

# Flexible working guidance

School of Media, Arts and Humanities

Approved at SMT, 26 April 2022

## Overview

These guidelines are intended to clarify how the school will implement the “Flexible Sussex” policy, a core component of the university’s EDI strategy. They should be read in conjunction with the university’s policy guidelines, particularly:

- The Flexible Sussex Handbook  
[\[https://www.sussex.ac.uk/humanresources/documents/flexible-sussex---embracing-the-universitys-flexible-working-procedure.pdf\]](https://www.sussex.ac.uk/humanresources/documents/flexible-sussex---embracing-the-universitys-flexible-working-procedure.pdf)
- Flexible Sussex – Flexible Working a Guide for Managers  
[\[https://www.sussex.ac.uk/humanresources/documents/flexible-sussex---an-overview-for-managers.pdf\]](https://www.sussex.ac.uk/humanresources/documents/flexible-sussex---an-overview-for-managers.pdf)

None of the procedures adopted by the School are intended to replace or override those outlined in these documents – the School policy is only intended to clarify how we will implement the university policy.

All decisions made either at School or Departmental/Subject Group level should conform to the key principles laid out in the *Flexible Sussex Handbook*, in particular the goal of being flexible by default. The policy also clearly states that flexible working is available to all staff (regardless of contract type, protected characteristics, or other factors) and that no staff member will in any way be disadvantaged (in pay, promotion, career opportunities, pension, etc.) as a result of requesting flexible working.

## Types of flexible working

There are three main options:

- **reduced hours** (working fewer than the standard contracted hours for a role at that grade), which may be worked over the standard number of days, or as a reduced number of days;
- **working pattern** (standard hours but over fewer days, or a mixture of short/long days). The *Handbook* notes that as part of this employees may choose to “only work during specific times of the year reflecting business need” (p.3); and,
- **location** (e.g. a mix of on campus and remote working).

*Note:* these three options may be combined to create a work pattern that suits the needs of both the staff member and the university. They may not require a formal flexible working agreement if they do not entail a change to the staff member’s terms and conditions of employment (further details are in the *Handbook*, pp.3—4).

## Making decisions

The Flexible working *Guide for Managers* clearly states that “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” (p.3). Unless such objective reasons can be offered, requests for flexibility will be met. Staff members have a right to appeal if their request is turned down.

## School guidelines

### Length of arrangement

All flexible working arrangements will normally apply for a 12-month period, which will usually be the academic year (September to September).<sup>1</sup> Specific combinations of reduced hours, working patterns and location may vary at different times within that 12-month period (e.g. a different pattern for semester one and semester two), but such arrangements should be negotiated and agreed for the whole 12 month period, to allow for workload planning.

Requests to change a flexible working arrangement part way through the academic year will not normally be considered. When short-term, unexpected issues arise, the university has various other forms of leave in place (e.g. compassionate or sick leave), which are intended to address such issues, and they should be used instead of flexible working agreements.

Nevertheless, line managers have the freedom to negotiate alternative patterns with staff members (including mid-year changes), as long as these meet the needs of both the staff member and the university.

### Pattern of working hours and contract types

Where flexible working involves reduced hours, these will be reduced proportionally for all contractual duties. For example, if a staff member’s normal contracted work is specified as being divided 50:50 between one type of task and another, the same ratio will apply to their reduced hours. If a staff member wishes to vary the ratio between the different tasks, they need to negotiate a change to the terms and conditions of employment (e.g. being moved to a different type of contract); that process is not covered by the flexible working framework.

### EDI considerations

When requests are being considered, the line manager *must* consider their overall impact of the workloads of other members of the department/subject area. A key goal of flexible working is to make working conditions more equitable for all staff. As a result, individual requests might have to be refused if they would impose an unreasonable burden on other members of staff. In reaching these decisions, particular attention must be paid to protected characteristics (as defined under [the Equality Act 2010](#)). However, the goal will always be to offer flexibility wherever it is possible.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Handbook* (p.2) extends the right to make one flexible working request per 12 month period to all employees. There is no other university guidance on the timeframe for flexible working requirements, other than decisions be made within 3 months.