

# Flexible Working Policy: Guidelines for Managers on Considering Flexible Working Requests

## Introduction

This guidance is to help managers consider requests from their employees to work flexibly fairly, consistently and within the law. It is important that this guidance is read alongside the University's Flexible Working Policy and Procedure. Managers have a duty to consider request is a timely way and any refusal must be based on sound business reasons for doing so.

When you receive a flexible working request, you will need to arrange to meet with the employee to discuss the request in detail. A template letter inviting an employee to a flexible working request meeting is available on the HR webpages.

## Before the Meeting:

- make a note of when the request was received and bear in mind the time frames specified within the Flexible Working Policy and Procedure;
- think carefully about the request and any potential benefits/impact of the proposed way of working;
- ensure you have thoroughly read the request form and the employee's opinions;
- consider how this request might be accommodated i.e. assess other team members' working patterns, future staffing plans, forthcoming projects, workloads, etc.;
- think creatively to try and accommodate requests or suggest alternative options;
- seek advice from Human Resources.

## During the Meeting:

- go through the form and discuss the employee's views on the request and any initial thoughts you may have;
- ensure the employee has every opportunity to outline how they envisage making their request work for both the department and their own requirements;
- you should aim for an open and honest discussion to explore the feasibility of the request. It is not appropriate to refuse the request at this stage but you can highlight any areas that you think may be difficult;

- explore flexible working options including alternatives should it not be possible to accommodate the initial request for any of the statutory reasons outlined in the policy and procedure;

#### **Before Making the Decision:**

- make sure you have fully considered the employee's circumstances, their needs and the needs of the business;
- consider the case on its own merits. It is not acceptable to turn down a request based on the outcome of a similar request made by another employee. It is also not necessary to accept a request simply because another individual is already working a similar flexible working arrangement;
- it is essential to fully consider the impact the decision may have on the employee if you turn down the request;
- a temporary change in working pattern may be more appropriate to cover a short term need;
- if you are in any doubt suggest a trial period as this will enable both parties to determine whether the flexible working arrangement is effective;
- do not make judgements about whose needs should take priority. However, if the request is part of a reasonable adjustment due to a disability greater consideration should be given;
- ask Human Resources for guidance if in doubt at any point.

#### **Agreeing to a Request**

If it is possible to agree to a request you should write to the employee to confirm the details. There is a template letter available on the HR webpages to assist with this. Please ensure that the letter is copied to HR so that any change in working patterns can be recorded on the HR/Payroll system. This is important as it may impact accurate recording on annual leave, absence and timesheets where applicable.

If the employee will be changing their contractual terms, such as reducing their working hours, it will be necessary to complete a REAP so that Finance are informed and to trigger a change of contract letter from HR.

#### **Multiple Requests**

There may be some occasions when a manager receives requests from more than one employee. If this happens it is important to still consider each request on its own merit.

Whilst in some circumstances it may be possible to approve both requests, before making their decisions the manager may wish to discuss with both employees whether there is room for adjustment and compromise in relation to their requests.

#### **Managing Flexible Workers**

Many of the management skills and practices required to effectively motivate and develop flexible workers are the same as those already applied to other employees.

Managing flexible workers involves moving away from managing employees based on their presence at work to managing by work quality and delivery. Regular communication and setting clear expectations and objectives is a far more effective way to manage performance and will help to ensure that flexible working arrangements are successful for both the department and the employee.