Flexible Working

FLEXIBLE WORKING

Introduction/Commitment

Leeds Beckett is a campus-based university with a vibrant campus community of both students and colleagues.   Working arrangements must ensure the best experience and education for our students, and provide good opportunities for meeting up with colleagues, collaboration, innovation and networking.

We recognise the importance of helping colleagues to balance their work and home lives by offering flexible working arrangements. This includes colleagues who are fully campus based and colleagues who work in a hybrid way. We actively promote flexible working opportunities and aim to advertise roles as open on a part-time, full-time or flexible basis unless there is a specific reason why this is not possible. The Working Families' 'Happy to talk flexible working' strapline/logo is part of our recruitment adverts.

To maximise the benefits of flexible approaches to how we work, we have developed the following Flexible Working Principles. Colleagues also have a statutory (legal) right to make a flexible working request (see our Formal Flexible Working Request Policy).

HR will support managers with advice, training and development.

Flexible Working Principles:

Informally agreed flexible working should be the first option. Colleagues and managers are encouraged to informally discuss and agree flexible working requests. We might need to use trial periods to test whether new arrangements will work for colleagues, their team and the wider University. Although these requests are discussed informally, it is recommended good practice that managers record agreed arrangements in writing (e.g. via email). Contractual changes should be notified to HR Services (see below) – for example, a reduction in working hours will be a change to contract (and reduction in pay).

Conversations will focus on fairness, transparency and open mindedness. Managers, teams and colleagues are encouraged to work together to agree working patterns through open dialogue in an informal setting with a view to coming to agreement. We will always treat requests fairly and encourage managers to do their best to say yes, whilst ensuring that service deliverables can be achieved and considering team arrangements so that all colleagues can work more flexibly if possible.

We need to maintain effective services, meet School/Service objectives and priorities and support our students. For a flexible working arrangement to work and be agreed it must suit both our University and the colleague and clearly different jobs lend themselves to different flexible working arrangements.

Arrangements agreed either informally or formally can be temporary, infrequent or regular, for a short period of time, or long term/permanent.

Flexible working conversations can be instigated by either colleagues or managers. Informally agreeing small changes to work patterns on an ongoing basis can benefit both colleagues and the University. Where a manager instigates the discussion, no contractual changes will be made without the colleague's agreement.

It is important to have clear boundaries between work and home. Expanding the days/times of day when employees can work and increased working in a hybrid way should not mean an increase in time worked, inability to switch off from work or an expectation that colleagues will work on weekends (further information is available in the Working in a Hybrid Way Policy).

Colleagues are trusted to give their best, taking personal accountability for their work. We want to create an environment that allows the kind of flexibility that supports a healthy work-life balance, and where the focus is on outcomes rather than the hours worked.

It is expected that all roles will require some attendance on campus. This is subject to arrangements that need to be in place from time to time from a health and safety perspective.

Informal flexible working arrangements should be regularly reviewed (at least every 6 months) to ensure that they are working well. It is recommended good practice that managers record agreed changes in writing (e.g. via email).

A formal flexible working application route will be maintained. Where agreement can't be reached informally, colleagues may submit a formal application for flexible working via the University's Formal Flexible Working Request Policy.

Types of flexible working arrangements and associated reasons

There doesn't have to be a specific reason for a colleague to discuss flexible working, but it could be linked to

- caring responsibilities including childcare and eldercare
- avoidance of congestion on public transport/around University buildings
- voluntary activities
- religious reasons and festivals.
- whilst undergoing medical treatment
- during pregnancy or following pregnancy loss
- menopause symptoms which are negatively impacting the colleague at work
- following a period of sickness absence or special leave.

Below are some examples of flexible working arrangements, but they are not exclusive.

- Changes to start/finish times (whilst either working at home or on campus) or longer breaks during the day accompanied by evening/weekend working when working from home.

- Working from home, either on an ad hoc basis or for part of the working week (see Working in a Hybrid Way Policy)

- Short term flexibility of working hours at certain times of year. For example, reduction in working time during August (or in times of increased caring responsibilities), with increased hours at another time of year to suit School/Service priorities.

Flexible working arrangements which are likely to require a contractual change (see section below about informing HR Services)

- **Annualised hours**: describes working time based on total hours to be worked over a year, rather than per week, month or term.
- **Job-sharing:** typically involves two people employed on a part time basis but working together to cover one full time post.
- **Term-time working**: allows an employee to work around the University academic year.
- **Part-time working** (sometimes referred to as **fractional** working): where a colleague is contracted to work for less time per week, month or year than standard full-time hours. For example, colleagues may wish to work a 9 day fortnight (0.9FTE), 0.5FTE could either be worked through 18 ½ hours each week or by working 2 days one week and 3 days the next, 0.6FTE could

be worked over 5 short days or 3 full days.

- **Unpaid career break/unpaid extended leave/unpaid sabbaticals** where a colleague has an extended period of time off work that is unpaid

When should managers inform HR Services of agreed flexible working patterns?

Some changes to working patterns which have been informally agreed within teams do not need to be notified to HR Services, such as changes to start/finish times. Instead managers should keep a note of the agreed working pattern.

Managers should inform HR Services when the new working pattern:

- Has an impact on pay, such as
  - a change in the number of hours worked each week (refer to VRP form and associated process)
  - periods of unpaid leave, including a career break or unpaid parental leave
- Has a contractual impact, such as:
  - a change to the times of year worked, including term time working or annualised hours (refer to VRP form and associated process)
  - a permanent or long-term change to include or exclude weekend days as part of the working week
- Is linked to a phased return to work following a period of sickness absence or special leave.

The nature of academic work means that academic colleagues already work flexibly and these principles do not change those arrangements. The principles above also do not amend or vary national and locally agreed safeguards relating to deployment, and workload allocation for academic staff will still be applied.

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