



Statement on flexible and part-time working

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We need to make sure that the way we work fits the world we live in. The composition of the workforce, the nature of life outside work and the expectations of people at work are constantly changing, and the more we are able to move with those changes, the more effective we become.

I am clear that flexible working is crucial to our ability to recruit and retain the best staff and perform at a world-class level.

The University is made up of staff members who carry out a more diverse range of roles than you would find in most other organisations and sectors. Not only will individuals have different ideas about the kind of balance between home and work that suits them, but also their role and the business needs of their School or Service will also govern the flexible working options available to them.

In this context, the main thing I ask colleagues for is an open mind – firstly, an open mind on the part of people considering applying for a change in their working arrangements. We cannot guarantee that your application will be agreed, and we will need to consider the impact of any request on other members of the team in which you work, but if you would like to make an application under one of our flexible working policies, I can assure you that it will be given serious consideration.

Perhaps more importantly, I am asking for an open mind on the part of the managers who receive such applications. I appreciate that managing flexible working arrangements can seem daunting. However, support is available from your HR Manager and, through that, it may be possible to identify different options going forward. The more open we are to flexible working requests, the more responsive, supportive and successful we become as an employer.

Professor Michael J P Arthur
Vice-Chancellor

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This demonstrates the University's commitment to flexible working and promotes the benefits to both staff and the Institution. It defines the various types of flexibility that may be explored and sets out mutual expectations to ensure that there is a shared understanding and agreement about balancing the needs of individuals with the University's objectives.
- 1.2. It is not intended to be a comprehensive statement, nor does it seek to replace agreed policies and procedures included on the HR Website under the 'work life balance policy' <http://hr.leeds.ac.uk/policies>.

2. Principles

- 2.1. At the heart of this is a set of principles for guiding decisions on requests for flexible working:
 - Opportunity and fairness – every employee will be eligible to apply for flexible working and we recognise the important role that flexible working has in terms of responding to the diversity of our workforce.
 - Co-operation and understanding – employees, managers and Heads of School/Service will work together to achieve a reasonable solution to a request for flexibility and both will understand the impact of new arrangements.
 - Communication and consultation – proposed new arrangements will be discussed with colleagues and other staff who may be affected by a requested change and this information will be taken into consideration during the decision making process.
 - Striking a balance – between the objectives and business needs of the employing School/Service and any applications for flexible working that are made.
 - The priority of University objectives – Heads of School/Service will be as accommodating and positive as they can be when considering requests, balancing those against the priority to maintain an effective service and considering the needs of colleagues.
 - Guidance and support – written guidance will be improved, and support and advice will be made available to Heads and to those considering flexible working options.

3. What is covered by the term “flexible working”?

Flexible working is the variation of working hours, times, patterns or location according to individual circumstances. Ways of working more flexibly include:

- varying the pattern of hours worked (e.g. term-time working, flexible hours, annualised hours);
- changing the number of hours worked (e.g. part-time working, job sharing);
- varying where you work – (e.g. working from home occasionally);
- taking a single break from work (e.g. career breaks, unpaid leave);
- phased return to work following a long-term break – (e.g. maternity leave, career break).

Obviously not every role or service lends itself to every working pattern, but where flexibility can be introduced it is important to recognise the potential benefits to both the employee and the University.

Flexible working arrangements can enable staff to work in new ways and to achieve an improved balance between the competing demands of work and other life commitments.

4. Mutual expectations

4.1. What will the University do?

- The University will go beyond the legislative requirements in considering flexible working requests from all members of staff.
- The University will ensure that individuals will not be disadvantaged for working flexibly.
- Policies and practices that promote flexible working will be reviewed to ensure that they remain effective and responsive to the needs of our workforce and organisation.
- The University will continue to raise awareness of flexible working and provide information and practical guidance on how this can be achieved.
- Good practice in the HE sector, and elsewhere, will be monitored to ensure that the University leads the way.

4.2. What will Heads of School/Service do?

- Heads of School/Service will ensure that there is careful planning of the impact and will consult with colleagues prior to agreeing to an application for flexible working.
- Heads of School/Service will access advice and guidance from their own line manager, their HR Manager or the Equality Service to ensure that informed decisions on flexible working requests are consistent.
- Other more creative requests for flexible working, not covered in the University policies but still reasonable, will be considered.
- Where a reduction in working hours is agreed, workloads will be reduced in line with the agreed working hours.
- Feedback will be provided where requests are not able to be met, partially or wholly.

4.3. What will employees do?

- Employees will consider their school/service needs and will show consideration for colleagues with different working patterns when applying for flexible working.
- Employees will strive to balance their own needs against the needs of colleagues.

It is recognised that flexible working can play a valuable role in meeting the strategic objectives of the University. It is hoped that individuals and Heads of School/Service are encouraged to think differently about approaches to work and to use flexible working where employee and Institutional needs coincide.