



Flexible Working Policy

1. Introduction

This Flexible Working Policy applies to all employees who meet the eligibility criteria, who wish to exercise their statutory right to request flexible working.

2. Scope and Purpose

The University recognises that flexible working can provide benefits to both the employer and the employee in developing a positive working environment and where reasonably possible it is hoped that solutions can be found which suit both the University and the employee. This may include other options such as, for example, one of the family leave policies. However, in ensuring the needs of the University are met it may not always be possible to accommodate a request. Some variations in working patterns may be possible without application of the formal policy. Advice on this policy or related topics is available from local College/Support Group HR teams.

3. Eligibility to Request Flexible Working

The right to request flexible working applies to all employees who have 26 weeks continuous service with the University, and providing they have not made another application during the past 12 months. Additional requests within a 12 month period may be considered at the discretion of the manager¹.

4. Timescales

Requests will normally be dealt with within a three month period, (including any review of the decision stage) starting from the date of the application. However, the manager and the employee can agree to extend this period. The manager will arrange to meet with the employee to discuss the desired work pattern and how best it might be accommodated. The meeting will also provide

¹ For the purposes of this policy the term 'manager' will be defined so as to include the nominated or line manager or another designated person of suitable seniority and responsibility within the relevant work unit or group, and who has the level of authority to make the decision to change a work pattern.

an opportunity to consider other alternative working patterns should it be difficult to accommodate the desired work pattern outlined in the employee's application.

5. Requests for Flexible Working

An eligible employee who wishes to apply for flexible working should submit a written application to their manager indicating that the request is made under the statutory right to request flexible working. Applications should be submitted well in advance of when the change is to take effect using the form provided at:

http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/forms/Flexible_Working_Request.doc

There are many forms of flexible working which can change an employee's current/normal work pattern, including changes to the hours they work, the times they are required to work or their place of work. Common variations include: part-time working, job sharing, compressed hours, flexible retirement², etc.

The application should include:

- the date of the application;
- the change(s) requested to their terms and conditions;
- the proposed start date;
- the effect these changes may have on the University and how these effects could be dealt with;
- any benefits associated with the proposed change from a business perspective;
- the date of any previous application; and
- if the request is being made as a reasonable adjustment to address a disability.

5.1 Considering an Application

On receipt of the written application the manager will normally arrange to meet with the employee as early as possible to discuss their request and how best it might be accommodated. The meeting will also provide an opportunity to consider alternative working patterns if the original proposal proves unworkable. The employee may wish to be accompanied by a trade union

² Requests for Flexible Retirement are not dealt with under this Policy and should be made under the Guidance for Requesting Flexible Retirement document at:

http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/Policies/Retirement-Guidance_for_Requesting_Flexible_Retirement.pdf

representative or a work colleague at the meeting. In certain circumstances it may be possible to agree to a request without a meeting.

5.2 Application Decision

The manager will write to the employee following the meeting with their decision as early as possible.

A variation to a work pattern may be made on a permanent or time limited basis. A trial period in the new work pattern may be helpful. If the change is made on a permanent basis there is no automatic right to revert to the original pattern of working.

Where a flexible working request is agreed, Section 2a of the form should be completed to record:

- the agreed working pattern
- when the change(s)/variation will take effect
- any contractual changes
- where the change is time limited, the end date of the variation

The manager should ensure that their College/Support Group HR team is notified of the outcome of the application and of changes to terms and conditions if applicable.

A request may only be declined on the following grounds:

- The burden of additional costs
- Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
- Inability to re-organise work amongst existing staff
- Inability to recruit additional staff
- Detrimental impact on quality or performance
- Insufficient work during the hours the employee wants to work
- Planned structural changes to the business

A manager may wish to seek advice from their local College/Support Group HR Advisor where a request is likely to be declined on one or more of these grounds.

The manager should normally meet with the individual to explain the reason/s they are declining the request and also confirm the decision in writing by completing Section 2b of the employee's application form.

5.3 Review of a Decision

An employee who is dissatisfied with the outcome of their application can write to the next level in the management chain asking for the decision to be reviewed. A copy of the declined request should be submitted to that manager along with a written statement from the employee stating why they are asking for a review of the decision. The written statement would not normally include new information as the request should have been explored at the Considering an Application stage.

A meeting will be arranged by the reviewing manager with all parties concerned and a final decision communicated as soon as possible thereafter. The employee may wish to be accompanied by a work colleague or Trade Union representative if he/she wishes at this meeting.

6. Document History

This policy was initially agreed with Unison, EAUT and Amicus-MSF in Summer 2003 and approved by the University Court in July 2003; subsequent changes are detailed in 6.1 below. It will be amended to take account of changes in legislation. In the absence of any such changes, the policy will be reviewed by December 2018.

6.1 Change Control Record

No.	Approval date:	Amendment made:	Approved by:
1.	April 2009	Policy updated to incorporate the entitlement to request flexible working to care for certain adults and the increase in the age of the child to 16.	CJCNC
2.	August 2014	Policy reviewed to reflect statutory changes as from 30 June 2014, which extended the right to request flexible working to all employees who meet the eligibility criteria. The University already extended flexible working requests to all eligible staff not just those with caring/child care responsibilities, therefore, the amendments made clarified the process and updated terminology in keeping with the new legislation.	CJCNC by correspondence August 2014.
3.	August 2016	Minor amendments to update organisational references; removal of reference to policy being subject to formal ratification	HRPDG
4.	July 2017	Minor amendments to terminology.	HRPDG

7. Alternative Format

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact UHRS@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 650 8127.