



Flexible Working Policy and Procedure

People and Culture

Flexible working is the variation of working hours, times, patterns, or location. For members of staff, it enables them to work in new ways to achieve an improved balance between the competing demands of work and other personal commitments. There are many different flexible work practices and options that can be considered by the University. 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 members of staff to work flexibly.

This policy sets out a framework to provide a consistent approach across the University and 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. We have a separate [hybrid working arrangement](#) in place which is already available for certain roles.

Policy statement/principles

We are committed to providing an inclusive and flexible working environment for all. We recognise the benefits that a flexible working environment can bring to both the University and our members of staff, 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 members of staff 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 request 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 manager and member of staff are encouraged to explore and discuss whether there are alternative ways of helping the member of staff obtain 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 university.
- **Flexibility involves give and take:** Responsibility for making it work must be shared by the member of staff 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 Faculty of Business and 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, sickness absence and stress.
- **Flexible working should support career development:** Members of staff working flexibly should have the same opportunities to develop their careers as those who do not.

- **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) and varying the days of week meetings are held to better accommodate those working part-time. 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. This is not an exhaustive list, and some examples are as follows:

- part-time working
- job-sharing
- annualised hours
- varying start/finish times
- compressed hours
- Short term temporary arrangements

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 Faculty/PSU, as well as considering the [Leave in special circumstances policy](#) and other forms of leave the University offers.

Eligibility

This policy is applicable to all members of staff regardless of length of service. Members of staff have a statutory right to make up to two requests for flexible working in any twelve-month period. If a member of staff has submitted a flexible working request, they must wait until that one has been considered and any appeal has been dealt with, before submitting another.

Requests for flexible working

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

Informal requests (no contractual change required)

Informal arrangements are based on an agreement between the individual and their manager. They are normally short-term arrangements (but may sometimes be long term), and any such informal changes should not require a change to the individual's employment contract.

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 manager in the first instance who may agree them without need for further formalising. However, to be open and transparent, managers and staff should 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 (12 months or more) should be reviewed regularly (as a minimum annually) and it is recommended that they be considered and recorded under the formal procedure outlined below, particularly if they are to continue on an ongoing basis.

Formal requests (contractual change required)

Formal flexible working arrangements will require formal consideration of a written request by the respective manager and be subject to relevant approvals as they will require a change to the staff member's employment contract, which will be issued by People and Culture.

Following an initial conversation between an individual and their manager to discuss the request, a formal written request should be made using the relevant form (where proposed changes are long-term and/or significant in nature) using the procedure outlined below, which can be followed by any member of staff.

Making a formal application for flexible working

The member of staff should complete the Flexible Working Application form and send this to their manager well in advance of the requested date of change of working arrangements, so that both parties can explore what opportunities are available to them. The manager should acknowledge receipt of the application form and send a copy to the local Business Partner - People and Culture on receipt.

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 the individual, their 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 accommodated for operational reasons, possible alternatives should be fully considered and discussed with the individual before a final decision is reached (see further guidance on this below which may require formal consultation prior to the outcome being confirmed).
- 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/group are met.

Meeting to discuss a request for flexible working

- The manager will arrange a consultation meeting to discuss a written request from a member of their staff for flexible working, and this will be held within 21 calendar days of receiving a request. However, if this is not possible, the individual will be informed of the reason for any delay.
- The meeting is an opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss how the proposed working arrangements would benefit the individual and for the manager to consider and discuss any alternative flexible working options that may be available and suitable for the member of staff and the University.
- At the meeting, we encourage the member of staff to be as open as possible about their needs/the request, so that the manager may engage in a constructive discussion about what is feasible.
- A member of staff may be accompanied at the meeting if they wish, by either a workplace colleague or a trade union representative. The local Senior Business Partner or Business Partner – People and Culture would normally attend too.

- There may need to be flexibility regarding the location of the meeting if, for example, the member of staff is on maternity or sickness absence.
- If the requested working pattern is unlikely to be able to be accommodated due to one or more of the 8 reasons for refusal an organization may legally state, this meeting also provides an opportunity to explore alternative arrangements and to fully consult before a decision is made.
- In the event agreement is reached, it will normally be expected 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 member of staff. At the end of the agreed trial period, the member of staff and the manager should meet to review the trial period, following which, the outcome in consultation with the Business Partner – People and Culture, will be confirmed in writing.

In addition to or as part of discussing the options, managers may wish to consider:

- Setting up regular one to one meetings so the team member can easily let the manager know if there is a change in their circumstances and to regularly review how the new arrangement is working.
- The timing of individual and department meetings - some staff who work flexibly may have caring responsibilities so efforts should be made for meetings to be arranged in advance and within the day/hours they work.

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 member of staff to discuss the request and implications, and notify the member of staff of 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, because of 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.
- insufficiency of work during the periods the member of staff 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 member of staff's contractual terms and conditions, subject to any trial period that may apply. The member of staff has no right to revert 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 manager, in consultation with their Head of Department/Group and Business Partner - People and Culture, will normally reach a decision. The decision should be recorded on Part B of the application form and sent to the Senior Business Partner or Business Partner – People and Culture, who will write to the member of staff within 7 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, along with any trial period agreed, or
- confirm details of any alternative arrangements that have been agreed and date from which these will start, along with any trial period agreed, or
- confirm that the request cannot be accommodated giving a short explanation of the reasons for this and setting out the appeal procedure. While we are committed to encouraging flexible working patterns, we need to remain realistic and, in some cases, it may not be possible for us to accommodate

a request on the basis of the above legitimate grounds. Such a decision will only be made following meaningful consultation with the individual who has made the request (as per the section above regarding the meeting to discuss the request).

Making an appeal

Where a request has been refused, a member of staff has 10 calendar days from the date of notification to appeal in writing to a senior manager in the Faculty/PSU (which would normally be the line manager's manager) setting out the grounds for appeal.

Within 10 calendar days of the receipt of appeal, an appeal meeting will take place involving the senior manager in the Faculty/PSU who will chair the meeting and the manager of the original decision maker. The Business Partner or Senior Business Partner – People and Culture will also normally attend.

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

Within 10 calendar days of the hearing, the Senior Business Partner or Business Partner – People and Culture 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 structure, 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.*

Timescales

Once a written request for flexible working (using the form below), is submitted to a manager from a member of staff, it will be dealt with as soon as possible. However, all requests will be handled and finalised within two months, from receipt of the application form to notification of the outcome of any appeal decision. The Flexible Working Application form is below.

The timescales within this policy may be extended where this is mutually agreed and 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 staff data please review our Privacy Notice.

Flexible Working Application form

Part A: Flexible Working Request *(to be completed by the member of staff)*

Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Faculty/PSU: _____

All employees have the statutory right to request flexible working. Under this procedure you can make two requests in every 12-month period. If you have submitted a flexible working request, you must wait until that one has been considered, and any appeal has been dealt with before submitting another. If you are uncertain whether you are eligible to make a request, please contact your Business Partner – People and Culture.

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

Reduction in/Change in total number of hours of work ☐

Job share ☐

Change in start/finish times ☐

Compressed hours ☐

Annualised hours ☐

Other (please state): ☐

(2) Details of requested changes to working arrangements *(giving full details of the proposed changes. For each working day, please state the proposed hours/times to be worked including breaks, and the total number of weekly hours).*

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

From: _____ Permanent change? Y/N *(please circle)*

Until _____ *(If for a temporary period only)*

(4) Other relevant information to support your application for flexible working

Do you have a disability or medical condition as the reason for applying for flexible working? If so, please contact your Business Partner – People and Culture, and your manager. In such cases, any reasonable workplace adjustments including flexible working will be considered using our Reasonable Adjustments framework & process instead.

Yes

No

Previous applications for flexible working

Have you submitted a previous request for flexible working? (If yes, please answer the next question.)

Yes

No

When did you submit your last request for flexible working?

Member of staff's signature: _____ Date: _____

Please pass this form to your manager who will arrange a consultation meeting with you to discuss your application further (within 21 calendar days). This is an opportunity for you to explain how the proposed working arrangements would benefit you and for us to consider and discuss any alternative flexible working options that may be available and suitable for you and the university.

We encourage you to be as open as possible about your request so that we are able to engage in a constructive discussion about what is feasible. You may if you wish, be accompanied at this meeting by a trade union representative or workplace colleague. Your local Business Partner – People and Culture may also attend to help with facilitating the meeting and relevant discussions.

Part B: Management decision *(to be completed by the manager following the meeting with the member of staff and having sought any relevant approvals)*

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

Within 21 days of receipt of this form, you should hold a consultation 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 should they wish, by a trade union representative or workplace colleague.

Following the meeting, you should consult with your Head of Department/Centre and Senior Business Partner or Business Partner – People and Culture (if not present at the meeting) before finalising a decision. In the event that the request is to be refused, meaningful consultation must have taken place under the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023.

The decision should be recorded below, and the form sent as soon as possible to the Senior Business Partner or Business Partner – People and Culture who will write to the individual within 7 days of the meeting to confirm the outcome (following meaningful consultation in the event the request has been refused).

Date of meeting with member of staff: _____

- Decision:
- 1. ☐ Request approved
 - 2. ☐ Request approved with amendments as follows:

Amendments:

- 3. ☐ Request to be declined for the following reasons:

Reasons:

Please consult your Business Partner – People and Culture prior to finalising the decision and/or prior to informing your member of staff as meaningful consultation needs to have taken place before notifying your staff member.

Effective date of agreed change(s): _____

End date if for a fixed period: _____

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

Manager’s name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Head of Department/Centre _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Document Control

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