

# Flexible Sussex Handbook

Embracing the University's Flexible Working Procedure



## Becoming Flexible Sussex

Our Flexible Sussex objective is to become an organisation that is flexible by default to ensure we are inclusive in everything we do. Providing a truly flexible working environment is a key part of achieving that ambition. This guide explains the benefits of flexible working and the key principles that set out the spirit in which we expect requests for flexible working to be considered. The guide is designed to help all staff implement the University's Flexible Working Procedure. It provides details on the most common flexible working arrangements and how managers and employees can work together within their teams to enable more flexible working opportunities.

Flexible working plays an important role in ensuring that we provide equal and inclusive opportunity throughout the organisation. Embracing this change in culture will be a challenge for us all. For it to succeed, we must all play a role: senior leaders; managers; and staff - working together to develop and implement innovative solutions.

We all face different challenges in maintaining a work/life balance, and these can change throughout our careers. Learning to be more flexible and being proactive and positive about change will help us to achieve this balance, benefiting us as individuals and the organisation as a whole. I hope that everybody welcomes the ambition of Flexible Sussex and can demonstrate the role they have played in helping us to become truly flexible by default.

Professor Adam Tickell  
Vice-Chancellor

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## Background

Flexible working can be a useful tool to improve employees' work-life balance and wellbeing, whilst helping to attract and retain staff. There are many compelling reasons for ensuring that we offer good flexible working policies.

### **Gender Pay Gap**

Our analysis of the University's gender pay gap highlighted underrepresentation of women in the highest paid jobs in the organisation. The action toolkit, published by the Government Equalities Office and the CIPD, recommends embracing flexible working as one of four key areas to take action to reduce a gender pay gap. A lack of flexible working opportunities is believed to lead to fewer women being attracted into the organisation at senior levels. According to the IFS and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, working part-time is a contributing factor to the gender pay gap for mothers as 'they miss out on earnings growth associated with more experience'.<sup>1</sup>

### **Accessibility**

Flexible working can be used as a tool to assist those with disability and impairment find a way into the workplace and to succeed and progress in the organisation. Flexible working is a cost effective reasonable adjustment and has a key role to play in retaining valuable staff who develop a disability or impairment whilst working for us. An overall ethos of flexibility ensures that accessibility can be addressed inclusively rather than as a special arrangement.

### **Attracting and Engaging Talent**

Flexibility is highly valued in the job market with more workers expecting greater control in managing their work-life balance. Technology and digital services have opened up more jobs to being flexible. Flexible working is a valuable element in overall reward packages which helps attract the best talent. Increasingly the understanding of work has changed. It is no longer a place you come to but a service and outcomes you deliver. Having control on how, when and where you work and being valued for what you deliver, rather than how long you spend in the office, is key to staff engagement levels.

### **Efficiency and Effectiveness**

More flexible service and job design can ensure that services are not reliant on a single person who can potentially become a single point of failure. Opening up the potential for more jobs to be flexible will help reduce these issues and the stress they can cause for individuals and service managers.

Implementing flexible working arrangements across our teams will present a variety of challenges that are real and need to be addressed. We see these challenges as an opportunity to improve how we work both within and between teams and in the services we provide. Within our community there will be differing views about flexibility based on previous experiences both positive and negative but also based on myths and misconceptions. The aim of this toolkit is to provide information and guidance on how to successfully implement flexible working arrangements to maximise the opportunities and benefits that flexibility brings. It provides more

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/10358>

details on common forms of flexible working and suggestions on how to redesign roles to make them open to flexible working.

## Key Principles of Flexible Sussex

Our approach to flexible working is based on the following principles:

**1. As a University we will take a proactive approach to flexible working.**

We will adopt flexible working in line with our policies, to enable us to deliver our business and services more effectively. The efficient and effective running of the University and the services we provide to our students must take priority, but requests for flexible working should only be refused for objective business reasons. All positions will be advertised as suitable for flexible working by default, unless a clear business case can be made for not doing so. This reason should be clearly stated in the job advertisement.

**2. We will be encouraging and supportive of individuals who want greater flexibility.**

We will challenge assumptions about traditional ways of working, taking account of the needs of our work, our students and our staff to find the best way to deliver the right outcomes. Managers and employees will keep an open dialogue to help identify solutions or compromises, where appropriate, to accommodate and adjust flexible working. It will not always be appropriate or possible to meet all requests and where this happens following a period of negotiation and dialogue clear reasons will be provided and a right of appeal.

**3. We will make flexible working easy to arrange and easy to change.**

We will reduce bureaucracy for managers and employees when it comes to arranging and changing flexible employment. All requests for flexible work and appeals will be handled within three months. Managers must consider all new formal requests in a reasonable manner but make decisions based on an objective process that does not discriminate against particular employees.

**4. All employees have equal opportunities for development, reward, promotion and career progression**

We will ensure that we manage and develop the talent of all our staff regardless of whether they choose to adopt flexible working arrangements or work traditional full-time hours.

## Eligibility

All University employees may request to work flexibly, regardless of length of service. Although employees with 26 weeks' service have a legal right to make one flexible working request per 12month period, the University has extended this to all employees. Once all positions are advertised as suitable for flexible working by default, (unless a clear business case can be made for not doing so) flexibility will be available regardless of the length of service. Managers are required to consider all flexible working requests. Whilst flexible working is encouraged wherever possible, not all posts or roles are suitable for all forms of flexible working. Working flexibly is not a right and is always subject to business need. The University's Flexible Working Policy sets out the formal process for applications and the right of appeal.

## Types of Flexible Working Arrangements

Flexible work should not just be equated with working reduced hours. To find the right arrangement, employees and managers should consider the benefits for the individual, the team and the business; looking for an arrangement that has a clear focus on business outputs but which also enables the employee to maintain and improve their work-life balance.

### Types of Flexibility

Flexible working arrangements provide flexibility on:

#### Hours Worked

The term reduced hours (often referred to as part-time working) applies to any employee working fewer than the standard conditioned hours for a role at that grade. This is where an individual works a number of hours which are less than the maximum contract hours for that particular post, it can range from working only a couple of hours a week to just less than full-time working and covers a variety of working patterns. Staff can work fewer hours over the same number of days or the same hours over fewer days or a combination of the two.

#### Working pattern

Flexible working patterns can apply to all staff including those on reduced hours. Staff on compressed hours work the normal contracted hours but compressed into a shorter period. For example a forty-hour week could be worked as four ten-hour days instead of five eight-hour days. Other working patterns include different length days throughout the week with some short days and some long days or some early start/early finish and some late start/late finish. Others may only work during specific times of the year reflecting business need.

#### Location

The Remote Working Framework supports a level of flexibility over the location in which work duties are performed, where possible, for all staff whose roles permit it. For many this involves working remotely at least some of the working week or month, if desirable. There are significant benefits to both staff and the university in practicing hybrid ways of working. To find out more please see refer to the [Remote Working Framework](#).

Some staff may feel it would be beneficial to work remotely in excess of the amount of remote working afforded by their role category. In such cases staff are encouraged to explore such needs with their manager, and apply for an increased level of remote working via the flexible working procedure.

Flexible working arrangements can include flexibility on any combination of the above factors.

#### Formality of Flexible Working Arrangements

Some forms of flexible working arrangements can be provided without any formal change to an individual's terms and conditions of employment. These are easy to arrange and vary and some can be made available to teams. Where a member of staff requests a formal flexible working arrangement that will affect their terms and conditions of employment the formal

application process needs to be used and once approved the manager needs to notify Human Resources who will issue an amendment to the individual's contract.

### **Formal Arrangements**

Where either party requires stability in the arrangement or where the employee wishes to exercise their right to make a statutory flexible working request, a formal arrangement will be required. All formal arrangements will be subject to review and will involve a change to the employee's contract.

Managers must consider all formal requests promptly and in a reasonable manner. Requests must be considered and decided on within three months, from the date of application, unless an extension is mutually agreed. Any appeals that may arise must also be completed within the same three-month period from the date of application. Full details of the procedures for formal flexible working arrangements are set out in the University's Flexible Working Procedure.

Requests for flexible retirement should always go through the formal flexible working procedure.

### **Informal/Occasional Arrangements**

If the change is occasional or straightforward and has no impact on pay, leave or pensions, informal flexible working is ideal. This should be agreed between managers and employees without the need to follow a formal application process. Informal arrangements can be put in place quickly and can be changed or ended quickly if circumstances change. For example, a manager agrees that a member of staff can start work at 10am on Fridays and make up the time by working late in the evening in order to take their disabled child to a weekly physiotherapy session for a 6 week period.

Informal arrangements can be agreed orally but the manager should provide a brief email/written confirmation of what has been agreed to avoid any confusion later on and making clear the arrangement is informal and that the manager reserves discretion to change these arrangements due to business need. Informal arrangements should be reviewed regularly and on an on-going basis. This will enable the manager to raise and address any concerns around outputs and assess whether the benefits of the arrangement are being realised. It also allows staff to consider formalising arrangements if they believe this would provide more certainty.

Where a manager agrees that a member of staff can reduce their working hours for a limited period of time, the manager needs to notify Human Resources who will issue an amendment to the individual's contract for the relevant time period.

### **Team Flexible Arrangements**

Flexi-time schemes can be introduced within Directorates. These schemes provide flexibility to staff to choose in conjunction with their managers and teams a suitable working pattern and have the flexibility to accrue some leave for limited time off in lieu. Eligible team members have the option but are not obliged to join the scheme.

Annex A provides an example flexi-time scheme and the most common forms of formal flexible working arrangements. Flexible working includes working reduced hours and working full time but in a more flexible arrangement, and potentially a combination of arrangements. In line with our principles, we encourage managers and staff to work collaboratively to identify flexible working solutions that work well for individuals, the team and the business. Early discussion and working together is the best way to achieve the best solutions.



## Reviewing Jobs and Services to Increase Flexibility

Whilst our ambition is to be flexible by default currently not all jobs are conducive to all forms of flexibility. Staff and managers need to work together to understand the opportunities that already exist for flexibility and whether there are opportunities to increase this. Flexibility does not have to be all or nothing and is usually better when it's not.

### Job Redesign

For some roles the completion of work is not fully dependent on one individual employee. This means that a team can work together to agree working patterns that enable flexibility and provision of the service against agreed service levels. These can be teams of staff who share the same role or mixed teams.

### Move from Individual to Team Assignments

Rather than assigning workload to individuals one option is to assign work to a small team or to buddy team members who manage individual customers. While customers generally value a single point of contact they also need continuity of service and no individual can always be available. The team approach is a more proactive approach to continuity of service and can enable individuals to adopt more flexible working arrangements.

### Review Service Level Agreements and Customer Demand

Some services set agreements when the main form of customer interaction was in person between 9.00 and 5.30. Today more services offer self-service options and multiple channels which has changed how and when the service is used. A review of how many customers use the service may show that very few come in person at the start and end of the day and it would be possible to reduce how many staff need to be available at the start or end of the day or change the office opening hours.

### Job Splitting/Sharing

Where requests are made to reduce hours it may be sensible to split a role rather than try and maintain all aspects of the role in a single job and recruit two part-time staff covering the same role. This will depend of the staff member, the role and the level of reduction in hours. It is also important to review the split to ensure that the grade of the revised job of the incumbent has not been changed. Another alternative is job sharing where the role is not redesigned but two people are employed to cover the work between them.

### Remote Working

There is a lot of advice and best practice for staff working remotely. Some tips are: **VISIBILITY** - Let others know where and when you are working and share calendars and schedules

**COLLABORATION** - Use electronic document management rigorously to make sure work is easily accessible to everyone either e.g. g:drives or BOX.

**COMMUNICATION** - Develop an etiquette for online communication and virtual meetings. Just because somebody is working from home it doesn't mean you can't speak to them or that they are always available. Signpost availability for phone contact or online discussion.

## **1. Flexi-Time (Flexible Working Hours)**

This is where there is the flexibility for the individual, within certain fixed limits, to vary their working times and the length of their working day. It allows employees, subject to the needs of the office/School, to:

- Vary their time of arrival and departure from work to suit domestic responsibilities, travel arrangements or for work related reasons
- Vary the length and time of lunch breaks
- Subject to business needs and line manager agreement, to take time off in lieu if they have worked extra hours to meet business needs.

### **Where it can be applied**

We encourage all managers to operate flexi-time schemes wherever possible for staff who work defined hours. This is the simplest and most effective form of flexible working and does not require any variation to the individual's contract. For most staff flexi-time allows them to operate flexibly without any personal formal agreement.

### **Issues and considerations**

Flexi-time schemes have agreed 'core times'. These are the hours employees must attend and generally reflect the busiest part of the day, e.g. 10.00am to 4.00pm. However core hours can vary based on the service provided by a team particularly for one with advertised opening hours. Managers should work in collaboration with their teams to ensure that staff can benefit from flexi-time schemes without compromising their ability to provide a service.

Hours worked to meet business needs in excess of an individual's conditioned hours may, subject to agreement, be taken as flexi-leave. Flexi-leave may also be taken in anticipation of making up the time afterwards, with agreement of line managers. The scheme needs to be carefully managed to make sure that employees are not building up excessive credits or deficits.

Participation in a scheme is voluntary and employees who wish to continue working fixed hours may do so. All eligible employees joining the team will be invited to join. If they are transferring from another part of the University they may be in a current scheme so it will be important that managers discuss how the scheme is operated for their new role as it may differ.

Employees who work reduced hours, or other flexible working options are equally entitled to participate in a flexi-time scheme and any local arrangements must make provision for this.

### **Additional information**

An example of a typical flexi-time scheme is set out below as a guide to assist any teams looking to introduce flexi-time.

## UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX EXAMPLE FLEXI-TIME SCHEME

\*\*\*\*\* Division

**1.1** The \*\*\*\* Division operates a Flexi-time scheme which allows employees some flexibility, subject to service requirements, in arranging their working time. The Director of \*\*\*\* reserves the right after consultation with the Divisions employees, to vary normal working hours or working arrangements to ensure that service requirements are met. The opportunity to participate in the flexi scheme is a benefit which may be withdrawn at management discretion.

**1.2** This Scheme applies to all staff on grades 1-6 within the \*\*\*\* Division.

### **1.3 Normal Office Hours**

These are from **09.00 to 17.30 hours Mon - Fri**. During this period staff participating in the flexi-time scheme will hold responsibility for the provision of adequate cover to ensure that neither the general efficiency of the Division nor the service provided by the Division is reduced. For staff participating in the flexi-time scheme, *adequate cover* is determined as a minimum of \*\*\*\* members of staff for each Department within the Division. Failure to ensure adequate cover is provided at all times may result in the withdrawal of the flexi-time scheme. The determination of 'adequate cover' will be reviewed on a periodic basis at the \*\*\*\* meeting.

### **1.4 Contracted Hours**

The contractual working week is **36.5 hours for full time employees** on grades 1-6 and during the settlement period the contractual hours are **146/182.5 (i.e. four/five times X 36.5)**, subject to the carry over provision. The contractual working week for part-time staff will be as stated in their contract of employment and the four week settlement period will be calculated by multiplying the weekly hours by four.

### **1.5 Working Time Regulations**

The Working Time Regulations 1998 restrict an employee's working week to 48 hours averaged over a 17-week period. The Regulations also require those working for a period of six hours or longer each day to take one uninterrupted break of not less than 20 minutes each day, preferably away from their workstation. The Flexi-time Scheme can be used to ensure that employees and managers abide by these Regulations.

### **1.6 Core – time**

The **daily core-time** is from \*\*\*\* to \*\*\*\* hours. During these periods all employees must be at work. It is the responsibility of staff taking part in this Scheme that the flexible working hours are planned so as to ensure that adequate cover is provided during normal working hours, as stated in paragraph 1.3 above. Staff must agree with their line manager, in good time, of the intended use of flexi-time credit to either **a) commence work later than \*\*\*\*** or **b) cease work earlier than \*\*\*\***.

### **1.7 Settlement Period/Carry Over (Credit/Debit)**

The settlement period will be based on a calendar month. Employees must ensure that they work at least the contractual hours (subject to carry over) during each settlement period. Time in credit/debit at the end of each week within the settlement period (calendar month) will be carried forward to the next week. A maximum of \*\*\*\* hours credit and \*\*\*\* hours debit (pro-rata for part time staff) may be carried forward into the next calendar month settlement period. Any credit carried over must be used within this next settlement period, and similarly any debit carried forward must be 'made-up' within this period.

## **1.8 Bandwidth**

The daily bandwidth time is from \*\*\*\* hours to \*\*\*\* hours. This is the period within which the employee's working day must be contained and employees should not start work earlier or finish work later than these times without the prior approval of their supervisor/line manager who should give consideration to any security or health and safety implications that may arise.

## **1.9 Flexible Lunch Break**

Employees may take from **half an hour to two hours for lunch**, preferably between \*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\* hours, and must record the time that they start and finish their lunch break on the flexi-time recording sheet. Please note that the flexi-time sheet is set up to automatically deduct a **30 minute break each day** (i.e. the minimum break staff are expected to take).

## **1.10 Standard Working Day**

A standard working day is 7 hours 18 minutes and a half-day is 3 hours 39 minutes.

## **1.11 Overtime**

Paid overtime for hours worked within the bandwidth period (\*\*\*\* –\*\*\*\* hours) is not normally permitted for qualifying employees, unless authorisation is given by a senior manager in special circumstances.

## **1.12 Medical/Special Appointments**

Employees are allowed time off to visit the doctor or dentist and certain other special appointments, at the discretion of the supervisor/line manager, during working hours. However, it is expected employees will make every effort to arrange such appointments outside of core-time.

## **1.13 Absence from Work for Annual Leave, Sickness, Training etc.**

If an employee is absent for a whole or half day, they will be credited with a standard working day (**7 hours 18 minutes**) or half day (**3 hours 39 minutes**) as appropriate.

## **1.14 Working from Home or on Official Business for a whole or part day**

The actual hours worked should be noted and recorded on the flexi- time sheet when next at the workplace.

### **1.15 Time Recording**

Employees are required to record the time they work on their flexi-time recording sheet, which should be available for inspection by their supervisor/line manager on request and produced when requesting permission to take credit absence. At the end of each calendar month settlement period staff are required to submit their Flexi-time sheets to their line manager for signature. Failure to submit completed records in a timely manner may lead to the staff member's exclusion from this Scheme.

- 1.16** It is the individual's responsibility to ensure the data entered on their flexi-time sheet is correct. Failure to accurately record data on the flexi-time sheet may lead to disciplinary action.

## 2. Compressed hours

A compressed hours working week, or 'long days', involves working fewer days each week, e.g. three or four, but for longer hours. This allows employees to work the same number of weekly (or fortnightly/monthly) hours compressed into a shorter period,

Most common examples are (excluding lunch breaks):

- Contracted hours over a four day week
- Contracted hours over a four and a half day week
- Contracted hours over a nine day fortnight.

### Where it can be applied

Any part of the business, dependent on the needs of the role. However some roles that provide a service may not be able to be extended outside of service opening hours to enable compressed hours to work.

### Issues and considerations

As with all working arrangements, the use of long days should meet the requirements of the *Working Time Regulations*. These state that there must be a minimum rest period of 11 hours between each working day (12 hours for employees under 18 years).

Long days that start or finish outside of normal business hours may have issues in relation to access to the workplace. The individual may also be working alone for significant parts of their day so the [lone working policy](#) should be consulted if such arrangements are being considered.

Be aware that compressed hours leads to longer working days, which can cause tiredness. This may impact on the individual's health, concentration and work output, but equally can be beneficial, for example by reducing the stress of a daily commute.

An individual may expect the same day off each week, but due to business and team requirements this may not always be possible. Consideration around this should be the same as for a member of staff requesting part-time working patterns

In discussion you may agree that it would be possible to use flexi-time to achieve some compressed hours patterns which may provide more flexibility to the individual and not require a formal change. This is also an option for trialling the approach to help staff and managers identify any issues before formalising a change.

Consider:

- What will be the effect on the rest of the team and on service delivery?
- Is any additional cover needed?
- How flexible is the arrangement?

### Additional information

Annual leave needs to be calculated in hours for employees working compressed hours. There is a [holiday calculator](#) on the HR Webpages for help with the calculation. The individual will be entitled to full public and privilege day entitlements. However, depending on the length and days worked, this may not be enough to cover all of the hours normally worked on these days. Arrangements will have to be agreed for any additional hours to be made up.

### **3. Reduced Hours**

The term reduced hours applies to any employee working fewer than the standard conditioned hours. This is where an individual works a number of hours which are less than the maximum contract hours for that particular post, it can range from working only a couple of hours a week to just less than full-time working and covers a variety of working patterns. It is often referred to as part-time working.

#### **Where it can be applied**

Any part of the business, dependent on the needs of the role.

#### **Issues and considerations**

Can the requested hours be accommodated? You may need to reallocate some duties or employ another person. The wishes of the individual need to be balanced with business requirements and the workload of the rest of the team. It is important that you discuss with the individual and the team options to address any issues on your capacity. There may be other staff within the team who are also interested in reducing or increasing their hours and the request may facilitate that change for them. You may be able to create two reduced hours roles. You may also wish to consider job sharing or job splitting to accommodate the change within the team.

Allowing individuals to work reduced hours may help to reduce costs since you will not need to pay for full time staff during quiet periods. However you should not use this as a reason to drive change or request staff to reduce their hours.

Individuals are accountable for calculating the impact of the reduction in hours on their pay and pension but can seek advice from payroll.

You will need to calculate pro rata entitlements to annual leave, and public and privilege days, in hours. There is a holiday calculator on the HR Webpages for help with the calculation.

There is no automatic right for employees to return to full time working at a later date after gaining agreement to reduce their contracted hours. Therefore it is worth discussing whether a staff member wishes to make a temporary arrangement to reduce their hours or trial the arrangement before formalising the change.

## **4. Part Year Working**

A working arrangement that allows employees to work only during set periods. Some examples are:

- Parents working term times only • Students working through vacations only
- Working alternate months.

### **Where it can be applied**

Any part of the business, as long as the needs of the business can be met.

### **Issues and considerations**

It may be difficult to cover key and specialist roles during non-working periods such as during the school summer holiday; other employees may not be able to provide sufficient cover.

Employees who are away from work for long periods will have to be fully updated on their return. This will need to include health and safety issues, department communications, introduction to new team members, etc.

In most cases, employees can opt to be paid throughout the year with their salary averaged over 12 months. If the employee leaves, any under or over payments in salary or leave entitlements will have to be rectified.

Employees are not entitled to sick pay during the non-working periods. Vacation working can give extra cover during peak holiday times.

### **Additional information**

Annual leave entitlements are calculated in hours on a pro rata basis. You must try to give a minimum of one week's notice before taking leave, but in exceptional circumstances only one day's notice may be given.

Care must be taken when agreeing an annualised hours contract to ensure that the employee is compliant with the [Working Time Regulations](#).

### **Additional information**

Public holidays and minimum service days are dependent on the number of hours worked per year and are calculated on a pro rata basis.

Pay and sick pay are dealt with in the same way as for part year working.