

Working Flexibly at ACU - A Guide for Nominated Supervisors and Managers

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) ACU is committed through its Mission Statement “to the dignity of all human beings” and endeavours to provide a flexible, supportive and diverse working environment which encourages employees to live a balanced lifestyle combining work, family and community responsibilities.

(2) As an employer ACU strives to balance the needs of the individual employee and the University to enable work-and-life needs to be addressed appropriately. The overall aim is to optimise the contribution of employees in the achievement of both personal and professional outcomes in an environment that is co-operative, supportive and efficient.

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

- a. Family responsibilities, such as parenting and elder care;
- b. Vocational education for personal and professional development;
- c. Cultural responsibilities or commitments;
- d. Volunteering or community engagement activities outside work;
- e. Managing health / medical issues while in paid work for self or a family member; and
- f. Reducing working hours whilst phasing in or out of paid work.

(4) Consistent with the ACU Mission, the University has developed policies and practices, which encourage a working environment that promotes equity and fairness and provides a range of options for staff. This Guide has been developed to support the process for requesting and managing requests for flexible working arrangements. This Guide is for nominated supervisors and managers and there is a separate guide for staff.

Section 2 - Benefits of balancing work, life, family and community commitments

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

- a. Alignment with ACU Mission, ACU Values and Principles;
- b. Increased satisfaction, motivation, loyalty, commitment and productivity;
- c. Support the workforce participation of individuals with caring responsibilities and those from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Section 3 - Understanding the nominated supervisor's role

(6) Nominated supervisors and managers have the responsibilities set out below in relation to flexible work arrangements. Nominated supervisors will:

Understand and fulfil their responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the requirements of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ACU Staff Enterprise Agreement clauses relating to flexible work and the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy, and other policies and procedures relevant to the flexible work arrangements being requested or in place. Ensure that a staff member's request for a flexible work arrangement is responded to in writing within 21 days of a formal request (in Staff Connect). If a request for flexible working arrangements is declined, provide the reasons, based on reasonable business grounds, for the refusal in writing. Consider approving a flexible working arrangement initially on a trial basis in order to test whether it meets the needs of the individual, team and University. A flexible working arrangement can be approved for a period of up to 12 months (renewable) by the relevant Member of the Executive. Ensure the flexible work arrangement is discussed and reviewed (including formally reviewed) between the staff member and nominated supervisor to ensure that individual, team and University needs are being met.
Be sensitive and engage in clear and open communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominated supervisors will handle conversations with staff about their personal needs in relation to flexible work with sensitivity. Discuss staff requests with an open mind to consider flexible working options that meet the needs of the individual, the team and the University. Examples of flexible working arrangements are set out in section 4 of this guide. The first solution that comes to mind may not be the best one. There may need to be some negotiation and compromise to make the arrangement work for the individual, team and University. Once a flexible work arrangement is in place, nominated supervisors will engage in regular open conversations with the staff member, team members and stakeholders. The nominated supervisor will also ensure the arrangement is reviewed with the staff member, including formally prior to the end of the arrangement.
Be reasonable and flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endeavour to accommodate a staff member's request for flexible work arrangements where reasonably possible, taking into account the needs of the individual, the work unit and the University. Engage with the staff member to identify solutions to possible challenges that might arise from the flexible work arrangement and consider adjustments to the flexible arrangement to endeavour to meet the needs of the University and staff member. Provide the staff member with the opportunity to participate fully and constructively in any trial and/or review of their flexible working arrangement. Whilst flexible working arrangements are intended to accommodate staff members' needs, staff members are also expected to organise their time on a 'give and take' basis as the success of flexible work requires a shared responsibility between staff members and their nominated supervisor.
Be accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the staff member is aware they should be available for all scheduled meetings when working from home or other location. Ensure that the staff member's flexible work arrangement does not restrict the normal provisions of services as relevant to their position. Focus on the staff member's objectives and support them to prioritise, problem solve and plan their work to ensure their workload is appropriate.
Seek assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before declining an application for flexible work arrangement and for advice, support and information, contact People and Capability using the general enquiry form in Service Central. If at any time you need advice or support, contact People and Capability using the general enquiry form in Service Central.

Section 4 - What Are Flexible Working Arrangements?

(7) Flexible working arrangements assist staff to balance their personal and professional responsibilities through the development of mutually agreed working arrangements with their nominated supervisor. There are many examples of flexible working arrangements, some of which are set out below. A staff member and their nominated supervisor will consider whether they are appropriate in all circumstances before the nominated supervisor makes a recommendation to the Member of the Executive to approve.

Flexible Working Arrangement	Description	Conditions
Changing hours of work	Where a staff member requests to decrease their working hours, or increase working hours without exceeding their employment fraction as listed in their contract.	The Enterprise Agreement sets out the working arrangements that apply to academic (refer to clause 5.2) and professional staff (refer to clause 5.3). The work pattern for the flexible work arrangements will be within these parameters. For example, the maximum ordinary hours a professional staff member is permitted to work is 9 hours in any one day or 45 hours in any week; therefore, overtime will apply if the staff member is granted approval to work outside these parameters. Refer to Section 6 of the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy for further information about the arrangements applicable to flexible time working arrangements.
Changing patterns of work	Where a staff member requests to change the way their normal working hours are completed with no change to the weekly working hours i.e. changing the days you work/don't work.	A staff member may apply to work part-time or further reduce their part-time hours on a temporary or ongoing basis according to the staff member's contract of employment and the needs of the University. There is no limit to the fraction of full-time workload that a part-time staff member may work, although this is at the discretion of the University. A staff member who is granted approval to change their employment fraction on a temporary basis will return to their substantive employment fraction (e.g. full-time work) at the end of the approved period. The staff member may request to return to their substantive employment fraction at any time, but this will be subject to approval by the relevant delegate.

Flexible Working Arrangement	Description	Conditions
Changing the location of work	An arrangement where a staff member performs some of their duties from home or another location off campus.	<p>If working from home, staff members will ensure they have an approved Working from Home Agreement for ACU insurance coverage, which includes a WHS Inspection Checklist for Home Workstations. The University provides equipment to perform work duties on campus. If working from home or another location off campus, the staff member must have access to equipment to perform their duties effectively. All Work Health Safety, and Wellbeing policies and procedures that apply to staff members of the University will, as far as practicable, apply in carrying out work at their home or other location. The Injury Management and Rehabilitation Policy applies to staff undertaking approved home-based work in the same way as to staff working on campus or undertaking ACU work at other locations.</p> <p>Staff members are solely responsible for checking whether home-based work has any impact on any existing home insurance arrangements they may have, including public liability or equipment covered by their own home contents insurance, and any obligations they may have to notify their insurer their home is to be used for work purposes.</p> <p>If changing the location of work, including working from home, involves access to University resources and computer networks, staff members must comply with the Computer and Internet Acceptable Use Policy.</p> <p>Working from home or other location must not be used as a substitute for childcare and / or other carer responsibilities. Staff must make appropriate childcare and / or carer arrangements for working from home days.</p> <p>Staff who work from home or another location are required to follow the same procedures for notifying of absences (eg personal leave) and notification of incidents / hazards on Riskware, that apply to all staff.</p>
Changing work arrangements, including job share	An employment arrangement where two (or more) staff members, each working part-time, share all the duties and responsibilities of a full-time position.	<p>Staff working in a job-share arrangement will normally share one full-time position at the same classification level, with each person working part-time on a regular basis and in accordance with the conditions for part-time staff.</p> <p>A position can be designated for job sharing during recruitment or when a staff member requests to work part time.</p>

Flexible Working Arrangement	Description	Conditions
Compressed working weeks or averaging hours of work	<p>Professional staff: Requesting to work the same number of hours, compressed into a shorter period e.g. a standard 35-hour week may be worked over 4 not 5 days (i.e. 8 hours 45 mins not 7 hours per day).</p> <p>Academic staff: Where your academic workload allocation, for teaching related duties, may be greater in one teaching period to accommodate a need for part of the year. To compensate for this, adjustments would occur at other times of the year to ensure your annual workload allocation falls within the ranges and tolerances in accordance with the Academic Workload Policy.</p>	<p>Changes to salary are not required, subject to organisational requirements, which may include consideration of how the work activity or service is delivered.</p> <p>Professional staff whose day to day hours are irregular or do not follow a standard pattern will record their hours via a Time Record in accordance with the Recording of Hours Worked Policy and submit to their nominated supervisor. The recorded hours will be reconciled at least twice per year to ensure any over or under amount of hours are paid or deducted. The reconciliation of hours will also occur as part of any exit process.</p> <p>The Enterprise Agreement states that any risk to employee health and safety from working additional hours must be taken into consideration.</p> <p>The following arrangements apply to a compressed hours arrangement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The maximum number of agreed hours must not exceed 9 hours per day or 45 hours in any week. • Overtime will apply if the staff member is granted approval to work outside ordinary hours. • Where a scheduled work day falls on a public holiday or a University concessional day, a staff member will record or be paid the number of hours scheduled for that day. • Where a scheduled day off falls on a public holiday or University concessional day, a staff member will not be entitled to additional payment or additional time off. • Personal leave is not available on a scheduled non-work day.

(8) Professional staff may also be able to request a flexi time arrangement. See clauses (31) to (35) of the [Flexible Working Arrangements Policy](#) for further information relating to this.

(9) A staff member seeking greater work flexibility may consider the following as alternatives to or in conjunction with the above flexible work arrangement options:

- Purchase of additional leave: Staff can apply to purchase an additional four (4) weeks annual leave by a commensurate reduction in salary. This option is available on an annual basis and the implications for superannuation must also be considered. Further information is available in the [Recreation Leave \(including Annual Leave\) Policy](#).
- Transition to retirement: There are a range of options available to assist the staff member in their journey to retirement that can be tailored to best meet their needs. Refer to the [Transition to Retirement](#) webpage for further information.
- Annualised Hours: A continuing fractional staff member may apply to receive an annualised salary payment over a twelve (12) month calendar year period by submitting a request before 1 December in any year to be paid the following year for the period 1 January to 31 December of that year based on the staff member's annualised fraction of employment. Further information is available within the [Employment of Fractional Staff Policy](#).

Section 5 - Who can Request a Flexible Working Arrangement?

(10) All staff members can request a flexible working arrangement. However, certain staff members have a right under the Enterprise Agreement to request a flexible working arrangement. A staff member who:

- a. has responsibility for the care of a child who is school age or younger;
- b. has a child who is under eighteen (18) years of age and who has a disability;
- c. is a Carer (as defined);
- d. is fifty-five (55) years or older;
- e. has a disability;
- f. is experiencing family violence or who is providing care or support to a member of the staff member's immediately family or household who requires care or support because the member is experience violence from the member's family;
- g. is a parent, or has responsibility for the care of the child, and is returning to work after taking leave in relation to the birth or adoption of the child;

(11) has the right to submit a request for a change to their working arrangements and have that request considered and formally responded to by the University.

(12) This right is available to:

- a. a fixed term or continuing staff member; or
- b. a long term casual staff member who has a reasonable expectation of continuing employment on a regular and systematic basis.

Section 6 - Managing a request for a Flexible Working Arrangement

(13) Prior to a staff member lodging the request for flexible working arrangements, the staff member should have already met with you on one or more occasions and discussed viable options for flexible working arrangements. During these discussions, you may have already considered all issues and implications of the arrangement and discussed them with the staff member.

(14) The staff member will then lodge a request for flexible work arrangements via Staff Connect.

(15) After receiving a request for flexible working arrangements, you will discuss the request with the staff member in a timely way and attempt to negotiate an agreement, taking into consideration:

- a. the needs of the staff member;
- b. consequences for the staff member if changes in working arrangements cannot be made; and
- c. University needs.

(16) If the flexible work arrangement proposed includes working from home or other location, the staff member will be prompted to complete the WHS Inspection Checklist for Home Workstations within their Staff Connect FWA request.

(17) If you require support or assistance with your discussions with the staff member and/or if you are considering declining the request on reasonable business grounds, consult with People and Capability.

(18) Normally the approval of flexible work arrangements will be for a period of up to 12 months.

(19) Refer to Section 7 of this Guide for requirements in relation to responding to a request for a flexible working arrangement.

Section 7 - Responding to a request for a Flexible Working Arrangement

(20) As a nominated supervisor, you are required to 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

(21) Once a flexible work arrangement has been approved by the Supervisor or Member of the Executive (where the request is pay impacting) via Staff Connect, a notification will be sent to you and the staff member confirming the request is approved, including the original details. The flexible work arrangement will continue for up to a 12-month period.

Declining a Flexible Working Arrangement

(22) If you are considering declining a request, you are encouraged to consult People and Capability.

(23) A flexible working request can be refused for genuine “reasonable business grounds” that could include:

1	The new working arrangements requested by the staff member would be too costly for the University.
2	There is no capacity to change the working arrangements of other staff members to accommodate the new working arrangements requested by the staff member.
3	It would be impractical to change the working arrangements of other staff members, or recruit new staff members, to accommodate the new working arrangements requested by the staff member.
4	The new working arrangements requested by the staff member would be likely to result in significant loss of efficiency or productivity.
5	The new working arrangements requested by the staff member would be likely to have a significant negative impact on service.

(24) If you refuse the staff member’s request you must provide the staff member with a written response, including details of the reasons for the refusal and whether there are any changes in working arrangements that can be offered to the staff member as an alternative. All documentation relating to making that decision should be retained and may inform the review of arrangements.

Section 8 - Monitoring and reviewing a Flexible Working Arrangement

(25) Once the flexible work arrangement is in place it is up to the staff member and nominated supervisor to:

- regularly discuss and review the arrangement and how it is working for the staff member and the University.
- formally review the arrangement prior to continuing the arrangement. A flexible work arrangement will normally be for a period of up to 12 months and the formal review should occur prior to the end of the period. If the staff member seeks to continue working on flexible work arrangement then a new request for flexible working arrangements should be lodged. If the staff member plans to revert back to their normal work arrangements then the formal review will not be required.

(26) Typical items for discussion and review, particularly during the formal review, may include:

- Is the arrangement providing benefit and flexibility to the University, team and the staff member?
- What problems or challenges have been encountered and / or are anticipated, and how have they been and / or will be addressed in the future?
- Is the work being performed satisfactorily, and are targets being met?
- What changes have been made or need to be made?
- Any other relevant factors identified?

(27) A good way to remind yourself to have regular discussions about the flexible work arrangement is to add it as a standing agenda item for your regular meetings with the staff member. It is recommended that you or your staff member add a calendar note regarding the end date of the flexible work arrangement into your respective calendars and schedule a meeting time for the formal review.

(28) Prior to the end of the flexible work arrangement period (up to 12 months) you will receive a notification from People and Capability advising this arrangement is coming to an end and you will need to discuss this with your staff member.

Section 9 - Policies and information relevant to work-life balance

Other Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realtime Health ACU Staff Enterprise Agreement You can contact the EAP directly on 1800 81 87 28 (24 hour service) or go to their website AccessEAP 	Family/Carer Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children of Staff and Students on University Premises Procedure Childcare Support for Academic Staff Policy Parental Leave Policy Personal Leave Policy Compassionate Leave Policy Supporting Parents at ACU Information Kit 	Study and Personal/Professional Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study Support for Staff Policy Professional Learning for Academic Staff Policy Professional Development for Professional Staff Policy Research Awards for Academic Staff following Parental Leave Policy External Secondment Policy Internal Secondment Policy
Phased Retirement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition to Retirement Pre-Retirement Agreement Policy 	Community Involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paid Outside Work Policy Community Service and Emergency Services Leave Policy Community Engagement Time Release Policy 	Work Arrangements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part-time Work Recording of Hours Worked Policy

Section 10 - Revisions made to these guidelines

(29) The revision table includes revisions up until this document was migrated into the current policy platform. Any later changes will show in the Status and Details tab.

Date	Major, Minor or Editorial	Description
20 Jan 2020	Major	Updated to incorporate the provisions of the ACU Staff Enterprise Agreement 2017-2021.
11 June 2020	Major	Alignment with changes to the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy, elaboration of the nominated supervisor's role and responsibilities in relation to flexible work arrangements, changes associated with the request for flexible work via Service Central and elaboration on the process for review of approved flexible work arrangements.

Date	Major, Minor or Editorial	Description
27 September 2022	Minor	Alignment with changes in the Application for Flexible Work from Service Central to Staff Connect.

(30) The University may make changes to this Guide from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation. In this regard, any staff member who wishes to make any comments about this Guide may forward their suggestions to People and Capability.

Section 11 - Further Assistance

(31) Any staff member who requires assistance in understanding this Guide should first consult their nominated supervisor or manager who is responsible for the implementation and operation of these arrangements in their work area. Should further information or advice be required staff should visit [Service Central](#).

Section 12 - Associated Information

(32) For related legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and any supporting resources please refer to the Associated Information tab.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	5th February 2024
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Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor and President
Approval Date	5th February 2024
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Angelle Laurence Chief People Officer
Responsible Manager	Angelle Laurence Chief People Officer
Enquiries Contact	Bernardine Lynch ER and Safety Committees and Policy Officer <hr/> People and Capability