

A Guide to Flexible Work Arrangements at OSU

OSU is committed to being a great place to work, learn and flourish; and to create and sustain healthy environments that enable community members to live productive, balanced and engaged lives. In an effort to confirm this commitment, OSU supports the use of flexible work arrangements (FWA) in situations where there is a mutual benefit to the employee and university. FWA can be beneficial to both employees and to the university by:

- Contributing to recruitment and retention efforts
- Reducing stress and increasing morale
- Improving employee attendance
- Assisting employees in work-life integration

Flexible Work Arrangements vs Accommodations

It is important to understand that flexible work arrangements are not meant to substitute for, or interfere in any way with, accommodations in the workplace in relation to a disability or medical necessity. Separate processes are in place for an employee with a disability who needs to request a workplace accommodation, which are coordinated through the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access. Additionally, when an employee needs to miss work due to a medical condition or military leave, FMLA, OFLA, or military leave may be appropriate.

Equal Opportunity and Access

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FMLA

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Eligibility

Flexible work arrangements can be a benefit in many situations, however, it does not mean they will be appropriate for every job type. Eligibility differs across employee types and may not be suitable for some positions.

- Jobs and office business needs, for example when employees are required to be available for customer service support during certain business hours.
- Employees: In general, employees will only be granted flexibility when their work is up to date, they have demonstrated the skills and qualities needed to succeed in the proposed FWA, and essential functions of the position can be met.



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These arrangements must be agreed upon by both the supervisor and the employee, but ultimately it will be up to the supervisor to determine feasibility. In order for a manager or supervisor to determine if a FWA is appropriate, their primary criteria in this decision-making process should be if the FWA will meet the business needs of the workplace.

Employment type also should be a consideration when looking at the feasibility of a flexible work arrangement as not every employee type has the same considerations in regards to overtime, etc.

Unclassified Employees are eligible based upon their manager/supervisor's discretion and the business needs.

- **Unclassified Exempt Employees:** Unclassified Employees that are FLSA Exempt (not eligible for overtime) are paid on a salary basis to perform a job on a professional workweek basis. In other words, there is no maximum, or set number of hours per week. At the same time, while these employees have more flexibility in their schedules, they may nevertheless be subject to structured work schedules as set by their supervisors and may be required to receive prior approval to be absent from or leave work during the normal workweek.
- **Unclassified Non-Exempt Employees:** are eligible for overtime and must be compensated either with cash or compensatory time at the rate of 1.5 times their regular rate of pay (the employee can decide). As this classification of employees must track and account for time spent in the workplace, supervisors may have greater influence over employees' work schedules. Nevertheless, flexible work arrangements are possible with supervisor approval.

Classified Employees are eligible based on their manager/supervisor's discretion, business needs, as well as the collective bargaining agreement. Classified Employees are contracted to work set hours per week, however, requests may be approved if a supervisor determines departmental workload and service requirements allow it. The Irregular Flexible Work Schedule form can be useful in arranging schedules that do not exceed contracted hours for work while ensuring that business and work-life needs are met.

Flexible Work Arrangement Options

Telecommuting

- Regular telecommuting
- Occasional telecommuting

Regular Telecommuting agreements are supported by a [telecommuting agreement form](#) that specifies the requirements and details of the arrangement. A telecommuting agreement can be for a defined period of time, or indefinitely, and can be terminated by the supervisor or employee at any time (generally with at least 3 working days advance notice). Please review the [agreement](#) and [policy](#) for more information.

Occasional Telecommuting for Unclassified Employees are arrangements approved on a case-by-case basis and are not regularly scheduled. Approval must be documented, which can be done via email. The purpose of occasional telecommuting is typically for situations such as:

- Personal needs at home, such as meeting a utility technician
- Temporary workplace disruptions such as office relocations

- Devoting concentrated efforts to a project

Irregular or Flexible Work Schedule Requests

- Compressed Workweek
- Flextime

Compressed Workweeks are schedules that allow a full workweek to be condensed into fewer days in the week. For example, an employee that usually works 5 days a week, 8 hours a day, to equal 40 hours in a week, may request to work 4 days a week, 10 hours a day to equal 40 hours in a week. Some variations to this schedule may occur during weeks that have a University Holiday. Unclassified employees should work with their supervisor and document the agreed upon schedule. Classified employees should complete the [Irregular or Flexible Work Schedule Request](#).

Flextime is a broad term for various work arrangements that mutually support workplace productivity as well as an individual having greater control over one's time. Examples may include varied beginning and ending times for specific days of the week while still working an individual's full FTE. This can be a formal agreement with your supervisor (should be documented) if there is a set schedule, or informal, based on an individual's need that day for circumstances such as a personal appointment.

Supervisor Training on Flexible Work Arrangements

OSU recognizes that there are benefits to FWA for both employees and the University, but also that supervisors may have questions or concerns regarding how to implement, respond to requests for, or manage a flexible work arrangement. To guide their decision-making process, supervisors may want to consider the following series of questions:

Step I: Workplace Considerations

What is the nature of your work?

- What does your unit produce or what service(s) does it provide?
- What are your unit's hours of operation?
- What is evidence of your unit's productivity?
- Is specialized equipment used?

How does the work get done?

- What are your employees' responsibilities? What are your employees' current work schedules?
- Are the positions solitary and independent or joint and require daily contributions and interactions?
- Who are your customers? What are the formal and informal expectations for service?
- How does your unit communicate to its customers? How does your unit communicate with its employees? How do your employees communicate to each other?

Where does the work get done?

- What is the location or place of work? Can you imagine aspects of the work being done in another location? Is distance a factor?
- Are there meetings or events that your employees must be present on campus for?

Step II: Identifying Appropriate Flexible Work Arrangements for Your Unit

- Now that you have outlined the nature of your work, how might current employee schedules be altered while maintaining productivity?

Types of Flexible Work Arrangements for your consideration:

- Flextime - altering the start and end time of the work day
- Compressed work week - compressing a five-day work week into four
- Telecommuting – working from another location, generally from home

- What types of flexible work arrangements would work best in your unit?

Examples:

- If your unit must be open for customers from 8:00am to 5:00pm, employee start time might begin as early as 7:00am or end as late as 6:00pm to accommodate closing and ending procedures.
 - If you have adequate staff who share responsibilities, the work day might extend to accommodate 10 hour days.
 - If the nature of your employee's work is web work, the work could be done in another location.
- If all of your employees were to ask for flexible work arrangements, what kinds of flexible work arrangements might you be able to offer? Note: Not every employee will ask for a flexible work arrangement and similarly situated employees should be treated consistently.
 - How will job responsibilities, customer service, and productivity be maintained in new arrangements?
 - How will the employees maintain communication with your customers, co-workers, and you when working an altered schedule?
 - Do the proposed flexible work arrangements unintentionally increase co-workers' responsibilities or work?
 - Example: If the employee proposes to work at home, will their phone be forwarded to their home office or will another employee in the office be expected to answer it?
 - How will productivity be measured when the employees work altered schedules?
 - Example: If the employee is telecommuting and is assigned a project, evidence of productivity is its on-time completion.

Step III: Approval of FWA Schedules

- You and your employee should discuss appropriate flexible work arrangement options for your unit. If required for the agreed upon FWA fill out the appropriate form, i.e., telecommuting agreement or irregular or flexible work request. If no form is required, document the agreed upon arrangement in an email or other format that can be reviewed by both the employee and supervisor.
- The form becomes part of your employee's in-house personnel file.

Step IV: Implement and Monitor

- The FWA agreement should be reviewed periodically, perhaps every three months (but at a minimum annually), and adjusted to meet business needs and to best accommodate an employee's work-life needs.

- Failure to meet obligations of the agreement should result in the modification or termination of the agreement.

Research

FWA improve the quality of the workplace experience, contributing to the creation of an inclusive campus by assisting diverse employees in managing their work and personal life needs (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). Workplace flexibility can increase employee productivity and engagement (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Vega, Anderson, & Kaplan, 2015). Flexible work policies are associated with fewer absences, days late, and missed deadlines (Halpern, 2005). Studies also suggest that flexible work arrangements can reduce employee stress and burnout (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Halpern, 2005; Moen, Kelly, Tranby, & Huang, 2011) while increasing engagement in health behaviors, such as getting more sleep and physical activity (Grzywacz, Casey, & Jones, 2007; Moen et al., 2011). As a result, employees lower their utilization of health care services. Lastly, organizational promotion of flexible work arrangements can be used as a strategic business tool to attract and retain talented employees. FWA is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment and lower turnover intentions (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Halpern, 2005).

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