

Working Flexibly @ ACU



A GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS and MANAGERS

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Introduction

ACU is committed to providing a flexible, supportive and diverse working environment and encourages employees to live a balanced lifestyle, combining work, family and community responsibilities. The University's 'Statement on Work and Life Balance' recognises that although work is an important means by which a person contributes to society, people also need to share time with their family, attend to their personal spiritual development, rest and pursue broader cultural, educational and recreational interests.

The University also recognises that Work-Life Balance is a personal choice that will change over time as individuals move through transitions in their lives. A focus on achieving Work-Life Balance will support staff by providing a level of autonomy and flexibility within their work role to accommodate various priorities at work, home and in their community. Such changes may include

- Family responsibilities, such as parenting and elder care;
- Vocational education for personal and professional development;
- Cultural responsibilities or commitments;
- Volunteering or community engagement activities outside work;
- Managing health/medical issues while in paid work for self or a partner; and
- Reduced working hours whilst transitioning to retirement.

Consistent with its Mission, the University has developed policies and practices, which encourage a working environment that promotes equity and fairness and which provide a range of options for staff. Where required, these policies also comply with State and Federal Anti-Discrimination legislation. The process for managing requests for flexible working arrangements is set out in these guidelines.

Benefits of Balancing Work, Life, Family and Community Commitments

Assisting staff to manage their work-life balance more effectively is beneficial to both ACU and its people through:

- Increased motivation, loyalty, commitment and productivity;
- Development of an organisational culture which adaptable to change and enhancing organisational excellence;
- Enhanced health and well-being of staff members;
- Increased ability to attract and retain staff;
- Reduction in employment costs associated with recruitment and absenteeism, and
- Staff identifying ACU as an employer of choice.



What Are Flexible Working Arrangements?

Flexible working arrangements assist staff members to balance their personal and professional responsibilities through the development of mutually beneficial working arrangements with their supervisor or manager. Flexibility can take a number of different forms and can be temporary or permanent, depending on the nature of the staff member's responsibilities and what can be reasonably accommodated by the University. Changes may include:

- The hours worked;
- The number of days worked each week (job share or part-time);
- Using paid or unpaid leave entitlement for extended breaks from fulltime work or career break; and
- Work location or working from home on an ad-hoc or regular basis.

Who Can Apply For Flexible Working Arrangements?

The University will consider all requests for flexible working arrangements from continuing and fixed term staff members on a case by case basis.

Understanding Your Responsibilities

As a supervisor or manager you are responsible for considering and, where possible, facilitating flexible working arrangements in your area, taking into account the following:

- The requirements of the Fair Work Act, the ACU Staff Enterprise Agreement clauses relating to flexible work and University's flexible working policy;
- Full consideration of the viability of each request and the reason/s behind the request;
- Approach the discussion/s with openness and sensitivity;
- Ensure that you have an understanding of the relevant policies, procedures and legal requirements;
- Endeavour to accommodate the request where reasonably possible, taking into account the needs of the individual, the work unit and the University;
- If you are unsure about the request, consider whether to authorise the arrangement for a trial period to see if it works (this would not work for job share requests);
- Contact Human Resources for advice, support and information regarding managing work-life balance;
- Informing the staff member of the decision regarding their request in a timely manner; and
- If you decline a request, provide the reasons for the refusal in writing

Managing a Request for Flexible Working Arrangements

The most effective approach for a supervisor or manager is to think about how the request not only meets the staff members need for flexibility but also how it might fit with the work area and needs of your team. You need to consider all of the issues and implications of the arrangement and discuss them with the staff member.

Step 1 – Proposal for a Flexible Working Arrangement

Prior to meeting face to face with the staff member, it is a good idea to ask them to provide you with a copy of their proposed flexible working arrangement (refer to the template in the Working Flexibly@ACU Guide for staff members). The proposal should include:

- Current work arrangement;
- Proposed work arrangement;
- Reason for requesting a flexible working arrangement;
- Benefits to the staff member of the proposed arrangement;
- Additional equipment required to implement the proposed arrangement;
- A completed 'Working From Home Agreement' (which includes a WHS Inspection Checklist for Home Workstations) if requesting a work from home arrangement; and
- Proposed starting date and length of arrangement.

Step 2 – Exploring Options and Possible Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements can result in a “win-win” situation. That is, the arrangement should benefit the individual staff member and the work unit. Consider what would be the most appropriate flexible work options for your work area. Options may include:

- Part-time work;
- Job sharing;
- Staggered starting and finishing times; and
- Working from home.

If the changes requested by the staff member cannot be reasonably accommodated, consider alternative flexible work options or leave entitlements that may meet the needs of the staff member.

Step 3 – Meeting with the Staff Member

It is important to request a specific meeting to discuss this face to face. Choose a time that is best for both of you, and not a time when either of you are pushed for time. During the meeting you need to:

- Be open to considering options;
- Appreciate that such a request can be very stressful for the staff member;
- Be understanding and make sure you have an awareness of all the issues at hand;
- Recognise that the request being made may be a challenge for you to accept;
- Be objective, test your assumptions and talk openly and honestly to the staff member;
- It's okay to say that you will need time to further consider options, and provide a date at which you will get back to the staff member

Step 4 – Considering a Flexible Working Arrangement

Flexible working arrangements need to be discussed between the staff member and their supervisor or manager. It is important to make the discussion as detailed and transparent as possible, having regard to the following:

- Agreement on a time period for the arrangement, including a review date;
- What will be the impact of the proposed change on your team's productivity and workloads?

- Whether the full range of tasks and responsibilities of the staff members role will still be met under the new arrangement, or do parts of the role need to be delegated or re-assigned to other staff members;
- How will the flexible work arrangement be managed to achieve continuity of work and responsibilities?
- The cost to the university of accommodating the arrangement, including its impact on service delivery and quality, productivity, and cost of additional equipment; and
- Compliance with work health and safety and other legal requirements in accommodating the request.

Responding to a Request for a Flexible Working Arrangement

As a supervisor or manager, you are required provide a written response to a request for a flexible work arrangement within 21 days, stating whether the request has been granted or denied.

Approving a Flexible Working Arrangement

After a flexible work arrangement has been agreed upon, it needs to be documented in the form of an agreement between the supervisor or manager and the staff member. The agreement should include that the changes:

- The agreed changes to the staff members work arrangements;
- The commencement date and duration of the arrangement;
- The process for review of the arrangement including regular meetings to discuss how the arrangement is working for the staff member and the University;
- Arrangements made to include the staff member in workplace communications, consultation processes, social activities and attendance at relevant training or staff meetings; and
- Agreed hours and an outline of the role and responsibilities of the staff member under the flexible work arrangement;
- A trial period, for instance between 3 to 6 months, to decide whether the flexible work arrangements is suitable for both the staff member and the work unit.

The agreement needs to be signed and dated by both the staff member and supervisor or manager and a copy retained by each party. As the supervisor or manager you should also inform the staff member's colleagues of any changes to work arrangements and develop strategies to integrate any changes in workflow.

It is important to refer to 'Policies and Information Relevant to Work-Life Balance' of this guide (Pg. 7) for any relevant policies and/or documentation that apply to the new flexible work arrangement. For example, if a staff member is varying their fraction of work hours, they will need to fill out the 'Request to Vary' form that is then signed by their supervisor or manager and submitted to HR. However some flexible work arrangements need only be documented at a local level between the staff member and their supervisor or manager, for example varying start and finish times from '9am to 5pm' to '7am to 3pm'.

Declining a Flexible Working Arrangement

As a supervisor or manager you can refuse a request for flexible working arrangements, however this can only be for genuine 'reasonable business grounds' that include:

- the changes in work arrangements would be too expensive for ACU to implement;
- would result in a significant loss in efficiency or productivity;
- would be likely to have a significant negative impact on customer service;
- there isn't any capacity to change the work arrangements of other employees affected; and
- that it would be impractical to change the working arrangements of other employees, or recruit new employees.

All refusal of the staff members request will require you to provide to the staff member a written response, including details of the reasons for the refusal.

Monitoring and Review of Flexible Working Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements should be reviewed every three to six months or earlier if the circumstances for one or both parties changes. Typical items for review may include:

- Is the arrangement providing benefit and flexibility to the University and the staff member?
- Is the work being performed satisfactorily, and are targets being met?
- What changes have been made or still need to be made? and
- Any other relevant factors identified.

Policies and Information Relevant to Work-Life Balance

<p>Work Arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part-time work • Job Sharing • Flexitime • Flexible working hours • Work from Home • Change of work location <p>Family/Carer Responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding • Childcare support for women academic staff • Parental Leave • Personal Leave – carer's leave • Compassionate Leave • Supporting Parents at ACU Information Kit <p>Phased Retirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Retirement Contract Agreement • Transition to Retirement <p>Community Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid outside work and community service voluntary outside work policy • Civic/Community Service Leave 	<p>Study and Personal/Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Support for General Staff • Academic Staff Study Support • Professional Learning for Academic Staff • Professional Development for Professional Staff • Research Awards for Female Academic Staff • Job Rotation for general staff • External Secondment • Internal Secondment <p>Other Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realtime Health • ACU Enterprise Agreement • You can contact the EAP directly on 1800 81 87 28 (24 hour service) or go to their website www.AccessEAP.com.au
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Flowchart for Requesting a Flexible Working Arrangement

