

# flexible work strategies

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

FOR EMPLOYEES AND SUPERVISORS

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## what is flexible work at UK?

**W**e have created these formal definitions to enable a common dialogue about flexible work strategies at UK. We also give examples to help you start thinking about what is possible for your role and your own work-life needs.

Please note, based on the responsibilities of your job and the needs of your unit or department, some strategies may not be a good fit or will look slightly different than the examples we've given.

### FULL TIME OPTIONS

#### FLEXTIME:

Adjusting start and end times to meet department and/or employee needs without reducing the number of hours worked each day or week.

This can range from individual employee start and end times to department "core hours" when all employees must be present (e.g. between 10 AM and 2 PM), but can flex their hours outside of those core hours. Flextime may also be formal (e.g. an employee starts work at 7 AM rather than 8 AM during peak or busy months) or informal (e.g. employees vary their start and end times on a daily basis).

#### RECURRING OR SITUATIONAL TELEWORK:

Adjusting the primary workplace location to meet department and/or employee needs. Recurring telework is an ongoing, formal arrangement (e.g. working from home two days per week) while situational telework is informal and occurs on an occasional, as needed basis (e.g. working from home after an afternoon doctor's appointment or during inclement weather).

#### COMPRESSED WORKWEEK:

A standard 40-hour workweek compressed into fewer than five days (e.g. 4-10's, 3-12's)

### REDUCED-HOURS OPTIONS:

#### PART-TIME:

Adjusting total number of regular hours worked to less than full-time. Please note that this option involves a pro-rated salary and benefits.

#### PHASED RETURN FROM LEAVE:

Temporarily adjusting the number of hours worked each week to less than full time after returning from an extended leave (e.g. Family Medical Leave). Please note that this option involves a pro-rated salary and benefits. Please check with the UK Benefits office before implementing.

#### PHASED RETIREMENT:

Employees with 15 years or more of eligible service and who are aged 60 or older may be able to reduce their hours as a way of "phasing" into their retirement. Additional details are available [HERE](#).

#### REDUCED SEASONAL HOURS:

Regular, clinically non-essential, full-time staff employees are eligible to temporarily reduce their work schedule to no less than 0.75 during the summer and/or winter months. Additional details are available [HERE](#).

## utilization of FWS\*\*

	UK	NATIONALLY
FLEXTIME	88%	77%
TELEWORK	40%	63%
COMPRESSED WORKWEEK	34%	36%
REDUCED HOURS	24%	N/A
PHASED RETIREMENT	14%	53%

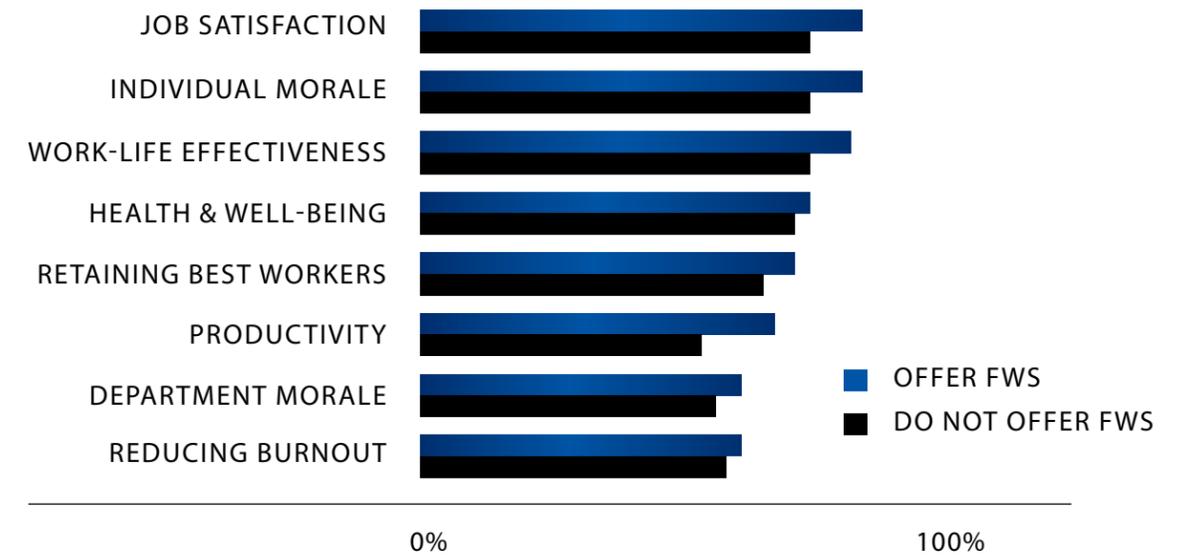
\*\*Data based on results from Workplace Flexibility Supervisor Study (2012) and SHRM When Work Works (2012)

## WHY FLEXIBLE WORK STRATEGIES?

There are MANY benefits of flexible work strategies -- for employees, supervisors, and environmental sustainability efforts. We've listed below what research shows as the most commonly stated benefits. You can also check out our website to calculate environmental benefits and personal cost-savings.

- Greater ability to manage work and personal life
- Higher productivity
- Higher retention
- Greater commitment to job
- Higher levels of employee engagement
- Higher job satisfaction and morale
- Reduced unpaid absenteeism
- Continued operations during emergencies and inclement weather

## UK Supervisors who have implemented flexible work strategies have found many benefits:



66% of UK Supervisors responding to the Workplace Flexibility Supervisor Study (2012) utilized some form of flexible work with their direct reports.



# employees: how to request a flexible work strategy

Requesting telework? Find the telework online request form [HERE](#)

Requesting another type of flexible work? Find the flexible work online request form [HERE](#)

## employees: things to consider

**G**ood communication and clear expectations are the keys to the success of any work arrangement, especially flexible work strategies. We've outlined below questions to consider and think about before submitting your request.

### JOB APPROPRIATENESS

Consider the responsibilities of your current job. Does your role require daily face-to-face contact? Do you need access to confidential paperwork? There may be creative ways that your job can be modified to accommodate your request that will also benefit the department/unit.

### POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

What are potential barriers to completing your current job responsibilities while working in this flexible way? For example, will you be able to maintain current level of interaction with clients/customers and coworkers? In your request, you'll want to identify these and how will you address them.

### COMMUNICATION SKILLS

You will need to maintain communication with your supervisor, coworkers, and colleagues across the University. This means returning emails and phone calls promptly, attending meetings, using Lync, etc. When you utilize FWS, especially if others on your team also work flexibly, you may need to change how you communicate. Think about how you plan to address any communication concerns or remain accessible (if teleworking) and clarify these in your request.

### PRODUCTIVITY

FWS can enable you to be as or even more productive in your current position. In your flexible work request, you should discuss how you will provide the same or improved level of service, support, productivity, and quality of work to meet performance goals and/or job responsibilities, including any client/customer needs.

Your supervisor may initiate a conversation with you about the types of FWS that fit with the team's work-flow, individual responsibilities, and goals. However, you can also request an FWS via an online request form and a conversation with your supervisor.

Please see the step-by-step process below. Before submitting a request, we recommend reviewing the information on the previous page about things to consider.

1. Fill out an FWS online request form. See the green box on this page for links.
2. A copy of the submitted form is sent via email to you, your supervisor, and the Office of Work-Life.
3. Your supervisor reviews the email with the submitted form. He or she may have additional questions or need clarification about the request before making a decision.
4. Your supervisor will reply via email to your request and copy the Office of Work-Life with his or her decision. If the request was for Reduced Seasonal Hours, your supervisor should also copy his or her budget officer. Information for budget officers is included [HERE](#).
5. If approved, you can start the FWS at the agreed upon start date. We strongly encourage you and your supervisor to have a check-in conversation after 90 days and then at least once per year to discuss what is working well and what may need to change.

# employee

# US Q& A RE

## WHO NEEDS TO APPROVE MY REQUEST?

The Office of Work-Life requires FWS approval from your immediate supervisor. We encourage supervisors to check with the director or department head about their desired level of involvement in also approving these requests.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM ELIGIBLE FOR FWS?

Full-time FWS are not a program or a benefit in which you must be eligible or enroll. However, some jobs are more appropriate than others for certain types of flexible work.

**Reduced Seasonal Hours:** Regular, non-essential staff members with an assignment of 0.75 FTE (full-time equivalent) or greater and in good standing within their departments are eligible to participate.

**Phased Retirement:** Staff who have 15 years of eligible service time and are age 60 or older are eligible to participate. Please see the related policy [HERE](#)

Overall, FWS can support supervisors and departments in meeting their goals, and employees in managing their work and personal lives.

## WILL UK PROVIDE ME WITH OFFICE EQUIPMENT IF I TELEWORK?

You and your supervisor should determine what University-owned equipment and technology will be used in the remote office. Office furniture is not provided for employee's who voluntarily work from home. However, please talk with your supervisor -- and outline on your request form -- any ergonomic support (e.g. ergonomic mouse and keyboard) you'll need to ensure a safe working environment at your remote office.

## CAN I TRY OUT FWS FOR A PILOT PERIOD?

Yes. The Office of Work-Life recommends piloting an FWS for 90 days and then reevaluating, especially if you are new to the department, your role, or to FWS. Having check-in meetings with your supervisor can help mitigate any concerns during the pilot period to ensure success.

## AM I REQUIRED TO PROVIDE A REASON FOR REQUESTING A FWS?

No. A flexible work request should be evaluated, based on how job responsibilities and goals will be met or exceeded.

## WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS IF MY REQUEST IS DENIED?

Some jobs are more appropriate than others for certain types of flexible work. Schedule time with your supervisor to discuss why the request was denied -- you may need to further address communication barriers or finish a specific project before an FWS makes sense for your role. You can also ask about resubmitting a request in 4 - 6 months.

The following Pay & Benefit FAQs are important to understand if you are requesting an FWS under the reduced-hours options on page 3.

#### WHY CAN'T I REDUCE MY HOURS TO LESS THAN 0.75?

A reduction in hours below 0.75 would change a full-time employee's status to part-time and would result in a loss of benefits.

#### CAN I CHANGE MY MIND AFTER I HAVE COMPLETED A REQUEST FOR A REDUCED-HOURS OPTION ONCE MY SUPERVISOR HAS GIVEN APPROVAL?

Yes, except if you've requested phased retirement. Once phased retirement has been established, an employee cannot return to full-time hours. Please refer to the phased retirement policy [HERE](#).

#### HOW MUCH WILL MY PAY BE REDUCED?

Non-exempt employees will be paid at the same hourly rate and pay is simply reduced based on the number of hours worked. Exempt employees' status will be changed to less than full-time exempt status. The salary will be reduced on a pro-rated basis based on the change in FTE.

#### WILL MY MEDICAL BENEFITS BE AFFECTED?

If in a paid status, your benefits will continue being deducted at their normal rate. If in an unpaid status, your benefits will be deducted retroactively once you return to a paid status. You can contact the Employee Benefits Office with questions regarding your benefit deductions at (859) 257-9519 and select option 3, then 1 for the benefits office.

#### HOW WILL MY RETIREMENT CONTRIBUTION BE AFFECTED?

Your retirement contributions will be made in accordance with the amount of your new pay (as a result of the number of hours worked). If in an unpaid status, retirement contributions will not continue during the period of unpaid leave.

#### WILL MY YEARS OF SERVICE (CALCULATED FOR DETERMINING RETIREMENT ELIGIBILITY) BE AFFECTED DURING THE PERIOD OF REDUCED HOURS OR LEAVE?

Yes. Your regular years of service will be adjusted based on your FTE during that time. For example, you will accrue 75% of your regular full-time service if reducing to 0.75 FTE. If in an unpaid status, that time period is not included in the calculation of your regular years of service.

#### WILL THE REDUCED HOURS OR UNPAID LEAVE AFFECT MY VACATION AND SICK LEAVE ACCRUALS?

Yes. If in a paid status, your accruals will be calculated on a prorated basis. If in an unpaid status, you will not accrue leave(s) (i.e. vacation, temporary disability leave and holiday leave).

## PAY & BENEFITS FAQs



## SUPERVISORS

### HAVING A DISCUSSION ABOUT FLEXIBLE WORK

**G**ood communication and clear expectations are the keys to the success of any work arrangement, especially flexible work strategies. If you are considering an FWS for your team, the Office of Work-Life highly recommends that you initiate a conversation about FWS with your employees rather than wait for them to submit a request. We've outlined below questions to consider and discuss with your employee or team during your FWS discussion.

1. What FWS are the best fit for the employee's role and responsibilities?
2. How can the employee (or team) ensure that current expected response times for emails, voicemails, etc from colleagues/clients/customers are still attained when utilizing an FWS?
3. Are there specific days/times or meetings that everyone should be in the office, regardless of their FWS?
4. Are there meetings that employees must attend, but they tend to be scheduled on short notice (less than 8 hours)? If yes, is there a way to attend these meetings via conference call or Lync?
5. What is the best/preferred way to contact each team member during the day? Knowing that some employees, for example, are able to respond to emails sooner than voicemails can help you and the team keep the lines of communication moving.
6. If only a few employees are utilizing a FWS, what will be the impact (positive or negative) on others?
7. How can FWS support existing business continuity plans or make them even more effective?



### EVALUATING A FLEXIBLE WORK REQUEST

**W**e've outlined on page 7 the process for an employee to request an FWS. The below items will help you evaluate this request. If you've already had a discussion about flexible work with your employee or team, you may just need to ensure that you are still on the same page with expectations.

#### JOB APPROPRIATENESS

Consider the responsibilities of your employee's current job. Does the role require daily face-to-face contact? Does the person need access to confidential paperwork? There may be creative ways that the job can be modified to accommodate the employee's request that will also benefit the department/unit.

#### PAST PERFORMANCE

Does the employee have a history of good or excellent performance at work? If applicable, do they consistently turn in high-quality work and meet deadlines? Employees who have a track record of success in the office are likely to continue this success even while working flexibly.

#### COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Employees need to maintain communication with you, their coworkers, and employees across the University. This means returning emails and phone calls promptly. When an employee utilizes flexible work, especially if everyone on the team also works flexibly, they may need to change how they communicate with others. Ensure that they've clarified in their request how they plan to address any communication barriers or remain accessible (if teleworking).

#### BENEFIT TO THE DEPARTMENT/UNIT:

How can the department or unit benefit from the FWS? As an example, modifying work hours may provide extended coverage at the office and offer more availability for clients/customers and students. Telework may also help free up a crowded space.

## MANAGING A FLEXIBLE WORK STRATEGY

Scheduling regular one-on-one meetings (either in person or via a conference call) is a good management practice, regardless of whether your employee utilizes an FWS. The Office of Work-Life recommends checking-in regularly with employees during the first 90 days of their FWS. This will help evaluate what is working and what could be improved, and address any problems before they become a real issue. You can also follow-up on any concerns you may have had during the request process (e.g. their ability to continue meeting deadlines, communication skills).

Below are a few of the topics you may want to discuss with your employee during these one-on-one meetings or the annual performance review. These are also good indicators of whether the FWS is working well:

### PRODUCTIVITY

Is the work being completed and deadlines met?

### QUALITY OF WORK

Is there any change in the employee's quality of work? No change at all is OK; it's a sudden drop in quality of work that is a concern.

### COMMUNICATION

Have you or other team members had any problems contacting the employee? Do they respond to messages in a reasonable time-frame? Is the employee able to communicate effectively with coworkers?

When it comes time for performance reviews, all employees should be evaluated against their ability to perform their major job responsibilities and meet their goals, regardless of whether they utilize an FWS.



## MANAGING A FLEXIBLE WORK STRATEGY CONT'D

### TECHNOLOGY

If teleworking, has the employee had problems with equipment or learning new software? Have they been able to troubleshoot technology problem themselves?

### CLIENTS/CUSTOMERS

Have clients/customers benefited or been negatively impacted?

### SATISFACTION

Is the employee satisfied with the FWS?



# additional resources

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Families and Work Institute

College and University Work-Life-Family Association

U.S. Department of Labor -- Workplace Flexibility Toolkit

Workplace Flexibility 2010 at Georgetown Law

SHRM -- Workplace Flexibility in the 21st Century: Meeting the Needs of a Changing Workforce

Boston College Center for Work and Family

WorkLife Law: UC Hastings College of the Law

