1. The case for flexible work

UNSW understands the importance of fostering a workplace culture that supports the work and life needs of its staff. Flexible work arrangements provide flexibility on how, where, when and at what times employees work. Flexible work arrangements can benefit both staff and the University.

The University recognises that people may need different types of flexibility at various times in their lives. Flexible work arrangements have several benefits; support the workforce participation of diverse groups including people with disability; enable staff to interact with students working in different timeframes; enhance the University's ability to attract and retain talented staff, and they help staff better manage their work and personal responsibilities including carer responsibilities. Employees increasingly expect and value a level of flexibility in their roles and access to flexible work arrangements has been shown to improve employee engagement, wellbeing and productivity.

UNSW supports and is committed to making access to flexible working equitable for all staff.

2. Types of flexible working

Informal requests for flexibility

Informal requests for flexibility to meet ad-hoc and short-term needs are not continuing arrangements. They should be discussed and managed by the manager and employee as they arise or as part of regular MyCareer discussion. Such requests may include but are not limited to:

- Changing the days of work occasionally (for part-time arrangements)
- Earlier / later start and finish times
- Individualised work schedules
- Working from home or at another location occasionally.

Formal requests for flexibility

Formal requests for a flexible work arrangement may impact an employee's pay or entitlements. These requests are ongoing or regular, for a defined period and in some instances may require a variation to the employee’s employment contract. Arrangements may include but are not limited to:

- Working part-time, job-share or reduced hours arrangements
- Moving to a compressed work schedule
- Flexi time
• Working from home on a regular basis.

Such arrangements should be documented in writing by the manager and employee to provide clarity and avoid misunderstandings. The manager and employee may seek the advice of HR. Where flexible work arrangements are already in place these should be reviewed, discussed and documented as part of the MyCareer discussion that managers conduct with each of their team members on a regular basis.

3. Guiding principles on flexible working at UNSW

These principles serve as a guide to accessing flexible work arrangements. Flexible work arrangements should involve a conversation between the employee and their manager. The following principles inform and guide employee/manager conversations.

3.1 An employee may make a written request for flexible work.

3.2 All employees have the right to request a flexible work arrangement. The type of flexibility will differ from person to person, based on individual needs and their role.

3.3 While employees are normally expected to provide a reason for their request, if they have privacy concerns they may discuss their request with HR.

3.4 Both the manager and the employee have a responsibility to genuinely consider and evaluate the potential implications of implementing the requested flexible work arrangement.

3.5 The manager and the employee requesting the flexible work arrangement should consider the potential impact of the request on:

- the employee’s role and responsibilities
- the employee’s colleagues, clients and any other relevant stakeholders
- business requirements (including but not limited to efficiency and productivity, customer service and any costs)
- the work unit’s ability to meet its operational objectives.

3.6 Managers must seek to ensure that flexible work arrangements are fair and equitable, having regard for the operational requirements of the work unit.

3.7 Staff are encouraged to discuss their request with their manager and then put in a written request. Where the request for a flexible work arrangement is due to caring responsibilities, UNSW must respond to the employee in writing within 21 days.

3.8 A flexible work request can only be rejected on reasonable business grounds.

3.9 Another employee’s flexible work request (within the same work unit or another area of the University), does not set a precedent or create a right for another employee to be granted the same or a similar change to their work arrangement.

3.10 If approved, the flexible work arrangement should be subject to a trial period. This period should involve regular formal or informal reviews by the manager, including feedback from the employee as to how the arrangement is going. Generally, a three-month trial period allows enough time to see if the arrangement is working, though the time may vary depending on the nature of the request. At the completion of the trial period both the manager and the employee should discuss whether the arrangement continues.

3.11 If the arrangement continues after the trial period it should be reviewed on a regular basis, at least annually from the date of commencement, by the manager and employee. A regular review provides an opportunity to address any concerns that may arise and to ensure the arrangement continues to be effective in meeting the needs of the University, the work unit and the employee. These reviews should be documented.

3.12 Documentation of the flexible work arrangement is important to provide clarity and avoid misunderstandings. A copy should be kept and maintained by the manager in a confidential and secure way. The employee should also keep a copy of the agreement.

3.13 UNSW’s policies and procedures continue to apply regardless of when or where an employee’s work is done.

3.14 An employee may request to end their flexible work arrangement and this will need to be discussed and agreed with their manager.
3.15 If it is determined that the flexible work arrangement must come to an end or be modified, the employee will be provided with reasonable notice.

3.16 Regardless of an employee's flexible work arrangement, performance expectations, including those agreed as part of MyCareer discussions, continue to apply.

3.17 When participating in a flexible work arrangement, employees must, as in any work environment, take reasonable care for their health and safety, take reasonable care of any UNSW equipment in their use and comply with UNSW Health and Safety Policy, Procedures and Guidelines.

Where these Flexible Work Guidelines refer to documentation this may include email, MyCareer forms or other relevant HR forms. Documentation should include the start date of the arrangement, length of the trial period and the date the arrangement will be reviewed.

If UNSW (rather than an individual employee) proposes to introduce a change to the regular roster or ordinary hours of work, it may also be required to consult with employees. Please seek advice from your HR Business Partnering team.

4. Flexible Work Toolkit

An online Flexible Work Toolkit is available for staff [link to come]. The toolkit contains practical advice, checklists, FAQs and examples of flexible work arrangements, including case studies that show how various flexible work arrangements can be managed. It includes a step by step checklist that both managers and employees can follow.

The relevant HR Business Partnering Team or Workplace Diversity workplace.diversity@unsw.edu.au may also be contacted for further guidance.

5. Appeals process

Where an application for a flexible work arrangement is not approved, the employee may seek advice from the HR Business Partnering team or Workplace Diversity as appropriate. If the employee remains unsatisfied with the decision they can refer to UNSW’s Staff Complaint Procedure.

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| Parent Document (Policy and Procedure) | Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy |

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Related Documents

- UNSW (Academic Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2015
- UNSW (Professional Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2015
- Code of Conduct (staff)
- Equity Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Reasonable Adjustment Guidelines for Managers of Staff and Potential Staff with Disabilities
- Change of Hours Request Form (HR09)

Superseded Documents

Working from Home Policy

File Number

[For Governance Use]

Definitions and Acronyms

Flexible Working

Flexible working includes (but is not limited to), part-time, job share, compressed work week, working remotely, flexi-hours.

Revision History

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Further Information

This section is not published on the final PDF document. It is for website purposes only.

Keywords for search engine

University-wide Guidelines will be housed within the Governance Repository. Include keywords to assist location using the ‘search’ function.

FAQs and answers

Include any Frequently Asked Questions and answers to be included with the Guideline (in a separate tab or section) in the Governance Policy Repository.