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University of Kentucky  
Workplace Flexibility Supervisor Study

## Introduction

The ability to recruit, retain and develop a highly qualified staff and faculty is of primary importance to the University of Kentucky in order to effectively fulfill its mission. One effort to address this workforce management issue has been the implementation of workplace flexibility policies. University of Kentucky's Office of Work-Life defines workplace flexibility as the provision of a variety of flexible work options that enable greater customization over when, where and how employees get their work done. These policies are used as a management tool to both assist employees to effectively manage their various responsibilities on and off the job, and to support the University in meeting its strategic goals. The University's workplace flexibility policies were developed with the input of various departments across campus and endorsed by President Todd in April 2008. Workplace flexibility policies at the University include six types of flexible work arrangements:

- Flextime: a full-time schedule with the ability to vary the start and stop times from the standard workday
- Compressed work schedule: a full-time job in fewer days than a customary work week
- Telecommuting: the ability to work from a different location such as a satellite office or from home
- Job sharing: a type of part-time work where the hours of one full-time job are divided between two employees
- Reduced hours or part-time: a reduced number of regular hours worked to less than a full-time position
- Phased retirement: employment options that allow an employee who is approaching retirement to continue working, usually with reduced workload, as a transition from full-time work to full-time retirement.

To get a better understanding of the use of flexible work arrangements by supervisors and how and why they are being implemented, UK Work-Life conducted an on-line survey of supervisors referred to as the UK Workplace Flexibility Supervisor Study. The study set out to answer eight primary research questions:

1. What is the prevalence of supervisors' use<sup>1</sup> of flexible work arrangements as a tool to manage their direct reports?
2. Among supervisors who manage their direct reports using flexible work arrangements, what types of flexible work options are used and for what reasons?
3. What motivates supervisors to use flexible work arrangements?
4. What are supervisors' perceptions about the business case for using flexible work arrangements?
5. What challenges are associated with managing flexible work arrangements?
6. How competent are supervisors in managing flexibility?
7. Among supervisors who do not manage their direct-reports using flexible work arrangements, what are the perceived barriers to using flexible work arrangements?
8. What types of educational and training opportunities would benefit supervisors in managing flexible work options more effectively?

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<sup>1</sup> Supervisor use refers to supervisor approval of the use of flexible work arrangements by their direct reports.

## Study design

In October 2009, UK Work-Life invited 1,398 supervisors, managers and directors from departments across the University to participate in the flexibility study. In this report, all research participants will be referred to as supervisors. All 14 Colleges were included in this cross-sectional study as were the following departments: Graduate School, Finance & Administration, Libraries, Offices of the President, the Provost, and Research. Supervisors were eligible to participate in this study if they supervised more than one employee. A list of supervisors who fell into this group was provided by the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness. The survey instrument developed by UK Institute for Workplace Innovation (iwin), in collaboration with UK Work-Life, consisted of 43 questions, including three open-ended questions.

Surveys were distributed via email following protocols described by Dillman.<sup>2</sup> First, senior managers received an e-mail announcement from the Vice President of Human Resources, Ms. Kim Wilson, informing them of the study and encouraging them to ask employees who are formally categorized as providing supervision to more than one person to participate. Three business days later, an email invitation, which contained a link to the survey, was sent to the prospective participants from Robynn Pease, Director of UK Work-Life. Reminder notices were sent once a week for a period of two weeks after the initial launch, and a final notice was sent two days prior to the survey close. This process yielded a 47% response rate and a final sample of 547 supervisors.

## Description of the sample

Study participants are more likely to be female (54%), 45 years of age or older (70%), and Caucasian (90%). (See Table 1.) Thirty-two percent of supervisors are in director position or higher; 27% are managers; 25% are supervisors; and the remaining 16% are assistant, associate or program managers. Almost half (45%) of the respondents have three or fewer employees who report directly to them. Two-thirds of the respondents (66%) have been employed at UK for 10 or more years, and half have 10 or more years of supervisory experience at UK. Slightly less than half (48%) of the respondents have some form of caregiving responsibilities (such as dependent children or responsibility for the care of a disabled or elderly adult).

## Survey results: Answering the research questions

### Research Question 1

What is the prevalence of supervisors' use<sup>3</sup> of flexible work arrangements as a tool to manage their direct reports?

Slightly more than half (54%) of supervisors provide some form of flexible work arrangements to their direct reports; while slightly less than half (46%) do not use any form of flexible work arrangements to manage their direct reports. The supervisors who offer some form of flexible work arrangements to their staff differ from their peers who do not use flexible work arrangements in a number of ways (see Table 1). First, female supervisors are more likely than their male counterparts to use flexible work arrangements to manage their direct-reports. Second, respondents who manage more people are more likely to use flexible work arrangements than supervisors who have fewer direct reports. And third, participants who are formally classified as supervisors are less likely to manage their workforce with flexible work arrangements than directors or above; assistant, associate or program managers; or managers.

<sup>2</sup> Dillman, D. (2007). *Mail and internet surveys: The tailored design method* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

<sup>3</sup> Supervisor use refers to supervisor approval of the use of flexible work arrangements by their direct reports.

Table 1

Prevalence of supervisor characteristics by total sample: Supervisors using flexible work arrangements (FWAs) and supervisors not using flexible work arrangements

| Descriptor                              | Full study sample<br>(N=547) | Supervisors using<br>FWAs<br>(n=298) | Supervisors NOT<br>using FWAs<br>(n=249) |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Age</b>                              |                              |                                      |  |
| 34 and under                            | 9%                           | 10%                                  | 8%                                       |
| 35 – 44 years                           | 21%                          | 23%                                  | 19%                                      |
| 45 – 54 years                           | 33%                          | 36%                                  | 31%                                      |
| 55 and over                             | 37%                          | 31%                                  | 42%                                      |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                        |                              |                                      |  |
| Caucasian                               | 79%                          | 76%                                  | 83%                                      |
| Other                                   | 21%                          | 24%                                  | 17%                                      |
| <b>Gender</b>                           |                              |                                      |  |
| Male                                    | 45.5%                        | 40%                                  | 52%                                      |
| Female                                  | 54.5%                        | 60%**                                | 48%**                                    |
| <b>Position classification</b>          |                              |                                      |  |
| Director or above                       | 32%                          | 33%                                  | 31%                                      |
| Assistant, associate or program manager | 16%                          | 18%                                  | 13%                                      |
| Manager                                 | 27%                          | 29%                                  | 25%                                      |
| Supervisor                              | 25%                          | 20%*                                 | 31%*                                     |
| <b>Number of direct reports</b>         |                              |                                      |  |
| 1 – 3 direct reports                    | 45%                          | 43%                                  | 46%                                      |
| 4 – 6 direct reports                    | 27%                          | 24%                                  | 31%                                      |
| 7 or more direct reports                | 28%                          | 33%*                                 | 23%*                                     |
| <b>Length of employment at UK</b>       |                              |                                      |  |
| 4 years or less                         | 14%                          | 13%                                  | 14%                                      |
| 5 – 9 years                             | 20%                          | 21%                                  | 19%                                      |
| 10 – 14 years                           | 15%                          | 16%                                  | 15%                                      |
| 15 or more years                        | 51%                          | 50%                                  | 52%                                      |
| <b>Supervisory experience at UK</b>     |                              |                                      |  |
| 4 years or less                         | 23%                          | 22%                                  | 25%                                      |
| 5 – 9 years                             | 26%                          | 24%                                  | 28%                                      |
| 10 – 14 years                           | 18%                          | 22%                                  | 14%                                      |
| 15 or more years                        | 32%                          | 32%                                  | 33%                                      |
| <b>Caregiving responsibilities</b>      |                              |                                      |  |
| Yes                                     | 48%                          | 50%                                  | 46%                                      |
| No                                      | 52%                          | 50%                                  | 54%                                      |

\*Statistically significant at  $\leq .05$ ; \*\*Statistically significant at  $\leq .01$ .

## Research Question 2

Among supervisors who manage their direct-reports using flexible work arrangements, what types of flexible work options are used and for what reasons?

To learn which types of flexible work arrangements are used across campus, supervisors who reported using flexible work arrangements were asked to identify:

1. the types of flexible work arrangements available to their direct reports, and
2. the proportion of their staff that use each type of flexible work arrangement.

The most common type of flexible work arrangement offered is flextime (see Table 2). Ninety-two percent of supervisors who use some form of flexible work arrangements offer flextime to their direct reports. Telecommuting is the second most common type of flexible work arrangement offered by supervisors (37%), followed by compressed work week (24%) and part-time work (16%). Very few supervisors offer phased retirement (7%) to their direct-reports, and job sharing is *not* currently being offered by supervisors.

Table 2

Type of flexible work arrangements available to direct reports

| Type of flexible work arrangement | Available to my direct reports<br>(n=298) |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Flextime                          | 92%                                       |
| Telecommuting                     | 37%                                       |
| Compressed work week              | 24%                                       |
| Reduced hours/change to part-time | 16%                                       |
| Phased retirement                 | 7%  |
| Job sharing                       | 0%  |

Looking at supervisors' responses when asked to estimate the proportion of direct-reports that actually use some form of flexible work arrangement, we learn that flextime is the most popular, with 86% of supervisors using flexible work arrangements reporting some (42%), most (16%), or all (28%) of their direct reports take advantage of flextime. The second most popular form of flexible work arrangement is telecommuting, with 45% of supervisors reporting use by some staff (33%), most staff (5%) and all staff (7%). Full results of the use of the flexible work options offered are recorded in Table 3, including compressed work week, reduced hours, and phased retirement.

Table 3

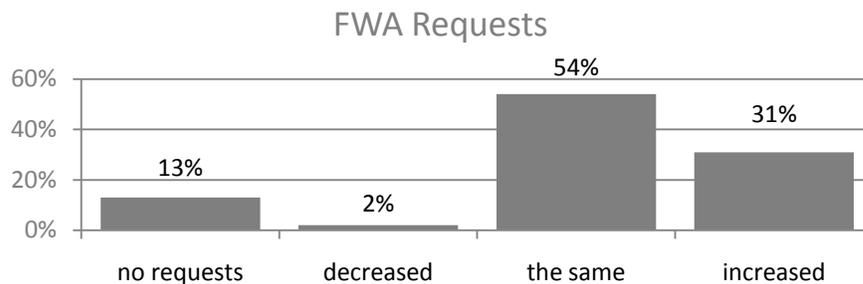
Manager estimates on the proportion of direct-reports using different forms of flexible work arrangements

| Form of flexible work arrangement | Manager estimates on the proportion of direct-reports<br>using different forms of FWAs |      |     |       |
|-----------------------------------|--|------|-----|-------|
|                                   | Some   | Most | All | Total |
| Flextime                          | 42%  | 16%  | 28% | 86%   |
| Telecommuting                     | 33%  | 5%   | 7%  | 45%   |
| Compressed work week              | 25%  | 2%   | 5%  | 32%   |
| Reduced hours/change to part-time | 16%  | 0%   | 1%  | 17%   |
| Phased retirement                 | 4%   | 0%   | 0%  | 4%    |
| Job sharing                       | 0%   | 0%   | 0%  | 0%    |

To capture the demand for flexible work arrangements over the past year, respondents were asked about the number of requests received by employees for some type of flexible work arrangements over the past year (see Diagram 4). Fifty-four percent responded that requests have remained the same; 31% of supervisors noted an increase in requests; while 15% noted they had either not received any requests or that requests had decreased from the previous year. The substantial increase in requests supports the University's decision to offer a variety of flexible work arrangements to help meet individual and organizational goals.

Diagram 4

Demand for flexible work arrangements in the past year



Due to changes in work-life demands (e.g., department operating hours, staffing concerns, caretaking responsibilities, career or educational opportunities) and the manner in which supervisors and employees negotiate schedules, the way in which flexible work arrangements are initiated and structured vary. When asked to identify how flexible work arrangements are initiated in their departments, we found that 65% of flexible work arrangements were employee initiated, 24% initiated by management, and 11% were negotiated at the time of hire. We also learned that flexible work arrangements are more likely to be negotiated as an informal agreement between supervisor and a direct-report (44%), as compared to a formal agreement (24%) (e.g., written proposals and signed agreements).

### Research Question 3

What motivates supervisors to use of flexible work arrangements?

Research has shown that supervisors are motivated to offer flexible work arrangements for a variety of reasons. In this study, respondents were given a list of 15 factors identified in the literature as motivators for offering flexible work arrangements to employees. As evidenced in Table 5, helping employees meet their work-life needs was the most highly cited motivator, followed by employee job satisfaction and engagement factors, talent management factors, and then financial reasons. More specifically, we learn that 83% of supervisors use flexible work arrangements as a strategy to help their staff manage their work and non-work responsibilities; 78% offer flexibility to their staff because they have expressed a desire to work flexibly and/or because they want to do the right thing for their employees. The next category of reasons that supervisors use flexibility includes: to increase job satisfaction (77%), improve overall morale (77%), and increase commitment and engagement (68%). Reasons associated with talent management ranked third, with 66% of supervisors reporting using flexible work arrangements to increase staff productivity and retention. Other reasons that fell into this category include motivations to manage the workforce effectively (62%), reduce absenteeism (47%), manage diversity issues (43%), reduce presenteeism (35%), recruitment of personnel (36%), and compete with other local employers (24%). About one third of supervisors use flexibility as a cost savings strategy.

**Table 5**  
Factors that motivate supervisors to use FWAs

| Factors that motivate supervisors to use FWAs           | Yes<br>(n=269) |
|---|----------------|
| <b>Respond to employee work-life needs</b>              |                |
| Help staff manage work and family life                  | 83%            |
| Respond to staff who indicate a desire to work flexible | 78%            |
| To do the right thing for my direct reports             | 78%            |
| <b>Employee satisfaction &amp; engagement</b>           |                |
| Increase job satisfaction                               | 77%            |
| Improve morale  | 77%            |
| Increase commitment and engagement                      | 68%            |
| <b>Talent management</b>                                |                |
| Increase staff productivity                             | 66%            |
| Help retain staff                                       | 66%            |
| Manage workforce effectively                            | 62%            |
| Reduce absenteeism                                      | 47%            |
| Workforce diversity                                     | 23%            |
| Reduce presenteeism                                     | 35%            |
| Recruitment   | 27%            |
| Compete with other employers                            | 24%            |
| <b>Financial reasons</b>                                |                |
| Cost savings  | 31%            |

In addition to responding to the list of factors that motivate them to offer flexible work arrangements to their direct reports, supervisors were asked to provide other reasons they offer flexible work arrangements. Their open-ended responses grouped around five primary themes:

1. the nature of the job requires the need for flexibility;
2. flexibility enables employees to attend classes;
3. first-hand experience with flexibility;
4. using flexibility to improve customer service; and
5. leverage flexibility as an employee benefit.

The following quotes illuminate the each of these themes.

**Theme 1: The nature of the job requires the need for flexibility**

- “Direct reports respond to after hour call-ins, flextime is a give and take balance.”
- “My employees are required to work certain evenings or weekends each month. In exchange, they are allowed time off during the regular week.”
- “I need them to work odd hours. In exchange, I give them flexible work hours when it doesn’t interfere with our ability to complete our work on time.”
- “Job requirements – two of the three people must work a nonstandard scheduled to be most effective.”

- “The nature of the job often requires employees to be flexible. So, when possible, their needs should be met too. It’s common sense.”

#### Theme 2: Flexibility enables employees to attend classes

- “Allowing my employee to attend classes will bring benefits to our department in the long run.”
- “At their request due to taking classes to achieve their degrees.”
- “Enhance the ability to utilize the University’s educational benefits by taking classes.”
- “To accommodate employees who are continuing their education and taking classes.”

#### Theme 3: First-hand experience with flexibility

- “Because I have been there in the same situation and needed help.”
- “I have benefited from it myself in a previous position.”
- “I have flexibility in my own work. It helps me be more productive. I wanted to extend the same to my supervisees. I would rather they be focused on their work rather than focused on whether they might be a bit late to work or having to decide between staying home with a sick child AND being able to respond to emails/calls/work...when they can do both. Having flextime allows people to use less gasoline and time commuting as well as relieves some of UK’s chronic parking problems.”

#### Theme 4: Leveraging flexible to improve customer service

- “Early and late start and end times for clerical staff is nice for faculty and visitor service.”
- “By extending the hours worked 4 days a week, but alternating the days off - we are actually available to do serve our clientele more hours.”
- “Extended operating hours for better customer support and coverage, without additional shifts & employees.”
- “Flexible office hours are required to meet the needs of nontraditional student customers who often have employment and family commitments and are unable to come in between 8am and 4:30pm.”

#### Theme 5: Provide flexibility as an employee benefit

- “We have few perks to offer. This is good for all if not abused.”
- “The desire to offer a benefit to those who report to me. They work very hard and especially since we haven’t had a pay increase, this is just a small thing I can do for them.”
- “One of the few perks left.”

### Research Question 4

What are supervisors’ perceptions about the business case for using flexible work arrangements?

As indicated by a growing body of research, flexibility is being used as a tool to manage today’s diverse workforce, enhance customer service, recruit and retain employees, and promote work-life fit. To assess the utilization of flexible work arrangements at University of Kentucky, respondents were asked to what

extent flexible work arrangements had a positive impact on staff performance. As indicated in Table 6, respondents believe that the use of flexible work arrangements has had a strong positive impact on a number of performance indicators, most notably: staff morale (79%), job satisfaction (79%), work-life fit (78%), health and well-being (65%), productivity (62%), and retention (62%). While nearly half (46%) believe offering flexible work arrangements helps to reduce personal expenses for staff, only 15% noted reduced costs to their department and 14% to the University.

**Table 6**  
Supervisor's perceived benefits of flexible work arrangements

| Perceived benefits of FWAs           | Moderate or great extent*<br>(n=264) |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Individual staff morale              | 79%                                  |
| Job satisfaction                     | 79%                                  |
| Work-life fit                        | 78%                                  |
| Health and well-being                | 65%                                  |
| Productivity                         | 62%                                  |
| Retaining the best workers           | 62%                                  |
| Department morale                    | 49%                                  |
| Reducing absenteeism                 | 47%                                  |
| Reducing personal expenses for staff | 46%                                  |
| Ability to extend office hours       | 31%                                  |
| Reducing costs to the department     | 15%                                  |
| Reducing costs to the University     | 14%                                  |

\* Possible responses included: not at all, limited extent, moderate extent, or great extent

## Research Question 5

### What challenges are associated with broader use of flexible work arrangements?

The University has a considerable amount of diversity in terms of department structures, office hours, workload, customer interface, scheduling requirements and work space. These factors, as well as diverse workforce, can be perceived as obstacles to offering certain types of flexible work arrangements. To determine these perceived barriers, respondents were asked to what extent a list of 22 recognized workplace concerns impeded their ability to offer a broader range of flexible work arrangements to their direct reports (see Table 7).

These concerns are associated with the structure of the job as well as issues pertaining to the day-to-day management of flexibility. Structural factors include: hours of operation (25%), scheduling (23%) and the nature of the departments' work (23%). Factors under the direct control of the supervisors include: concerns about abuse of use of flexible work arrangements (24%), treating all employees equally (23%), inequity across position (21%), co-worker resentment (19%), and administrative hassles (19%). This may suggest a need for additional supervisor training on the University's policies and guidelines for implementation and use of flexible work arrangements. Factors identified as presenting less of a challenge to expanding the use of flexible work arrangements include: increased absenteeism (5%), unclear why they are beneficial (3%), and not cost effective (3%).

Table 7

Perceived challenges to expanding the use of flexible work arrangements

| Perceived challenges to expanding the use of FWAs | Moderate or great extent*<br>(n=266) |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Hours of operation                                | 25%                                  |
| Concern about abuse of use                        | 24%                                  |
| Scheduling structure of the job                   | 23%                                  |
| Concern about treating all employees equally      | 23%                                  |
| Nature of work                                    | 23%                                  |
| Concern about inequity across positions           | 21%                                  |
| Senior leadership views FWAs as an accommodation  | 21%                                  |
| Concern about co-worker resentment                | 19%                                  |
| Administrative hassles                            | 19%                                  |
| Concerns about reactions of customers             | 18%                                  |
| Difficulty with supervising staff                 | 17%                                  |
| Lack of clear guidelines                          | 15%                                  |
| Loss of productivity                              | 11%                                  |
| Difficulty measuring performance                  | 10%                                  |
| Liability concerns                                | 8%                                   |
| Other more pressing issues                        | 8%                                   |
| Immediate manager                                 | 7%                                   |
| Little interest among staff                       | 6%                                   |
| No requests                                       | 6%                                   |
| Increased absenteeism                             | 5%                                   |
| Unclear why they are beneficial                   | 3%                                   |
| Not cost effective                                | 3%                                   |

\* Possible responses included: not at all, limited extent, moderate extent, or great extent

Managing workplace flexibility is no doubt complex. Yet, the positive outcomes associated with the use of flexibility for employers and employees are reason enough for organizations to add flexibility to their manager tool kit. Effective management of flexibility requires supervisors and employees to take responsibility of this new way of working. Issues to be considered when integrating flexibility into day-to-day operations may include level of employee performance (past and present), length of request (short-term or permanent), nature of the request, and accountability. Table 9 displays responses to questions that were constructed to explore these topics.

Table 9

Complexities associated with managing flexible work arrangements

| Complexities associated with managing FWAs  | Yes |
|---|-----|
| Have you ever had an employee start working flexibly then change back to a standard schedule? | 30% |
| Have you ever rejected an employee's request to work a FWA?                                   | 26% |
| Has the use of FWAs changed the way in which you measure employee performance?                | 13% |
| Have you ever had to issue corrective action or terminate an employee for misusing their FWA? | 3%  |

As noted, 30% of respondents indicated they had an employee who worked a flexible schedule and then changed back to a standard schedule. When asked to describe the circumstances surrounding the reason for returning to a traditional work arrangement, the supervisors' responses suggest that there had been a change in the employees' work or non-work situation.

#### Non-work reasons

- "Change in marital status and feeling they needed to be home in the evenings"
- "Class stopped, so returned to regular schedule"
- "School got out, relieving employee of child responsibility"
- "Employee needed temporary flexibility for newborn childcare"
- "Compressed schedule, used for summer only"

#### Work reasons

- "Change of work schedule for employee. Employee determined they did not want to continue the arrangement and wanted to return to a regular schedule."
- "Employee found that the four day work week was not as helpful in completing all job related tasks as she had hoped. Also- she had difficulty getting to work in time to work a ten hour day."

As noted in Table 9, 26% of supervisors had rejected an employee's request for a flexible work arrangement in the past year. As further explained in the following quotes, the most common reasons for declining an employee's request centered on two issues employee performance and job demands.

#### Employee performance

- "Employee was in the midst of corrective action."
- "Employee was new to department and was not at a high enough competency level to warrant working unsupervised."
- "Employee wanted to work 3 12.5-hour days. Employee had issues with completing assignments with supervision. This arrangement was not suitable with work completion issues already at hand."

#### Job demands

- "Current JAQ requires 24 hr. availability."
- "Employee wanted to cut down from 5 days/week to 3 days/week. Job needs to be performed on a daily basis and we had no one to do it on the other 2 days."
- "I require my managers to be at the work site."
- "Employee was in a position which required a high level of day-to-day personal contact with clients/customers (an account clerk). In another case, essential job requirements simply could not under any circumstance be done remotely (e.g., a facility manager)."
- "A proposed schedule was a change to those hours in which the employee was hired under and would leave the office uncovered during posted hours."

Also of particular note, only 3% of supervisors indicated that they had to issue corrective action or terminate an employee for misusing their flexible work arrangements. This finding suggests that the concern about the abuse or misuse of flexible work arrangements noted earlier as a perceived barrier is unfounded. Similarly, only 13% of supervisors agreed that the use of flexible work arrangements required them to change the way in which they measure employee performance, suggesting supervisors are using performance measures based more on work/task completion than face time.

## Research Question 6

### How competent are supervisors in managing flexibility?

Research studying supervisor effectiveness has found that supervisors who have the knowledge, skills confidence to manage flexible work arrangements, and the support of their supervisors are more likely to successfully implement and manage flexible work arrangements than supervisors with low self-report scores in these areas. Table 10a displays supervisor responses to questions designed to capture supervisor self-assessments of their knowledge and skills in managing flexible work arrangements.

As displayed, most supervisors who offer flexible work arrangements rate themselves high in terms of confidence in managing employees working a flexible work arrangements (89%) and also high in terms of skills and knowledge, including: establishing mutually beneficial agreements (86%), evaluating the performance (86%), working inclusively with staff working flexible work arrangements (85%), and providing supervision (84%).

**Table 10a**

Perceptions of confidence and skill

| How skilled are you in:   | Intermediate to highly skilled |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Effectively managing direct reports working a flexible work arrangement                   | 89%                            |
| Establishing mutually beneficial FWAs that are fair and equitable                         | 86%                            |
| Evaluating performance of direct reports working a flexible work arrangement              | 86%                            |
| Scheduling meetings, events, or other activities that are inclusive of staff working FWAs | 85%                            |
| Providing supervision to direct reports working a flexible work arrangement               | 84%                            |
| Coaching employees to write proposals and formulate agreements                            | 64%                            |

As noted in Table 10b, supervisors who use flexible work arrangements also believe that they are important to their staff (97%), their department (90%) and the University (90%) as a whole.

**Table 10b**

Perceptions of importance

| How important do you believe flexible work arrangements are to: | Important to very important |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Your staff  | 97%                         |
| Your department   | 90%                         |
| The University of Kentucky                                      | 90%                         |

Supervisors were asked to assess supervisor support both in terms of how they are supported by their immediate supervisor and also how they support their direct reports in the use of flexible work arrangements. Table 10c displays results which indicate that supervisors have support from their supervisors to offer flexible work arrangements (74%) and to personally work a flexible work arrangement (82%). Not surprisingly, these supervisors are supportive of their employees who want to discuss their flexible work arrangement needs (95%), and make a real effort to inform their staff about the University's flexible work arrangements policies and procedures (80%).

Table 10c  
Perceptions of supervisor support

| Supervisor support  | Moderate to great extent |
|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Are you</i> supportive of your direct reports who want to discuss their FWA needs? | 95%                      |
| Do you have the support of <i>your supervisor</i> to offer FWAs to your staff?        | 74%                      |
| <i>Do you</i> make a real effort to inform staff of available FWAs?                   | 80%                      |
| Do you have the support of <i>your supervisor</i> to personally work a FWA?           | 82%                      |

Collectively these results support previous research that supervisor support and supervisor skill, knowledge and confidence are important factors in supervisors' decisions to implement flexible work arrangements with their employees.

### Research Question 7

What are the perceived barriers to offering workplace flexibility by supervisors who do *not* use flexibility?

This next section of the report, explores reasons that supervisors opt not to use flexible work arrangements as a strategic management tool. As a recap, about half (46%) of the supervisors surveyed do not use flexible work arrangements. Those supervisors who do not use flexible work arrangements are more likely to be male, age 55 and over, work in the position of Supervisor, and have 6 or fewer direct reports.

As a strategy to understand why some supervisors do not use flexible work flexible work arrangements, we asked supervisors who *do not use* flexible work arrangement to identify the barriers to using them. To provide a point of comparison, we asked them to check all obstacles they identified with from the same list of 22 concerns presented to supervisors who offer flexible work arrangements.

Table 11 displays the results, which indicate the most prevalent reason for not offering flexible work arrangements was the lack of requests from direct reports (43%). The next group of responses centered on structural aspects of the job and included: hours of operation (36%), nature of work (33%), and scheduling (29%). Next, concerns about implementation included: abuse of use (16%), equity across positions (16%), lack of clear guidelines (15%), and treating all employees equally (14%). These responses support the previous suggestion that additional training might be helpful to better inform supervisors about the University's guidelines for and the benefits of offering flexible work arrangements.

On the other end of the spectrum, the least prevalent reasons for not offering flexible work arrangements included: liability concern (3%), work arrangement not cost effective (4%), increased absenteeism (5%), and lack of support from immediate manager (5%).

Table 11

Reasons flexible work arrangements are not used by respondents

| Reasons flexible work arrangements are <i>not</i> used | Yes |
|--|-----|
| No requests  | 43% |
| Hours of operation                                     | 36% |
| Nature of work   | 33% |
| Scheduling structure of the job                        | 29% |
| Little interest among staff                            | 25% |
| Concern about abuse of use                             | 16% |
| Concern about inequity across positions                | 16% |
| Lack of clear guidelines                               | 15% |
| Concern about treating all employees equally           | 14% |
| Loss of productivity                                   | 13% |
| Concern about co-worker resentment                     | 12% |
| Difficulty with supervising staff                      | 12% |
| Administrative hassles                                 | 11% |
| Concerns about reactions of customers                  | 11% |
| Other more pressing issues                             | 9%  |
| Unclear why they are beneficial                        | 8%  |
| Difficulty in measuring performance                    | 8%  |
| Senior leadership views of FWAs as an accommodation    | 7%  |
| Lack of support from immediate manager                 | 5%  |
| Increased absenteeism                                  | 5%  |
| Not cost effective                                     | 4%  |
| Liability concerns                                     | 3%  |

Supervisors *not offering* flexible work arrangements were also asked to provide any additional reasons and insights, not considered in the list above, as to why they do not offer flexible work arrangements. Their responses were grouped into the following 4 themes. “Perspectives and misconceptions about flexible work arrangements” includes quotes that highlight a number of misconceptions about how to structure and manage flexible work arrangements. “Not familiar with UK’s flexibility policies” includes statements and requests to learn about flexibility options offered at UK. The theme “have previously tried it and it didn’t work” provides quotes which explain why previous use of flexible work arrangements did not work. The fourth theme “staffing” captures reasons that identify the lack of staffing as the reason for not offering flexible work arrangements. Collectively, these comments support the suggestion for additional supervisor training to learn about the benefits of flexible work arrangements and the University’s flexible work arrangement options, guidelines, and training opportunities.

#### Theme 1: Perspectives and misconceptions about flexible work arrangements

- “Management by walking around is not possible when people are absent.”
- “People most interested in flexible schedules are the ones least dependable.”

- “I personally find it very difficult to connect with the resources I need when operating on a flexible schedule of any kind, and I'm internally driven to do whatever is necessary for success of the enterprise.”
- “Open for Business means here and now.”
- “People need to be here when we are busiest.”
- “With all the other benefits the University offers, it's even easy to see why there are no requests for flexible scheduling. Our employees flex too much as it is!!!”
- “I believe that UK has excellent benefits, but I notice a selfish tendency for some to misuse the system rather than work with the system. Flextime is an excellent tool for employees with a short-term, well defined need, but abuses are possible.”
- “Employees cannot afford the cut in pay.”
- “People cannot afford it. They have the option, but choose not to take advantage due to losing salary.”
- “My staff cannot afford to lose pay.”

#### Theme 2: Not familiar with UK's flexibility policies

- “Did not know it was an option, but our staff is very interested.”
- “I was not familiar with UK's formal flexible work arrangements.”
- “If by flexible this program meant 4-10 hour days, that would be great!”

#### Theme 3: Have previously tried it and it didn't work

- “Staff tried it as a test. Staff did not continue with it.”
- “The department has previously tried this unsuccessfully. The main complaint was when you worked longer days, then if you called in sick or took vacation you had to take the additional hours that the employees did not anticipate using. There was a tremendous load on the staff working when others called in, as they had to cover the co-workers jobs also.”

#### Theme 4: Staffing

- “We cannot complete the tasks required by the office with the current staff level. If someone requests flexible work arrangement and it was granted, there would be a direct burden on the other workers to provide support to customers in their absence, as well as coverage of workload.”
- “There isn't enough staff and coverage for when someone needs to be off.”
- “With the few people that we have, it is necessary to have everyone here 8:00 to 4:30.”

### Research Question 8

What types of education and training opportunities would benefit supervisors in effectively managing flexible work arrangements?

To assist the University's Work-Life office in providing supervisors with the resources, support, and training they need to effectively implement and manage flexible work arrangements, supervisors using flexible work arrangements were asked to identify current resources they *have found helpful* as well as additional resources and tools to which they *would like to have access*. As noted in Table 12, SuperVision training (the University's supervisor training program) was noted by 25% of supervisors as being helpful, followed by a work-life presentation (18%), the University's Flexibility Toolkit (16%), and the UK Work-Life website (13%).

Interestingly, results highlight somewhat of a disconnect between what is currently available and what supervisors requested. Many of the most highly requested resources are already available through the office of Work-Life including: a website on flexible work arrangements (47%), a supervisors' toolkit (45%), checklists for considering (39%) and managing (35%) flexible work arrangements. UK Work-Life also routinely offers workshops for supervisors and managers (31%), departmental staff trainings (21%), testimonials and examples (20%), coaching and mentoring (14%), and 1:1 consultations.

The low number of responses on *tools found to be helpful* along with the relatively high number of *requested resources* which already exist, suggest that supervisors may be unaware of resources available through UK Work-Life, or have not utilized them.

**Table 12**  
Education and training resources for workplace flexibility

| Education and training resources that <i>have been</i> helpful   | Yes |
|--|-----|
| SuperVision training   | 25% |
| Work-Life presentation   | 18% |
| Flexibility toolkit  | 16% |
| UK Work-Life website   | 13% |
| 1:1 Consult with office of Work-Life                             | 7%  |
| Flexibility training workshop                                    | 6%  |
| Staff flexibility training                                       | 1%  |
| Resources that <i>would be</i> helpful                           | Yes |
| Website on flexible work arrangements                            | 47% |
| A supervisor's toolkit   | 45% |
| Supervisor checklists for considering flexible work arrangements | 39% |
| Supervisor checklists for managing flexible work arrangements    | 35% |
| Senior leadership support  | 33% |
| Workshops for supervisors and managers                           | 31% |
| Departmental staff trainings                                     | 21% |
| Testimonials and examples  | 20% |
| Coaching & mentoring   | 14% |
| 1:1 Consultation   | 10% |
| Not interested in any training                                   | 8%  |

As noted in Table 13, when asked to choose their preferred method of learning, supervisors overwhelmingly selected remote, computer-based (37%) and webinar (25%) technologies over more traditional face to face (25%) or classroom style methods. This information is particularly helpful to know as the University's office of Work-Life continues to develop learning and training resources.

**Table 13**  
Supervisors' preferred method of learning

| Preferred method of learning                 | Yes |
|--|-----|
| Computer-based trainings                     | 37% |
| Webinars                                     | 25% |
| Face to face                                 | 25% |
| No need for additional training at this time | 23% |
| 1:1 Coaching                                 | 10% |

To create a broader context for supervisors' use and confidence in using flexible work arrangements to manage their workforce, we asked supervisors if they personally work a flexible work arrangement, and if so, why? Of the supervisors who use flexible work arrangements with their direct reports, slightly more than half (52%) personally work a flexible work arrangement. Supervisors' reasons for personally working flexible work arrangements had to do with various elements of work-life fit. Thirty-two percent use flexibility to maximize their work-life fit; 30% use them to better meet work responsibilities; and 29% use flexible work arrangements to address responsibilities outside of work. Other reasons for personally using flexible work arrangements included: caregiving responsibilities (16%), organization of work (16%), commuting arrangements (14%), personal development (12%), and professional development (10%).

**Table 14**  
Supervisors' reasons for personally utilizing flexible work arrangements

| Reasons for utilizing flexible work arrangements        | Yes |
|---|-----|
| Maximize fit between work and non-work responsibilities | 32% |
| Better meet work responsibilities                       | 30% |
| Better meet responsibilities outside of work            | 29% |
| Caregiving responsibilities                             | 16% |
| Organization of work                                    | 16% |
| Commuting/Transportation arrangements                   | 14% |
| Personal development of interests                       | 12% |
| Professional development                                | 10% |

### Supervisor reflections on the use of flexible work arrangements

This last section of the report describes supervisors' open-ended responses to a question that asked them to provide any additional information about their experience of using flexible work arrangements at the University of Kentucky. Comments clustered around four main themes:

1. flexible work arrangements viewed as a win-win,
2. policy issues,
3. lack of leadership support, and
4. difficulties in implementation.

Within the four broad themes, several sub-themes emerged and will be further identified.

## Theme 1: Flexible work arrangements are a win-win

Overall, many of the supervisors' comments pertained to positive benefits of flexible work arrangements for UK employees as well as for the organization. Within this broad theme, comments clustered into eight key areas:

- A. flexible work arrangements are good for employee health and wellbeing,
- B. flexible work arrangements are viewed as employment benefit,
- C. flexible work arrangements are seen as standard employment practice,
- D. flexible work arrangements allow employees time to deal with family issues,
- E. flexible work arrangements are viewed as a management tool,
- F. supervisors open to providing flexible work arrangements if requested,
- G. use of flexible work arrangements is motivated by personal experience, and
- H. flexible work arrangements allow for employee advancement.

### Sub-theme A: Good for employee health and wellbeing

Comments clustered around this area highlight the importance of flexible work arrangements as a scheduling tool to ease stress and promote health and wellbeing.

- “Flexible work arrangements had made my life a little less stressful. My job requires a great deal of in-state travel frequently resulting in 10-12 hour days. The flexible schedule takes advantage of these hours and allows some additional freedom for me.”
- “Thank you for helping increase support for these options. Flexibility is critically important to the health and wellbeing of employees as well as to their productivity, job satisfaction, and retention.”

### Sub-theme B: Viewed as employment benefit

These comments describe the use of flexible work arrangements as an employee benefit, one that helps to raise morale and retain good employees.

- “Flexible work arrangements are a wonderful benefit for any employee. It'll help the university to keep good employees and raise the morale in these times when salary raises are not being provided.”
- “I really think that offering flextime is maybe the second best benefit (healthcare benefits is first) that we can offer UK employees. I ask my staff very often to work extra hours for the project, I think it's only fair to offer them some flexibility too.”
- “I think this is a great benefit for UK to offer. I support it completely and hope it continues and that UPPER MGMT people are encouraged to support it!”
- “It is a great benefit to offer, certainly now in our no raise environment.”
- “It's been wonderful so far, a great added benefit to the University workplace. We are always sure to include in our flex agreements with employees that it's possible, due to the nature of our work, we may have to ask them to revert back to regular schedule either for a short period of time or permanently. They have been fine with that and it's worked very well for us.”
- “Work Life management is extremely important, especially as we have not been able to offer our employees raises. Utilizing flexible work hours has been a way to keep morale up in these challenging times. Thank you for your support!”

### Sub-theme C: Standard employment practice

These statements support the use flexible work arrangements as a preferred and accepted business practice.

- “Flexible work arrangements should be an accepted employment practice.”
- “I sincerely appreciate that this is an option and is encouraged here at UK. There are so many reasons that this is a great thing! I honestly am not sure I would work for UK without these options - both for me and for my staff.”
- “I believe it is a good thing and wish it had been in existence when I was raising my child. I also feel it is important that flexible work arrangements be available to ALL employees, not just those with caregiving responsibilities.”

### Sub-theme D: Allows employees time to deal with family issues

The next set of responses focus on the use of flexible work arrangements as a way to manage family and caregiving responsibilities.

- “I believe that it is a very nice option for many employees, for those with children and caregiving responsibilities it probably has been a job and life saver for those individuals.”
- “I believe that it is very useful for employees that are parents or care givers. It would go far to keeping good work conscience workers.”
- “I personally think it would be great to have a more flexible schedule. It is hard to work 5 full days a week and maintain a home life taking care of a parent. It would be great to have a 4-day work week.”
- “I think it is a good opportunity to help anyone that has caregiving responsibilities, young children or health issues.”
- “The ability to offer flexible work arrangements for staff or faculty who have family caretaking responsibilities or other legitimate and otherwise insurmountable extenuating circumstances is a major advantage. We have used flexible work schedules successfully in such circumstances. When the circumstances are resolved, however, it is expected that the employee returns to regular work schedule.”
- “The flexible work schedule that we have now allows us to take care of family obligations without using up the vacation time that we need to keep fresh. Our families appreciate this too.”

### Sub-theme E: Viewed as a management tool

The following statements describe the use of flexible work arrangements as an important and useful management tool for themselves and their direct reports.

- “Excellent management tool when properly employed.”
- “The flexibility to use flexible work arrangements has been a very large positive aspect of my job and my ability to manage staff.”
- “I credit a flexible work arrangement as one of the fundamental reasons I am very happy with my life and my job. I am a far more loyal and productive employee--although that productivity may be at 3am. It is more of a matter of believing everyone can be trusted instead of assuming distrust as some units at UK are more prone to do as a result of old school management/organizational theories or models used.”
- “I think flextime increases productivity and motivation, but it needs more support from senior administration.”

### Sub-theme F: Supervisors open to providing if requested

A number of supervisors who currently do not offer flexible work arrangements noted support for the use of flexible work arrangements if they had direct reports who requested them.

- “I am very open to providing flexible work arrangements to those I supervise if they make that request. No request has been made yet.”
- “I fully support flexible work arrangements. At this time, no desire for an arrangement has been expressed, however, we have had arrangements in our department in the past and they have worked well.”
- “I support a flexible work arrangement and would encourage any staff member to take advantage of it if the work allowed it. My experience has been that you can generally work anything out if you want to.”
- “I think it is great and would try to support any requests that I would receive.”
- “I think it's an excellent program and would allow it if anyone asked.”

### Sub-theme G: Motivated by personal experience

This grouping includes references to the personal use of a flexible work arrangement as being a motivator to offer flexible work arrangements.

- “I think some people just don't understand the need for flexibility until they need it themselves.”
- “I appreciate flexible work arrangements, having utilized a flexible schedule for four years previously.”

### Sub-theme H: Allows for employee advancement

The following statements note the use of a flexible work arrangement as important to their ability to work and take classes.

- “Flexible work arrangements are very important to help employees balance work and life. I couldn't go to school if it weren't for my four-day (40-hour) work week.”
- “I support flex work arrangements. I actually had the opportunity to complete an undergrad degree here at UK utilizing a flex schedule. I am now working on a graduate degree and my immediate supervisor has agreed to allow me to take a course during work hours. He does not like it, but realizes that I will not be in this position forever and will further my education regardless of where I work.”

## Theme 2: Policy issues

Supervisors' open-ended comments about the use of flexible work arrangements grouped within a second theme: issues pertaining to UK's flexible work arrangement policy. Overall this policy-related theme suggests that additional training and support on the University's Flexibility Policy and Implementation Guidelines is needed to dispel erroneous or insufficient information. Two sub-themes emerged within this area:

- A. unclear policy, and
- B. perceived unfairness.

### Sub-theme A: Unclear policy

Comments under this sub-theme suggest that some supervisors do not fully understand the University's policy and guidelines for implementing flexible work arrangements.”

- “Flexible work arrangements are not clear in regards to exempt employees.”
- “I am asked several times a year about comp. time in regards to week-end work.”

- “I have heard them mentioned, but have not seen much of a push to implement them, particularly on a departmental level.”
- “I think that most people don't understand it enough to even try to work out a flexible schedule.”
- “Wish it was available to exempt personnel.”

#### Sub-theme B: Perceived unfairness

The following comments focus on the issue of fairness, specifically who is and who is not eligible to access flexible work arrangements.

- “All the pros and cons need to be discussed regarding flexible work. If you are working longer hours in fewer days, then you use more time when taking sick leave or vacation time. Since you only get paid for 7.5 or 8 hours, on holidays, you have to use vacation time to make up the difference on those days also. Scheduling training is an ongoing issue when you are using flexible work.”
- “Exempt employees are not treated similarly across campus in terms of their ability to use or schedule flex time. This does not seem fair.”
- “The current restrictive interpretation of which positions can be exempt and the restrictions on how hourly employees may work their hours are counterproductive to an effective flexible time program. Requiring hourly, non-exempt employees to take compensatory time within the same work week rather than the pay period or the same month causes resentment in workers. Many times they would rather have the time off rather than be paid overtime but are not allowed to. This plus the expansion of non-exempt positions several years ago has caused an epidemic of clock watching, very counterproductive to motivating professionalism.”
- “On the one hand flexible time seeks to empower the worker and on the other hand the restrictive hourly reporting system belittles them to just cogs in the machine.”
- “As to flexible work arrangements -- it is the primary way I can recruit and retain from national doctoral-level professional pool b/c our salaries are not competitive. I would love to see UK establish some formal 'comp time' arrangement for exempt staff. Sometimes my staff members work an entire weekend out of town for student programming, and the best I can do is to adjust that work week somewhat, so that they can address other work-life responsibilities. I'm not talking about nickel and dime accounting for an extra hour here or there, nor about staff racking up extra weeks of vacation. It would be helpful to have clear and reasonable guidelines about how much schedule adjustment is acceptable within a pay period, for example. Thanks!”

### Theme 3: Lack of leadership support

The third theme that emerged from supervisors' open-ended comments about the use of flexible work arrangements focused on the perceived lack of leadership support for using flexible work arrangements. Overall, it appears that within some pockets of the University, supervisors and managers at various levels do not fully support the use of flexible work arrangements and/or may have a negative perception of employees who do use them. Three sub-themes emerged within this broad theme of perceived lack of support from leadership:

- A. management resistant to use of flexible work arrangements,
- B. management skeptical of flexible work arrangements, and
- C. employees afraid that use of flexible work arrangements may have a negative impact on their careers.

The theme lack of leadership support and its sub-themes are represented in the following quotes:

### Sub-theme A: Management resistant to use flexible work arrangements

A number of comments identified a lack of willingness in the form of support and/or resistance to the use of flexible work arrangements.

- “Although currently at the supervisory level at UK, I have had Project Management and Assistant Director positions at other companies and academic institutions. At these other positions, we were able to be much more flexible with staff and it is very discouraging the amount of inflexibility or even attempt to try something new. In addition to the direct manager being against flex time, HR is not very flexible. They have actually told our manager that someone wanting to coach for their children's extracurricular activities or for child care issues was not a reason to offer flex time! And then management wonders why morale is poor.”
- “Generally not supported by upper level management. Poses additional supervisory problems. Hasn't improved morale of most vocal employees, but nothing would!”
- “I think that flexible work arrangements aren't pressed enough to Senior Management.”

### Sub-theme B: Management skeptical of flexible work arrangements

Comments under this sub-theme highlight a number of reasons why managers may be skeptical to use flexible work arrangements.

- “As a manager, it is more difficult for me to use telecommuting because my administration erroneously thinks I need to be present in my office. With the modern communications tools we possess, this option should be available”.
- “Flexible work arrangements make sense on many levels, but it can be frustrating when peers (other supervisors) make you feel as if by allowing staff to use them you are somehow being too laid-back and are not holding staff accountable. Also, there is a sense that departmental upper management can be skeptical of arrangements, and that staff who do not request them are probably more dedicated and are harder workers. Some of that is simply societal. Many managers still perceive risks of decreased productivity and loss of control when flexible arrangements are permitted.”

### Sub-theme C: Employees afraid that use of flexible work arrangements may have a negative impact on their careers

The following quotes highlight a sense of reluctance and fear to use flexible work options. Specifically, if you don't have your supervisor or manager's support, using flexible work arrangements may have a negative impact on your career at the University.

- “As a supervisor/manager, I don't necessarily feel as if I have the option to work a flexible work schedule...perhaps because it hasn't been verbally supported. I guess. I just assume that if it's not mentioned, it's an unspoken rule or assumption that it wouldn't be wise for a manager/supervisor to do.”
- “I would love to work a flexible schedule however without the support from my supervisor and unsure where my director and our department supervisor stand on the issue, I am very hesitant to pursue.”
- “People at UK are still scared to ask for flexible arrangements and this is unacceptable!! Higher level support and awareness has a direct impact on implementation of these initiatives.”
- “I know that our senior administrator does not believe in flexible work schedules... I believe that the use of flexible work schedules make for better working relationships and those employees will remain in their positions longer if given the flexibility to manage their professional and personal life. We cannot always be at work between 8 and 5pm.”

## Theme 4: Difficulty in implementation

The last theme that emerged from supervisors general comments about the use of flexible work arrangement at UK focuses on implementation of flexible work arrangements. Overall, supervisors' comments appear to suggest that while flexible work arrangements continue to be requested and used, supervisors are presented with a number of challenges that may impede their support and eventual use. These challenges are sometimes unique to the situation and may require assistance from UK Work-Life; others are reflective of the nature of the work, the structure of the job, or staffing requirements, and may require a different approach to flexibility. Within this broad theme, five subthemes emerged:

- A. management challenges,
- B. implementation more challenging with small staff/departments,
- C. need for training,
- D. productivity/coverage issues, and
- E. perceived inequity.

The theme difficulty in implementation and its sub-themes are represented in the following quotes:

### Sub-theme A: Management challenges

Comments in this sub-theme identify a number of interesting challenges that supervisors might need to address when using flexible work arrangements.

- “Flex Time is hard to implement for my employees. We're a 24 a day operation, and most of them have set shifts. I still manage to work around their needs for varying stop/start times, and believe that Flex Time is very, very important to UK & to the satisfaction of its employees.”
- “I think that flexible work arrangements can be very beneficial, when administered fairly and appropriately. In our department, callbacks and extended hours are not uncommon and flexibility allows a certain level of benefit to those who willingly respond whenever needed. However, there are drawbacks. Not all positions are equally flexible, creating the perception of inequity in the department. It's more work for the supervisor to monitor work output. Some employees have come to see flexibility as a right rather than a privilege, which creates tension when you need to tighten up the standards.”
- “I'm convinced that flexible work arrangements can be a win/win, but we do have to deal with issues like fairness, commitment to mission, etc.”
- “Offering flexible work arrangements to employees is difficult to manage (although not impossible.) Our biggest complaints come from faculty who resent their staff from wanting to be off an extra day each week! They see it as an obstacle to their own productivity.”
- “Overall, it has worked well for our students to offer this. However, when staff must stay late beyond their scheduled day problems do arise.”
- “With some tweaking this could be a great program. I am not concerned about tracking as my staff uses an electronic time clock to record time. Scheduling could become tricky however as a staff morale booster I would be happy to take on this task. Flexibility working hours would be great, especially for those who drive in from out of town; 4 day work weeks would mean saving 1 tank of gas/month. Reduced seasonal hours however do not compute especially considering the fact staff has not had raises in several years! One would have to be making quite a salary to afford this option! Working from home would be nice but only if one's work can easily be tracked to ensure an employee is doing a full day's work. Facilities and several other units unfortunately could not take advantage of this.”

### Sub-theme B: Implementation more challenging with small staff/department

These comments highlight the challenges of units/departments that have only a small number of employees.

- “Having a small staff that interacts with the public sector makes using flexible work arrangements difficult. I'm not opposed, but not sure it would work in our unit.”
- “I'm supportive as long as the University gets adequate consideration. Flexible arrangements inside small units can be difficult.”
- “I support it in theory, but given the small size of our college and the nature of the work, there are limited opportunities for this to work, with the possible exception of some flexibility during the summer months.”

### Sub-theme C: Need for training

The following supervisor comments highlight the importance of training, coaching and support in the effective implementation of flexible work arrangements.

- “I am very much in favor of flexible work arrangements. It may be that I need more assistance in understanding how this could work in our specific situation.”
- “I worked for almost 20 years at another company with 4 years in management there offering a flexible work arrangement within my department, so I arrived at UK with a successful background in flexible work arrangements I think that more areas here at UK could offer flexible work arrangements, if managers had a better understanding of how to implement. Staying with a fixed schedule is far easier from a management perspective than offering a flexible arrangement, and TRUST is a large contributor to success.”
- “Offer examples of flex schedules that departments can use - that considers areas that have students as customers.”
- “We had limited flex time but it was eliminated due to inconsistency of application and overuse by some individuals.”

### Sub-theme D: Productivity/Coverage issues

These comments highlight challenges associated with coverage and the way in which work gets done and teams may be impacted when flexible work arrangements are used.

- “I supervise a service area that deals extensively with the public and utilizes other highly trained personal at professional levels. My area is open 7 days a week and holidays from 8 am to 6pm. I have limited numbers of employees due to budget restrictions. We are already spread too thin. The professionals we use are very demanding and they want to work during the meat of the day (10-4)... when I have employees here from 7-6 I am wasting high-end dollars doing low end time. If I have workers on the clock during low demand times, I lose those workers during high demand times. Guess who gets to cover for them - their co-workers (who have to perform double duty for longer periods of time) I am now chronically short handed and have not used a holiday in the past year. Bottom line: While good for some (not all) employees, flex time is not in the interest of the department or the supervisors. It is not a team building situation. I have noticed a drop in moral, camaraderie, teamwork, productivity and satisfaction of all my employees who have participated in this program. Though I have supported them at personal cost, they now desire to return to normal schedules. The loss of team connectivity alone is prohibitive to production and contentment.”
- “I would love to implement them in our department, but we have too much work to complete consistently. Implementation would not be possible without directly impacting others in the office.”

- “It seems like a great idea, but not all positions are efficient with flexible work arrangements.”
- “Totally supportive if the job can be accomplished. Some responsibilities just don't allow for such flexibility, unfortunately. However, we do some cross training to allow for all areas to be covered for vacations, etc.”
- “In my experience, employees favor flexible hours; however, it is important to be available for our clients during regular office hours and we give that a high priority.”

#### Sub-theme E: Perceived inequity

Comments in this sub-theme speak directly to the issue of equity in the use of flexible work arrangements and the challenge of how to address this issue with direct reports not using a flexible work arrangement.

- “I think sometimes senior managers are unaware of resentment that might exist within the workplace when it comes to flexible work schedules. Even the best employees that try not to let outside things bother them find it hard sometimes when a situation is perceived as unequal. I think more reviewing and even possibly anonymously surveying employees within the department on their thoughts on flexible work arrangements might help give some insight into how the situation is viewed by the rest of the staff. The situation I have described has created a huge office morale issue and I think that it has had at least a bit of an impact on motivation and work ethic. We currently have an excellent staff doing a lot of great things but this one situation is like the sore spot that just won't go away - so many feel that this person's arrangement is unfair. I certainly understand that there might be a need for this arrangement for some employees and that space might be an issue in some campus departments. However, I think taking a closer look at each case by case situation could make things seem more fair. I also think notifying/educating managers periodically on dealing with resentment and also determining where a flexible situation might be appropriate would help.”
- “I know many like to use flexible work arrangements, but in my previous work experience, they seldom work properly. In my past experience, the work doesn't get done and people who aren't using flexible work arrangements are resentful of those who do. It just ends up being a bad situation all the way around. I would be very hard pressed to allow it, plus it would be very difficult to do with the type of work we do.”

## Conclusion

Since the endorsement of the University's workplace flexibility policies by President Todd in April 2008, the use of flexible work arrangements throughout the UK campus has been initiated. This study was conducted to give UK Work-Life a better understanding of the use of flexible work arrangements by supervisors, and how and why they are being implemented. In answering the research questions which guided this study, we have learned a great deal about the current use of flexibility. This important information will serve as a baseline as UK Work-Life continues to monitor the University's flexibility initiatives.