

## Flexible Working Frequently Asked Questions

### Is this a completely new flexible working procedure?

No. The Flexible Working Procedure is largely unchanged. The key difference is that all jobs will offer the option to have flexible working considered from the point of recruitment so there will no longer be a 26 week qualifying period to apply for a flexible working arrangement. This launch is to ensure that the current procedure is fully understood, that it is being used correctly and effectively, and to provide additional support and information on types of flexible working and how individuals, managers and teams can accommodate these requests.

### So if the policy hasn't changed what is the difference?

The key change is that the University will be more proactive in embracing flexible working for all current employees as well as during the recruitment process. The University will become 'flexible by default'. From 1 October 2018 all jobs will offer flexible working as an option except where it is not possible on business grounds to do so.

### Why is the University making these changes?

It is widely acknowledged that by offering flexible working, organisations will encourage a more diverse workforce, retain a high level of female employees, and also help women to progress. In addition, by making our commitment to flexible working clear at the recruitment stage, it will make Sussex accessible to a wider range of people at all levels. Flexible working is a key tool for reasonable adjustment for disabled members of staff. We also believe that increased access to flexible working will result in higher levels of staff engagement and motivation, reduced absenteeism, and increased performance levels.

Best practice guidance on reducing gender pay gaps recommends that organisations improve flexible working to ensure that women are not permanently or temporarily excluded from the workplace and that they have access to the same opportunities to progress as their male colleagues.

Feedback from [Athena SWAN](#) focus groups last year highlighted flexible working as a key issue for staff with caring responsibilities, and this came up again in relation to carers as part of our accessibility audit. The Changing University Culture (CHUCL) research identified the same issues.

### What should I do if I want to make a Flexible Working Application?

Understand your needs and those of the team. Think carefully about what type of flexible working arrangement you want. Our handbook on flexible working, *Flexible Sussex- Embracing the University's Flexible Working Procedure*, can help explain these to you.

You should start discussions informally as early as you can with your manager so that you can have a dialogue about what might be possible and to give your manager time to consider how they could support your request. Be prepared to be flexible if you can to help identify an effective solution that can be agreed. Sometimes managers can support part but not all of a request.

You should also consider a trial of the working arrangement to see if it works for you personally and professionally. A trial can also be used by a manager who is unsure of whether a particular flexible

working arrangement will be effective. Trial periods help you and your manager agree on the right solution before making formal changes to your terms and conditions of employment.

**I'm not a parent and I don't have other caring responsibilities. Will I be taken seriously if I request to work flexibly?**

Yes of course. Flexible working isn't just about being a parent or carer anymore - it is something the University is embracing and seeking to embed wherever possible to enable staff to lead fulfilled lives.

**I'm happy with my working pattern, do I have to work flexibly?**

Absolutely not. Flexible working opens up greater opportunity for more people and our new approach has been designed to respond to this. We are offering flexibility as an easier to use option not enforcing it. No changes will be made to individual's working arrangements without their agreement.