



University  
of Glasgow | People & Organisational  
Development

# Flexible Working Policy

## Foreword

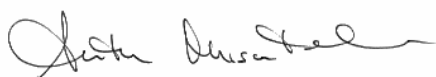
The development of this Flexible Working policy is an important initiative in our ambition to create and sustain a world class working environment for all our staff and one that is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The policy arises out of a thorough and evidenced based appraisal of the value of flexible approaches to work, but just as importantly it reflects the messages you have been communicating through our staff surveys and through the focus groups we established to help shape the policy.

The evidence suggests that flexible working delivers mutual benefits including a more positive work life balance, a means of managing stress, improvements to performance and productivity as well as a way of attracting talent to the workplace. In addition, it delivers greater equality and diversity as people feel empowered to manage their workload around other non-work responsibilities that might otherwise have restricted their career choices and progression.

While it is true that flexible working arrangements may not be appropriate for all roles, I hope that as staff or line managers, you will feel able to consider the options in an open-minded, creative way. Flexible working practices work best when they are agreed in partnership as a two-way arrangement and in a spirit of trust and I feel sure this framework will support any future discussions you may choose to have.

I commend the policy to you and hope that it will offer a fresh and energising way for all of us to think about the way we engage with work.



**Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli**  
**Principal and Vice-Chancellor**

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Principles</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Application Process</b>	<b>5</b>
	<u>Early Discussion</u>	<b>6</b>
	<u>Informal Requests</u>	<b>6</b>
	<u>Formal Requests</u>	<b>6</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Appeals</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Review</b>	<b>7</b>

## Policy Snapshot

- The University recognises that flexible working can deliver many mutual benefits and is committed to developing an enabling culture where a healthy work-life balance is the norm
- Staff may request flexible working from their first day of employment
- Managers should openly consider requests in the spirit of the principles outlined in this policy.
- The policy makes a distinction between ad-hoc/irregular flexible working and more formal flexible working which requires a change to terms and conditions

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University acknowledges the mutual benefits of flexible working and is committed to developing an enabling culture where a healthy work-life balance is the norm and where employees are empowered to work in an agile manner to do their best work.
- 1.2 The University recognises that flexible working arrangements can:
- Support new ways of working
  - Improve work-life balance
  - Enhance employee engagement & morale
  - Advance gender equality
  - Enhance productivity
  - Attract and retain talent
  - Improve attendance levels
  - Support improved use of our physical estate
  - Improve accessibility of employment
  - Reduce environmental impact (e.g. less travel)
  - Increase civic contribution (e.g. providing flexibility for colleagues to meet caring needs or to volunteer outside of work)
- 1.3 This policy sets out the spirit in which flexible working arrangements should be considered across the University. All flexible working requests should follow the process outlined in section 5 below.
- 1.4 Further support and guidance is available via the [Flexible Working Toolkit](#).

## **2. Definition**

- 2.1 Flexible working arrangements give a degree of flexibility around the working pattern, location and/or the number of hours an individual works, subject to the organisational requirements of any given role.
- 2.2 Flexible working arrangements vary by their very nature with some requiring changes to contractual terms and conditions (e.g. changing hours or days worked) and some requiring no such change (e.g. working flexible hours).
- 2.3 Arrangements may also be permanent or temporary/ad-hoc/irregular (e.g. adopting a different arrangement for a limited period (e.g. to support with caring responsibilities)).
- 2.4 The University intends for agile and flexible working approaches to be as accessible as possible to all employees whilst ensuring that statutory rights are preserved, therefore the process to be followed when requesting a new arrangement (Section 5) should reflect the circumstances of the request.

## **3. Scope**

- 3.1 This policy aligns with the statutory entitlement available to employees and applies to all University of Glasgow employees from the first day of employment. It is also possible for new employees to agree a flexible working pattern before starting employment with the University.

## **4. Principles**

- 4.1 Flexible working can play an important role in supporting our values-based agile, engaging and enabling culture where performance is maximised and barriers are minimised as we embrace new technology and new ways of working.
- 4.2 Flexible working can support a culture where change is accepted, adaption is quick and innovation is encouraged across the University.
- 4.3 Many roles in the University are already flexible by their very nature or contractual status and where this is the case there may be no requirement to follow the process outlined in this policy. Not every role will however be immediately suited to flexible working arrangements.
- 4.4 Employees requesting flexible working arrangements are responsible for ensuring they are fully aware of any impacts this may have on their contractual terms and conditions

(e.g. pay/annual leave/pension implications). Additional guidance is also available to support both employees and managers around the flexible working process.

- 4.5 Discussion of flexible working requests should take place in partnership, with dialogue seeking to explore possible alternatives where initial proposals cannot be supported. Both managers and employees can benefit from agreeing a trial period for any new arrangement to ensure that it is successful in delivering expected benefits.
- 4.6 Trust is essential to the success of any flexible working arrangement and it must be acknowledged that individuals and teams have different needs, working styles and pressures therefore the nature and possibilities of flexible arrangements will vary. Employees adopting flexible working arrangements should accept that there is a responsibility to agree (and review) expectations and boundaries as well as offer a degree of flexibility in return. Flexible working arrangements should not adversely impact on other colleagues or teams.
- 4.7 Managers retain the right to make the final decision on whether or not a flexible working request can be supported within their team/area and an appropriate justification must be provided where it is not possible.
- 4.8 Employees should not typically make more than two formal flexible working requests in any 12-month period however it is accepted that short-term arrangements (e.g. for reasons relating to ill-health or caring responsibilities) may require review if circumstances change.
- 4.9 Reasonable steps should be taken to share agreed flexible working arrangements with appropriate managers/colleagues in order to ensure greater visibility and understanding. Individuals should also remain contactable during their working time (where appropriate) and should utilise available technology to support effective working, communication and/or collaborative work.

## **5. Application Process**

- 5.1 Employees wishing to request a flexible working arrangement should follow the process outlined below. Managers can find further information in the Flexible Working Toolkit.
- 5.2 Advice or support may be sought from either Human Resources or Trade Union representatives where required and is particularly encouraged where a proposed formal flexible working arrangement may impact upon contractual terms and conditions.
- 5.3 Flexible working applications made under this policy will be managed in line with the HR Records retention schedule and associated [privacy notice](#).

### **5.4 Early Discussion**

- 5.4.1 Employees considering any form of flexible working should discuss their initial thoughts with their manager as early as possible to explore how they may work in practice. Discussions should themselves be flexible and approached with an open mind in order

to fully consider how the proposed working arrangement may be accommodated. Employees and managers should draw on any prior experience of flexible working to explore how any proposed arrangements can be optimised.

- 5.4.2 The next steps in the process depend on the nature of the arrangement being requested. Proposals which require a change to terms and conditions (e.g. change in days or hours worked) require a formal request to be made, otherwise an informal request will be appropriate in the first instance.

## 5.5 Informal Requests

- 5.5.1 Ad-hoc/irregular arrangements or those which will not require a change to terms and conditions may be quickly agreed through informal discussion (possibly after adjusting to overcome any potential barriers). Arrangements which do not require changes to terms and conditions\* include working flexible hours and/or varying work location/home working (with the exception of full-time remote working). Typically when an individual varies their work location their contractual base of work will remain on campus (or equivalent local unit).

*\*Any change to the number of hours worked (e.g. part-time working) or the specific days on which work is carried out (e.g. compressed hours) will always require a contractual change and therefore the formal process below to be followed.*

- 5.5.2 Ad-hoc/irregular arrangements require no further action once agreed however for longer-term/permanent arrangements (e.g. working flexible hours indefinitely) managers should confirm the nature of the agreement via email. It may still be appropriate to hold a trial period for such arrangements.
- 5.5.3 Where managers are unable to accept the proposal based on the information available at the informal stage, employees may consider advancing their request to the formal process in order to explore the request in more detail.

## 5.6 Formal Requests

- 5.6.1 Requests for flexible working arrangements which will require a change to terms and conditions (such as the number of hours or days worked) - or where any other request could not be approved through earlier discussions - should be made on the [via the online form within the University Helpdesk](#). This allows for more information to be provided and supports wider discussion on the proposed working arrangements. Once the form has been submitted, the manager named within the form will be notified by email.
- 5.6.2 Managers should meet with employees to discuss their request as soon as possible on receipt of the request.
- 5.6.3 After full consideration of the information presented, managers should provide a response. This may be at the end of the meeting but in some circumstances, managers may wish to take time to consider the request in greater depth. Where this is required employees should be kept up to date as required and notified of the outcome as soon as possible.
- 5.6.4 Outcomes should typically be communicated verbally by managers in the first instance. Where a request is refused, managers should update the system and follow up in writing using the [Template Letter – Flexible Working Request \(Not Approved\)](#) taking advice from their local HR Team if required. Where a request is approved, managers

should summarise the agreed new working arrangement and its start date (and if temporary, its duration) within the online system. Record the duration of any trial period (if applicable) and/or any appropriate follow up action required e.g. risk assessments, equipment required. If there are any financial implications for this request e.g. an increase, decrease, continuation or change of funding, please submit a manager request through the HR system portal. Once submitted the local HR team will receive a request to make confirm the changes in writing with the staff member. Trial periods should be considered as a way of testing the proposed arrangement in practice.

- 5.6.5 The application process should take no more than 2 months from initial submission through to conclusion, however most cases should be concluded promptly. Applications should be submitted in good time ahead of any proposed start dates for a new arrangement.
- 5.6.6 Applications can only be refused for valid and objective reasons where it is considered that a change to the employee's work pattern would adversely impact the University on one or more of the following areas:
- the burden of additional costs
  - a detrimental effect on ability to meet organisational demand
  - an inability to reorganise work among existing staff or recruit additional staff
  - a detrimental impact on quality or performance
  - insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work
  - planned structural changes
- 5.6.7 Where a refusal is given, managers must provide a detailed justification (under one or more of the above reasons) of the specific reasons for the refusal.

## 6. Appeals

- 6.1 Employees may appeal against the outcome of the formal process within 10 working days of it being notified to them. The grounds for the appeal should be put in writing via the online system (in the MyItems section). Once submitted the local People & OD team will receive a request to schedule the Appeal Meeting.
- 6.2 The appeal will normally be heard by a manager more senior than the manager who originally considered the formal request. The Appeal Meeting should normally take place within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal. Advice and guidance on the process is available from People and Organisational Development. The member of staff may, if they wish, be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a work colleague.
- 6.3 The Appeal Meeting allows the individual to highlight why they believe their flexible working request should have been approved and provides an opportunity for the Appeal Manager to ask further questions to inform their decision.
- 6.4 Once the Appeal Manager has considered all the points raised, they should provide a written response to the employee within 15 working days of the Appeal Meeting.
- 6.5 The decision of the Appeal Manager is final and there is no further stage of appeal.



## 7. Review

7.1 This non-contractual policy was developed in full consultation with the Campus Trade Unions.

<b>Document Control</b>	
<b>Policy name</b>	Flexible Working
<b>Approved by</b>	SMG (16/03/20), Policy Review Group (12/02/20)
<b>Implementation date</b>	17/03/20
<b>Last reviewed</b>	April 2023, Policy Review Group (25/04/23)
<b>Owner</b>	Central HR – Employee Relations
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	10/09/19