Working Flexibly at ACU - A Guide for Staff

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 flexible working arrangements. This Guide is for staff and there is a separate Guide for nominated supervisors (see Working Flexibly at ACU - A Guide for Nominated Supervisors and Managers).

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 the ACU Mission, ACU Values and Principles;
b. Increased satisfaction, motivation, loyalty, commitment and productivity; Support the workforce participation of individuals with caring responsibilities and those from culturally diverse backgrounds;
c. Development of an organisational culture which is adaptable to change and enhances organisational excellence;

d. Enhanced health and well-being of staff members; Increased ability to attract and retain staff;
e. Reduction in employment costs associated with recruitment and absenteeism; and
f. Staff identifying ACU as an employer of choice.

Section 3 - Understanding the staff member's role

(6) Staff members have the responsibilities set out below when they make and/or are working under a flexible work arrangement. Staff will:

Be informed and prepared	• Consider and be clear about their needs. • Familiarise themselves with the policies and procedures relevant to the flexible work arrangements being requested or in place. • Understand that a flexible working arrangement may be available initially on a trial basis and will be time limited. • Understand that the flexible working arrangement will be reviewed regularly and discussed between the staff member and nominated supervisor to ensure that individual, team and University needs are being met. • Be aware that their request may be declined if there are reasonable business grounds for doing so.
Engage in clear and open communication	• Staff should discuss their request for flexible work arrangements with their nominated supervisor with an open mind to consider flexible working options that meet the needs of the individual, the team and the University. The first solution that comes to mind may not be the best one to meet individual, team and University needs. There may need to be some negotiation and compromise to make the arrangement work. • Once a flexible work arrangement is in place, staff should: ◦ have open and regular conversations with their nominated supervisor, team members and relevant stakeholders. ◦ collaborate to establish and maintain effective communication mechanisms and find solutions to any problems that might arise.
Be flexible and share responsibility	• When requesting a flexible work arrangement, the staff member will proactively identify and suggest solutions to any challenges that might arise from the arrangement. • Staff will participate fully and constructively in any trial and / or review of their flexible working arrangement. • A flexible work arrangement will be discussed and reviewed regularly by the staff member and supervisor. The staff member and nominated supervisor should be prepared to make adjustments to the arrangement and recognise that the flexible work arrangement may need to change over time to ensure that the individual, team and University needs are met. The staff member should contribute to these discussions and to finding solutions to challenges that arise. • 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 accessible and transparent about the flexible work arrangement	• Staff members whose flexible work arrangements involve working from home or other location will make themselves available for all scheduled meetings and will normally attend the workplace for a minimum optimum period which will be approved as part of the arrangement. • Staff members should ensure that their availability and how they can be contacted is communicated. For example: ◦ an email signature can include information about the days of the week worked, who to contact and how in relation to urgent matters during non-work times and days; ◦ show available work times and days within the staff member's Outlook calendar; ◦ forward the office telephone when working off-campus.
Plan work and self manage	• The staff member should prioritise and plan their work within the time available. They should proactively inform their nominated supervisor and team members of progress and any potential issues that might arise when they are not working or away from the office.

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 beneficial 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 applicable 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 (eg fulltime 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.	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 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. 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. If changing the location of work, including working from home, involves access to University resources and computer networks, staff members must comply with the ICT Acceptable Use Policy. 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. 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.
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. Job sharers may split days, weeks or alternate weeks.	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 A position can be designated for job sharing during recruitment or when a staff member requests to work part time.

Flexible Working Arrangement	Description	Conditions
Compressed working weeks or averaging hours of work	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). 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.	Changes to salary are not required, subject to organisational requirements, which may include consideration of how the work activity or service is delivered. 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. The Enterprise Agreement states that any risk to employee health and safety from working additional hours must be taken into consideration. The following arrangements apply to a compressed hours arrangement: • 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 you in your journey to retirement that can be tailored to best meet your 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;

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.

(11) 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 - Application Process

(12) Step 1: Refer to section 3 and 4 of this Guide to understand your responsibilities and the options for flexible work arrangements.

(13) Step 2: Develop a proposal for flexible work arrangements, including alternative options.

(14) Step 3: Discuss the proposal and options with your nominated supervisor and seek to develop a solution that considers your needs as well as those of your team and the University.

(15) Step 4: Submit a request for flexible work arrangements via Staff Connect.

(16) Step 5: Consistent with Section 7 of this Guide, your nominated supervisor will consider your request and make a recommendation to the relevant Member of the Executive, and then you will receive a response in writing advising whether the request has been approved.

Section 7 - What happens after my request for a flexible work arrangement is submitted?

(17) Your request will be reviewed by your nominated supervisor. The nominated supervisor will discuss the request with you in a timely way and attempt to negotiate an agreement, taking into consideration:

a. your needs;
b. consequences for you if changes in working arrangements cannot be made; and
c. University needs. It is expected that you will have held discussions with your nominated supervisor regarding your plans for a flexible working arrangement prior to lodging your request for a flexible working arrangement.

(18) It is expected that you will have held discussions with your nominated supervisor regarding your plans for a flexible working arrangement prior to lodging your request for a flexible working arrangement.

(19) If the request is endorsed by your nominated supervisor, it will then be referred to the relevant Member of the

Executive (where the request changes your employment fraction).

(20) Within 21 days of submitting the request you will receive a response in writing which will advise whether the request has been approved or declined.

(21) If the request is approved the arrangements will be in place for up to 12 months (under normal circumstances). You will be expected to fulfil the responsibilities that apply to staff members working under flexible work arrangements as outlined in section 5 of this Guide. In addition, Section 8 of this Guide provides further information in relation to monitoring and reviewing your flexible work arrangement.

(22) Prior to the end of the period of the arrangement, your nominated supervisor will discuss your work arrangement and personal circumstances with you to assess if the flexible work arrangement will cease, change or continue. If you wish the arrangement to continue after the end date, you must submit a new request to your nominated supervisor prior to the end of your current arrangement.

(23) Any requests impacting pay or location will be updated in Staff Connect once the Flexible Work Arrangement Request is approved. There is no need to submit a Request to Vary.

On what basis can my request be declined?

(24) Your nominated supervisor or Member of the Executive may decline your request if they consider there are reasonable business grounds to do so. These grounds could include, but are not limited to:

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.

Section 8 - Monitoring and reviewing a Flexible Work Arrangement

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

a. regularly discuss and review the arrangement and how it is working for the staff member and the University.
b. 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 you wish to continue working on flexible work arrangement then a new request for flexible working arrangements should be lodged. If you plan to revert back to your 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:

a. Is the arrangement providing benefit and flexibility to the University, team and the staff member?
b. What problems or challenges have been encountered and / or are anticipated, and how have they been and / or

will be addressed in the future?

c. Is the work being performed satisfactorily and are objectives being met?
d. What changes have been made or need to be made?
e. Any other relevant factors identified?

(27) A good way to remind yourself to have regular discussions about the flexible work arrangement is to include this as a standing agenda item for your regular meetings with your nominated supervisor. It is recommended that you add a calendar note regarding the end date of the flexible work arrangement into the calendars for you and your nominated supervisor 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 nominated supervisor.

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

Other Resources • 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** • 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** • 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 • Transition to Retirement • Pre-Retirement Agreement Policy	**Community Involvement** • Paid Outside Work Policy • Community Service and Emergency Services Leave Policy • Community Engagement Time Release Policy	**Work Arrangements** • Part-time Work • Recording of Hours Worked Policy

Section 10 - Revisions made to this Guide

(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.
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
Review Date	30th April 2024
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 People and Capability