as enhanced performance, greater commitment and job satisfaction and reduced staff turnover, absence and stress.

Flexible working should support career development

Staff working flexibly should have the same opportunities to develop their careers as those who do not. Business need, performance and skills should be the basis of promotion. As new job opportunities arise, employees and managers should discuss and decide the location and hours of work required.

Arrangements should be regularly reviewed

New working patterns need to be flexible enough to respond to business requirements and changes in individual circumstances. Arrangements should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are still working for the member of staff and the University.

Meeting times should be inclusive

Managers are encouraged to operate 'core business in core hours' for key meetings (between 10am and 4pm). This provides an inclusive approach and ensures maximum attendance.

We will actively consider flexible working options and commit to exploring the possibilities for each role for any request made by a member of staff. All flexible working arrangements are subject to the overriding requirements of the University to deliver services effectively and on time.

Options for flexible working

Flexible working arrangements can be any working pattern which varies from the normal 37 hour, five-day a week pattern at the workplace, for example:

- part-time working
- job-sharing
- annualised hours
- varying start/finish times
- compressed hours
- term-time working
- remote working (e.g. from home)
- ad-hoc arrangements (to cover emergencies)

Line managers and individuals are recommended to seek guidance and fully explore the options suitable for/available to the particular role through open conversations, balancing both the needs of the individual and the School/PSU, as well as considering the [other forms of leave](#) the University has to offer.

Eligibility

We seek to go beyond the statutory requirement; therefore this policy is applicable to all staff regardless of their length of service. The statutory right to request flexible working applies to employees who have a minimum of 26 weeks' continuous service.

Requests for flexible working

It is advised that a member of staff considering making a flexible working request (either formal or informal) will have a conversation with their line manager in advance, to consider which options would be most suitable for the role, the individual and the needs of the business.

1. Informal requests (no contractual change required)

Informal arrangements are based on an agreement between the individual and their line manager. However, they should not require a change to the individual's employment contract.

There may be occasions where requests for limited or short-term changes to working arrangements may be made. Often, it is more appropriate for these to be considered on an informal basis. Examples of this may include ad hoc requests to work from home on a specific day, or to vary working hours. Such requests should be made to the line manager in the first instance who may agree them without need for further formalising. However, in order to be open and transparent, line managers and staff are encouraged to keep a record of what has been agreed.

Flexible working arrangements which start off as informal arrangements e.g. later or earlier start and finish times but continue for a significant period of time (12 months or more) should be reviewed regularly (as a minimum annually) and considered under the formal procedure outlined below. Particularly if they are to continue on an ongoing basis.

2. Formal requests (contractual change required)

Formal arrangements will require formal agreement by a line manager, as they will require a change to the staff member's employment contract.

Following a conversation between an individual and line manager to discuss the request. It is recommended that a formal request is made where changes are long-term and/or significant in nature using the procedure outlined below, which can be followed by any employee.

2.1 Making a formal application

The employee should complete the Flexible Working Application form and send this to their line manager well in advance of the intended change, so that both parties can explore what opportunities are available to them. The line manager will acknowledge receipt of the application form and send a copy to the local HR Team.

2.2 Criteria for dealing with flexible working requests.

Managers should take the following into account in considering flexible working requests:

- The potential benefits of the request may include improved productivity, morale and commitment, retention of key staff and/or salary or other cost savings.
- The proposed change must be feasible and not be detrimental to the work of colleagues, the team, students, external clients/sponsors or service users.
- The arrangements must not be detrimental to the wellbeing or health, safety or security of the individual concerned, or their colleagues.
- If a proposal will affect an individual's pay they should be advised to consult the payroll team to understand how their pay/pension may be affected.
- Where the arrangement proposed cannot be accepted for operational reasons, possible alternatives should be considered and discussed with the individual before a final decision is reached.
- Each request should be considered under its own merit. There should be no limit to the number of staff who can work flexibly as long as the operational needs of the department are met.

2.3 Meeting to discuss a request

- The line manager will arrange a meeting with the employee to consider the request within 28 days after the date an application is received. There may need to be flexibility regarding the location of the meeting if, for example, the employee is on maternity or sickness absence.
- An employee may be accompanied at the meeting if they wish, by either a workplace colleague or a trade union representative. The local Senior HR business partner or HR business partner would normally attend too.
- The meeting will provide both the employee and the line manager with an opportunity to discuss the requested working pattern in depth and consider how it might be accommodated.
- If the requested working pattern cannot be accommodated, the meeting also provides an opportunity to explore alternative arrangements.
- It will normally be expected for both sides to agree to a trial period (usually a minimum of three months) in order to see how the new working pattern suits both the department and the employee. At the end of the agreed trial period, the employee and the line manager should meet to review the trial period and discuss how to take this further.

2.4 Decision and notification

The University is not under a legal duty to agree to the request, but it is expected to consider the request seriously, meet with the employee, and notify its decision in writing. The approach of the University is, where possible, to agree any requests or find a compromise, unless there are good reasons not to on one or more of the following grounds:

- the burden of additional costs
- detrimental effect on ability to meet service/customer needs
- inability to re-organise work amongst existing staff
- inability to recruit additional staff
- detrimental impact on quality of work/service provided
- detrimental impact on performance

- impact on the individual or team's wellbeing
- insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work
- planned structural changes that may be incompatible with the proposed working pattern.

If a request is made and accepted it will be a permanent change to the employee's contractual terms and conditions, subject to any trial period that may apply. The employee has no right to revert back to the previous working pattern (subject to any review arrangements), unless explicitly agreed otherwise, or as a result of a further formal flexible working request.

The line manager, in consultation with his/her Head of Department and HR, will reach a decision. The decision should be recorded on Part B of the application form and sent to the Senior HR Business Partner or HR Business Partner, who will write to the employee within 14 calendar days of the meeting to:

- confirm that the request has been accepted and detail the appropriate arrangements and dates from which these will start or;
- confirm details of any alternative arrangements that have been agreed and date from which these will start or;
- confirm that the request cannot be accommodated giving a short explanation of the reasons for this and setting out the appeal procedure.

2.5 Making an appeal

Where a request has been refused, an employee has 14 calendar days from the date of notification to appeal in writing to a senior manager in the School/PSU (which would normally be the line manager's, line manager) setting out the grounds for appeal.

Within 14 days of the receipt of appeal, an appeal meeting will take place involving the senior manager in the School/PSU who will chair the meeting and the line manager of the original decision maker. The HR Business Partner or Senior HR Business Partner will also normally attend.

The employee may be accompanied at the appeal meeting if they wish by a workplace colleague or a trade union representative. The line manager who made the initial decision will normally also attend.

Within 14 days of the hearing, the Senior HR Business Partner or HR Business Partner will write to the individual to inform them of the outcome of their appeal. The letter will set out responses to any points raised in the appeal.

Where the appeal panel overturns the original rejection of the request or suggests an alternative outcome, the individual will be consulted on the implications and implementation. *Note: depending on the organisational hierarchy, the line of referral/attendees may be different to that outlined above; however, the principle of a more senior manager hearing the appeal will stand.*

2.6 Timescales

Timescales may be delayed by mutual consent to allow for periods of leave etc.

All information received in relation to this policy will be stored and processed in line with applicable data protection legislation. To learn more about how we handle your data, please review our [Privacy notice](#).

Flexible working application form

Part A: Flexible Working Request *(to be completed by the employee)*

Name: _____

Job Title: _____

School/PSU: _____

(1) Type of flexible working request *(please tick as many as appropriate):*

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Change in total hours of work | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Job share | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Change in start/finish times | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Term time | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Compressed hours | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Annualised hours | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Remote working (e.g. from home) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please state): | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(2) Details of requested changes to working arrangements *(please give full details of proposed changes to timing of work, place of work, number of hours etc):*

(3) Proposed effective date(s) *(please enter dates below):*

From: _____

Until _____ in the first instance (if applicable):

(4) Impact of proposed changes

I think the effect on the University and my colleagues can be dealt with as follows:

(5) Other relevant information

Employee’s signature: _____ Date: _____

Please pass this form to your line manager who will then arrange a meeting with you to discuss your application further. You have a right to be accompanied at this meeting by a trade union representative or workplace colleague.

Part B: Management decision *(to be completed by the line manager following the meeting with the employee)*

Please refer to the Flexible Working Policy and consult your Senior HR Business Partner or Business Partner as necessary.

Within 28 days of receipt of this form, you should arrange a meeting with your member of staff to discuss their request. You should ensure that you advise your member of staff in advance of their right to be accompanied at the meeting by a trade union representative or workplace colleague.

Following the meeting, you should consult with your Head of Department and Senior HR Business Partner or Business Partner (if not present at the meeting) before finalising a decision. The decision should be recorded below and the form sent as soon as possible to the Senior HR Business Partner or Business Partner who will write to the individual within 14 days of the meeting to confirm the outcome.

Date of meeting with employee: _____

Decision: 1. ☐ Request approved

2. ☐ Request approved with amendments as follows:

Amendments:

3. ☐ Request declined for the following reasons:

Reasons:

Effective date of agreed change(s): _____

End date if for a fixed period: _____

If for an initial trial period, the date of review: _____

Line Manager's name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Head of Department _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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