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Flexible Work Arrangements – Toolkit

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Flexible Work Arrangement Toolkit

Purpose

This toolkit is designed to help staff and supervisors understand what flexible working arrangements are, how to request and respond to them, and how to integrate flexible working practices into existing work arrangements.

This document should be read in conjunction with the [University of Adelaide Enterprise Agreement](#) as well as the [Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure](#), and other supporting information and resources as available on the University of Adelaide [Flexible Work Arrangements \(FWA\)](#) webpage.

The following resources may assist you in this process: [Staff Services Online \(SSO\)](#), which provides a streamlined way for employees to submit FWA requests; FAQs, which offer answers to common questions and provide clarity on the flexible work arrangement process, and scenarios, which present practical examples to help guide decision-making and ensure consistency in handling requests. These tools can help you navigate the process more effectively and ensure that both your team's needs and business requirements are met.

What is Flexible Work?

The University of Adelaide is committed to enabling equity, diversity, and inclusion in the way staff work. University of Adelaide is equally committed to creating campuses that strive to be vibrant, engaging, safe, and sustainable places where students and staff can perform at their best.

Our Vision

We will:

- Continue to provide an excellent learning environment for our students.
- Support staff by genuinely considering flexible work requests, balanced against the University's operational needs.
- Make a variety of flexible work options available to eligible staff across a diverse range of roles at the University of Adelaide.
- Provide information and safeguards aimed to protect the organisation and staff when working flexibly.

Flexible Work Principles

Considerations

Flexible work arrangements need to consider the requirements and interests of the University, our students, the individual, and the broader team.

Mutually beneficial

Flexible work should be a win-win for all parties. It aims to support the individual whilst also enabling service delivery and the University's business needs to be maintained.

Eligibility

All fixed-term and continuing staff can request a Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) regardless of their length of service. Casual staff who have been employed on a regular and systematic basis for at least 12 months and who have a reasonable expectation of continuing employment on a regular and systematic basis are also eligible to request an FWA.

Give and take

Everyone is encouraged to embrace a versatile approach to flexible work. Sometimes arrangements will need to be reviewed, changed, paused, or ended to meet the needs of the University or the individual.

Context matters

Different types of flexibility will suit different roles, business requirements, and operational environments.

Trust and communication

A strong sense of trust and accountability within the team is key to the success of flexible work practices.

Benefits of Flexible Working

Staff retention

Offering flexibility is one way to reduce the likelihood that staff will leave and helps to increase loyalty.

Retaining existing knowledge and skills is important to ensure we maintain a high knowledge base within our teams therefore being able to offer the best service to our students and stakeholders.

Attracting top talent

Flexibility has become one of the most desired benefits for job candidates. By offering flexibility, we attract the most talented individuals to work at the University.

Improved work output

Being able to work remotely from a hybrid location can at times be beneficial for concentration therefore improving the quality and efficiency of work.



Increased job satisfaction

Staff who have opportunities to work flexibly have been shown to have greater job satisfaction, which increases their productivity and sense of loyalty to the organisation.

Wellbeing

Greater flexibility can support wellbeing and reduce absenteeism.



Flexible Work Arrangement Options

Option	What is it and what can you request	Conditions/Limitations
Compressed Weeks	Staff can work fewer days per fortnight whilst working the same total amount of hours agreed in their contract. As an example, a full-time person may work additional hours over nine days of the fortnight to have one day off.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hours worked must be inside of the span of ordinary hours - 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. No more than 9.5 hours in any day.
Variable Start/Finish times	Staff can request to change their normal start and finish times that are outside the traditional 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. office hours, whilst still working their contracted hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hours worked must be inside the span of ordinary hours – 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. No more than 9.5 hours in any day.
Reduced Employment Fraction (part time work)	Staff can request to temporarily reduce their work hours. This may be a suitable option for working parents, staff who may be transitioning to retirement, staff who may want to study or participate in community service/volunteer programs outside work, or any other reasonable request.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Hybrid Work Location/ Working From Home or another location	<p>Work from home or another location. This includes working agreed day(s) from another location, but this does not include interstate or overseas locations.</p> <p>You can request:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed days working from another location. A block arrangement to complete a specific project. Irregular (ad-hoc) work from another location to allow you to keep working when an unexpected situation arises, such as a tradesperson visiting, a private appointment close to home. Note that ad-hoc requests do not require a flexible work request to be submitted via Staff Services Online (SSO). This can be done via a conversation with your supervisor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst there is no minimum or maximum number of days in which you can work from home or another location, there will be a requirement to spend more time on campus/office than working remotely. Every role and situation will be different, and any arrangements need to consider the requirements and interests of the University, the team, our students, and stakeholders. You must complete the Flexible Work Request online request form via Staff Services Online (SSO) and have this considered/approved by your supervisor before you can start working from another location on a regular basis. This is important as the other location becomes your 'workplace' and the University needs to ensure that the environment is safe.

Option	What is it and what can you request	Conditions/Limitations
Job share	<p>One role which is shared by (usually) two people. You can request a job-share for your existing role.</p> <p>You can apply for full-time roles with a job-share partner.</p>	<p>To start a new job share arrangement for your existing role you will need to discuss your proposal with your supervisor first. If approved, a part-time work arrangement will need to be put in place and recruitment action taken to identify part-time job-share partner. Job share backfill arrangements should be put in place for the same duration as the FWA.</p> <p>To start a job-share arrangement in a new role, you will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply for jobs that are advertised as suitable for job sharing, or • find a job-share partner and apply for full-time roles together. <p>If an advertisement does not specify an openness to considering such arrangements, ask hiring managers if they are willing to consider a job-share arrangement.</p>
Purchased Leave	<p>Request to purchase additional leave. You can apply for additional leave with a commensurate reduction in salary across the year.</p> <p>Note: Outside of a FWA, all staff can access various alternate leave options as prescribed in the Enterprise Agreement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase a minimum of one week leave per year to be taken at a mutually convenient time. • Leave must be taken in one-week blocks. • Salary will be averaged over the year to allow staff to be paid during the extra weeks' leave. A purchased leave arrangement will result in a reduction in salary in return for the additional paid leave.

The Role of Supervisors

As a supervisor, fostering a work environment that accommodates the diverse needs of the team cannot be overstated. You will need to ensure the wellbeing of each individual, recognise the unique factors and circumstances involved, and proactively engage with and consider FWA requests.

Any FWAs must also align with relevant legislation, policies, and procedures.

The processes in place to facilitate FWAs will help you to comply with overarching legal obligations. The best way to ensure your flexible work practices are fair and compliant is to follow the guidance in this tool kit.

Flexible work applications must be properly considered. As a Supervisor, **you must respond to all written requests in writing within 21 days to ensure alignment with requirements of the *Fair Work Act (2009)***. In most instances, you will be able to make a decision to approve an FWA, however there may be circumstances where it is reasonable and necessary to decline the flexible work request. If you are considering declining a request, please with your [Human Resources \(HR\) Advisor](#) for support prior to responding to your staff member.

Requests for workplace adjustments in support of people with disability can be made at any time during the employment life cycle. Supervisors can support our staff with disability and can seek advice from the [Health, Safety & Wellbeing \(HSW\)](#) team at any time.

Your main responsibilities are to:

- Ensure you consider all requests made by your staff with a view to creating a win-win for all parties where possible.
- Consider and discuss alternate solutions with your staff member if you believe operational requirements may be compromised.
- Ensure that budget and cost implications are considered.
- Ensure that your staff submit an FWA application via SSO once their request has been discussed.
- Seek the advice of your [HR Advisor](#) if you are considering declining the request and before any written response is provided.
- **Provide a written response (via SSO) within 21 days.**
- Review the FWA to ensure that it is working well for both your staff member and the University and consult with your team if changes need to be made.

Declining a Flexible Work Request

The University will make every effort to accommodate applications for a FWA, however there may be times where it cannot be accommodated. In line with the Fair Work Act, genuine business reasons that may result in a declined request include:

- the new arrangement would be too costly for the University
- there is no capacity, or it would be impractical to change the working arrangements of other staff to accommodate the request
- the new working arrangements requested would be likely to result in a significant loss in efficiency or productivity
- the proposed working arrangement would likely have a significant negative impact on customer service.

If you are considering declining a FWA request, please discuss this with your [HR Advisor](#) prior to responding to the request to ensure it does not breach legislation. Should the University decline a request for a FWA, a written response must be provided to the individual detailing the reasons why the request was declined. Support and advice can be provided to supervisors by the appropriate [HR Advisor](#).

Reviewing Requests

To ensure that FWAs are working well, it is important that staff and supervisors maintain ongoing dialogue.

Review work arrangements at the three-month mark. If they are working well, you can continue with the arrangement for up to 12 months.

Staff will need to re-apply for FWA once the 12 months has ended.

Ending or Changing a Flexible Work Arrangement Early

- The University or a staff member may initiate to case an FWA early.
- Any end or change to a FWA should be discussed by both parties.
- Reasonable notice by either the supervisor or staff member should be provided in line with the Enterprise Agreement. Notice periods required are:

Type of Flexible Work Arrangement	Notice Period for ending a FWA (by Either Party)
Reduced Employment Fraction	3 Months
Purchased Leave	6 Months
Compressed Weeks	3 Months

Ending a type of FWA not listed above should involve discussion and mutual agreement between the supervisor and their staff member.

Flexibility at Work – Application

When considering and discussing a request for flexible work arrangements, it may become evident that the staff member’s request cannot be accommodated due to conflicts with operational needs. It is therefore essential for both parties to be prepared to discuss some alternative ideas if the preferred option is not available, with the aim to achieve a win-win outcome. To assist with this, it may be helpful to follow the steps below:

Staff to Consider

Supervisor to Consider

When preparing for your discussion with your supervisor, try to anticipate the questions that may arise. That way you can be prepared to respond during the meeting.

Prior to the discussion:

- Think about what the impact of your proposed changes will have on critical functions and tasks of your role, your team, and the University
- Identify the benefits of your proposed arrangement for both you and the team.
- Think about alternate options if your preferred arrangement cannot be accommodated.
- If you need support considering these issues, you can reach out to your [HR Advisor](#) for advice.

During the discussion:

- Be clear and realistic about what you are requesting and the reason for this request
- Come prepared with a list of points you want to discuss.

It is essential to have an open and honest discussion with your staff about their request and consider options to achieve a possible win-win outcome. You should also complete the Supervisor Checklist: Flexible Work Arrangement Assessment (obtain from your [HR Advisor](#)) when considering whether the FWA can be accommodated.

Prior to the discussion:

- Does the proposed change impact on the staff members duties? If so, how?
- Does the proposed change impact on the delivery of service to students or stakeholders?
- Will the proposed arrangement affect the way that other staff work? Will it require changes to rosters or workloads? Will it affect the way the team communicates or collaborates? If so, how can this be addressed?
- Does the proposed arrangement create any security or safety concerns?

During the discussion:

- Explore any alternatives that are possible.
- Explain any conditions or implementation issues.
- Should broader discussion with the team be necessary to support the request, it is important to advise your staff member before finalising any arrangements.

Sometimes a request for a FWA may not be practical and will be declined. If, during the discussion with your staff member, you believe that there may not be a suitable option available, reach out to your [HR Advisor](#) for support before formally confirming your decision, noting that there is a requirement to respond in writing to the staff member within 21 days of receiving the written request.

Flexibility at Work – Review

Flexible work arrangements will require monitoring and periodical review to ensure they remain appropriate for both the University and the staff member. During this time, it is important to review how it is working for the staff member, along with any impacts on productivity, team culture and the information flow. If issues are identified, these should be discussed and addressed. It is important not to wait until the end of the review to feedback any issues, but rather alter and make changes to the FWA if and when necessary.

Staff to Consider

- Think about any changes you may wish to make but be aware that once a new arrangement is entered into, you may not be able to change it, unless by mutual agreement.
- Monitoring your arrangement may be as simple as a conversation or email about any issues that may arise. Any issues should be addressed with your supervisor where possible before the review date
- The review may occur during your standard 1:1 meetings or as a stand-alone discussion.
- Make sure the arrangement is not negatively impacting your work practices and the rest of the team.
- Ensure that you are prepared and have noted any issues or changes you may want to raise during the discussion. Remember this is a collaborative process.

Supervisor to Consider

- Has the FWA created any issues or concerns in being able to deliver agreed outcomes?
- Has the FWA created any issues for students and/or stakeholders?
- Monitoring your staff member's FWA may be as simple as a conversation or email about issues that may arise. If sending an email, it is always important to follow this up with a conversation. Any issues should be addressed where possible before the review date.
- Book time into your calendar for the review date to ensure that time has been set aside to have a discussion with your team member.

The following are outcomes that can arise from the review phase:

- There will be no change – in this case, the current arrangement can continue for the agreed period.
- The arrangement will cease, and the team member will submit an alternative arrangement.
- The arrangement will cease, and the team member will revert to the substantive work arrangement (before declining an FWA, please discuss with your [HR Advisor](#)).



Setting Up Team Protocols

Give and Take

- Flexible working doesn't guarantee that every individual will get their preferred arrangement. Not all types of flexibility will be available for every role, or every individual, all the time.
- Flexibility requires give and take between the person requesting the FWA, the supervisor, and team.
- It also places mutual obligations on the staff member, supervisor, and the team to ensure operations including service delivery are not negatively impacted, whilst also accommodating individual requests where possible.

Coverage Plan

- Have a regular team 'coverage plan' that includes:
 - ensuring stakeholder/student needs are being met,
 - work objectives are being delivered,
 - team meetings can still be held, and
 - understanding who is where for handovers and back-up.

Stakeholder Conversations

- Have transparent conversations with stakeholders about the potential impact and how quality outcomes will be ensured.

Work Demands

- Develop a plan for responding to busy and quiet periods (and be transparent in communicating potential shifts in work demands) and check in to see if changes are needed.

Meetings

- Decide how to include anyone working remotely in meetings, or if meetings are held on someone's day off. There may be times when the team need to be together, so discuss and agree the best approach with the team when this situation arises.

Technology

- Use technology and provide remote/VPN access.
- Use Teams conference calls and chat function to collaborate.



Understanding Concerns

While most of us want to support flexible work, supervisors can at times have doubts about how to make it work. Below are some of the most common concerns, with potential solutions.

Concern	Description	Potential Solutions
Bias	Whilst there may be the perception that FWAs can create challenges, do not create an overarching view that this will be the case for every arrangement put in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on outputs required with your staff member and trust that they will do the right thing. • Reiterate the importance of everyone in the team having a shared responsibility for both individual and team outputs, and regularly measure progress towards these goals. Guide the team in setting realistic objectives and tracking their achievement, ensuring that everyone understands their role and responsibilities in meeting these expectations.
Work Delivery	How will the flexible work arrangements impact on the team's ability to deliver work on time, to an acceptable standard and in line with agreed service requirements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure review periods are put in place and reviewed. • Consider individual requests with reference to any existing FWAs in place within the team • Transparency is the key. Discuss as a team the potential impacts in advance and what can be done to overcome them, especially in peak periods.
Commitment	The belief that staff who work flexibly are not committed to their jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the review period, assess if the staff member is delivering on their work tasks and can maintain an appropriate level of engagement. If it is not working, have a discussion as soon as possible. • Seek support from your HR Advisor as required.
Productivity	That team members will be unproductive, particularly if they are working at another location, without direct supervision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set and agree upon clear goals and expectations for the work to be done. • Schedule 1:1s frequently and focus on progress against the goals set. • Schedule face-to-face meetings (in person or via Teams) for any specific work issues as they arise

Concern	Description	Potential Solutions
Scheduling	How to schedule flexible hours so that they work within the team environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider and discuss scheduling conflicts or times when the team will be short staffed and devise ways to ensure service delivery and business requirements are met. • Ask the team to be flexible in their arrangement to meet service needs or to attend important meetings.
Communication	The loss of informal communication mechanisms, particularly if the team members are working at various locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce more ways to communicate, such as instant messaging via Teams, online training, and regular on-site meetings. Technology is usually a quick win in this case.
Scale	What if everyone in the team wants to work flexibly, and some arrangements clash? How will the work get done?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on your team goals and what work must be maintained or improved, and then consider what flexible work arrangements might be suitable. If arrangements clash, explore potential compromises that balance the needs of each individual, the team, and the University.

