Examples of Flexible Working

Guidance

Introduction

Flexible working is not restricted to reducing hours or working part-time but instead covers a range of potential arrangements which give a degree of flexibility around the working pattern, location and/or the number of hours an individual works.

This guidance note aims to provide some additional context to the University's Flexible Working Policy by outlining common examples of flexible working arrangements and relevant considerations such as potential barriers and how these may be overcome.

Arrangements vary by their very nature with some being more formal and requiring changes to contractual terms and conditions (e.g. changing hours or days worked) and some being more informal, requiring no such change (e.g. varying work location or working flexible hours). Arrangements may also be permanent or temporary/ad-hoc/irregular such as adopting a different arrangement for a limited period (e.g. to support with caring responsibilities).

Whilst flexible working can be led by individual requests, managers and their teams should proactively consider whether a team arrangement could provide wider benefits such as identifying and implementing/trialling new approaches to work that place colleagues in the best environment for the task they are working on.

Further guidance is available via the Flexible Working Toolkit and/or the Hybrid Working Portal.

Types of Flexibility

Flexible working can involve changing working arrangements across any combination of the following:

Location
The nature of the work being carried out may be more suited to a remote working environment. Remote locations may be anywhere other than an individual's normal office location and can include home-working. Such arrangements typically focus on outcomes/outputs rather than presence and take advantage of technology to collaborate and maintain contact with colleagues as required. Further guidance on this can be found on the Hybrid Working Portal.

Working Pattern
Working patterns do not necessarily need to match a '9 to 5', five days per week' model, particularly in light of the dynamic environment in which the University operates and accounting for the other pressure's employees face in modern life. Individuals and their wider teams/units may benefit from working more flexible hours, such as starting and finishing earlier/later or through compressing their work into a smaller number of days (e.g. working 4 longer days in a week). Such patterns may themselves be adaptable to suit the needs of the organisation and may flex during busier/quieter times of the year. Aligned to remote working above, flexible hours also work well under an approach that focuses on outputs/outcomes rather than presence.

Hours Worked

It may be possible to support a reduction in hours worked, where this may benefit an individual's work-life balance. Typically referred to as working 'part-time', such arrangements see individuals working less hours than the originally contracted hours for the post. In some cases, job-sharing may be possible (where two or more part-time individuals share one position).

Common Flexible Working Arrangements

The following are common examples of flexible working arrangements along with relevant considerations such as potential barriers and how these may be overcome.

These are:

- Hybrid Working
- Flexible hours
- Part-time hours
- Compressed hours (e.g. working 'full-time' hours over 4 longer days)
- Job sharing

Hybrid Working

Hybrid working is the ability to vary/mix the place of work (campus, remote hub, home etc) with prior agreement. Working from a mix of locations can bring many mutual benefits. It may be the optimal environment in which to carry out a particular task or piece of work whilst at the same time improving an individuals work-life balance (e.g. through reducing commuting time). Further guidance on this can be found on the Hybrid Working Portal.

Where it works well

This approach to working works well where outputs/outcomes are measurable. It works well, for example, for work which requires a degree of concentration which is difficult to achieve in a busy office environment. It works well where technology is embraced to support remote collaboration and in fact teams can often discover improved opportunities to connect and collaborate in a virtual environment.

Other Considerations

Working from different locations brings other considerations around health and safety, IT equipment and data protection. Individuals or Teams considering hybrid working should explore the University's Hybrid Working Portal.

Individuals working from different locations should also ensure they take appropriate steps to build transparency around availability with their wider teams. This may involve keeping calendars up to date or using Teams status to note their availability.

Flexible Hours

Individuals working flexible hours tend to vary their start/finish times within agreed parameters (e.g. start and finish times between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00). This can support employees with domestic responsibilities, travel arrangements or with work-related reasons. Employees may wish to request such an arrangement for a short-term period, or indefinitely or alternatively some areas of the University have chosen to offer such an approach as standard.

This approach can typically be agreed without the need for a formal contractual change, providing there is no change to the total number of hours worked or the days on which they are worked.

Flexible hours are not exclusive to employees working full-time hours and agreement may be reached, for example, that part-time or flexible hours could be worked in a flexible way when it comes to start/finish times.

Where it works well

This is a simple and effective approach to flexible working which can positively impact an individuals work-life balance with minimal practical impact on the organisation. It works well when based around trust and should be possible across a wide range of different roles. Such an arrangement also works well where two-way flexibility can be accommodated, such as an individual matching their working pattern to the needs of the University as far as reasonably possible.

Where it can be applied across a team, it may deliver benefits such as that team being able to provide a service across longer hours (e.g. from 08:00 to 18:00 rather than 09:00 to 17:00, as a result of different arrangements overlapping).

Other Considerations

Challenges can include uncertainty around various colleagues start/finish times. This can be overcome through high-levels of transparency and open-dialogue amongst teams/units and through practices such as keeping calendars up to date with details of planned working patterns. Similarly, such variability can present challenges when scheduling meetings. This may present an opportunity to set parameters within the working day for meetings to be held (e.g. between 10:00 and 16:00) and scrutinising whether meetings are essential. This may also bring other benefits such as colleagues knowing that within any working day there will be periods of time where they know they will not be required at meetings.

Some areas of the University may support such arrangements providing busier periods of the day are covered.

Part-time Hours

Individuals working part-time hours work fewer than the standard weekly working hours. The number of hours worked can range from just below 'full-time' working down to a few hours per week. This can support employees to improve their work-life balance either by working shorter days or by having additional non-working days in any given week.

Any reduction in hours worked must be treated as a formal request as it requires changes to contractual terms and conditions. Individuals should ensure that they are fully aware of any implications of such a change, such as an associated reduction in salary, leave entitlement or pension benefit.

It is possible for part-time hours to be worked across flexible start and finish times as per the section above.

Where it works well
Part-time working can theoretically work in most roles but is best utilised in areas which will not be adversely impacted through any reduction in hours. Although less common, part-time working can form part of a job-share arrangement in order to deliver 'full-time' hours.

Other Considerations
Part-time employees should also follow good practice guidelines around maintaining transparency of arrangements/keeping calendars up to date where appropriate. It is also important for managers of part-time workers to ensure that workload matches contractual hours, particularly during the process of transitioning to a part-time approach.

Compressed-Hours

Compressed hours normally involve lengthening the working day in order to shorten the working week. A common example is working 'full-time' hours but over 4 longer days (or 4.5 days) instead of 5 standard days. Alternative options see colleagues compressing 10 days into 9 instead of 5 days into 4. This can support an individuals work-life balance, normally by providing additional non-working days in a given week however at the same time it does result in lengthening other days worked.

Where it works well
Compressed hours can work well across a range of roles and although the total number of hours worked may be no different to a 'traditional' full-time role, any arrangement will require an environment where work will not be impacted by the individual not being present on certain days.

Other Considerations
Individuals should be aware that whilst reducing the number of days worked in a week, they will in turn be increasing the length of the days that they are working (although this can be

mitigated by compressing hours over a longer period of time if appropriate – e.g. 10 days into 9).

Consideration must also be given to conducting appropriate risk assessments if, for example, new longer working days leave an individual working alone for significant periods of time.

Job Sharing
Job-sharing is an arrangement whereby two or more part-time workers 'share' one role (typically a full-time one). This can support a full-time role being delivered whilst meeting the work-life balance requirements of two or more team members.

Where it works well
Job-sharing works best where part-time working can be supported, but there is an over-riding requirement for a full-time role to be delivered. It can also bring more than one set of skills/experience to a given role due to the multiple individuals involved.

Other Considerations
Job-sharing can present practical challenges relating to the management of the role and the appropriate allocation of workload across more than one individual within it. It also often requires a form of handover between the different parties carrying out the role which may impact available working time (compared against one individual carrying out that role).