

Flexible Work Schedules (FAQs)

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What is a flexible work schedule?

Flexible work schedules may be used to meet the needs of both the employing unit and the employee. Employing units are encouraged to be as flexible as possible in allowing for alternative work schedules.

There are two major types of work schedule flexibility -- flexible work **hours** and flexible work **schedules**.

Flexible work hours are temporary changes in an employee's regular work schedule in order to adjust for an unplanned, short-notice, or sporadic event. The flexibility helps the employee avoid working more than 40 hours in a work week. Any flexible work hour adjustment is at the

discretion of the supervisor, and does not need to be documented as a written agreement, but would become part of the monthly leave report. Two examples:

- An employee (with the supervisor's approval) worked an additional two hours on Monday in order to complete a report due by Tuesday. The supervisor adjusted the employee's schedule to allow the employee to leave work two hours early on Thursday so the employee did not work more than 40 hours in the work week.
- An employee got stuck in traffic behind an accident on the way to work, and as a result, arrived one hour late to work. Although the late arrival might still be considered tardiness, the employee could, with the supervisor's approval, work an additional hour that evening (or sometime that work week) to make up the time.

Flexible work schedules are adjustments to the employee's regular work schedule on a recurring basis to respond work/life needs of an employee or scheduling needs of the employing unit. The revised schedule must continue to support the operational needs of the University and allow for appropriate oversight of the employee's work. Flexible work schedule adjustments must be documented in writing and may be revised or revoked by the supervisor as needed.

Four examples:

- The employing unit serves potential students and their parents, many of whom must visit after work. Although there are fewer visitors in the morning and in the late afternoon and evening, the unit responds by staying open from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Approximately half of the unit's employees work from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm (with a half-hour lunch break.) The other half of the employees work from 11:30 am until 8:00 pm (with a half-hour lunch break.)
- An employee must pick up her child from daycare on the way home from work (her husband drops the child off in the morning because he must work until later in the evening.) As a result, the employee needs to leave work earlier than 4:30 pm each day in order to avoid paying late pick-up penalties for daycare. The supervisor allows an adjustment in the employee's work schedule to 7:30 am - 4:00 pm to respond to the transportation needs of the employee's family.
- An employee works in a job that involves no interaction with the public and that can be done at any time, providing that deadlines are met and all of a week's work is accomplished during that work week. The supervisor allows the employee to work four ten-hour days, Monday through Thursday, on a regular basis.
- An employee who usually works from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm and who does not interact regularly with the public travels to a nearby state every weekend to care for his elderly mother, who does not have home help on weekends. The drive is long and the employee is exhausted. The supervisor approves a nine-hour work schedule (8:00

am to 5:30 pm with a half-hour break for lunch) Tuesday through Thursday and an 8:00 to 2:30 work schedule (with a half hour lunch break) on Fridays and a 10:00 to 5:30 work schedule (with a half hour lunch break) on Mondays. The employee works 40 hours per week, but the schedule accommodates his driving time.

What are common uses of a flexible work schedules?

A flexible work schedules may be implemented for a variety of reasons to benefit the employee, the employing unit, or both. Some common examples include:

- Adjusting for a long commute to and from work by starting (or ending) the work day earlier (or later)
 - Avoiding peak traffic to reduce an employee's time on the road
 - Matching work schedules to time schedules for mass transit or other commuting alternatives
 - Reducing the number of work days and therefore the number of commutes to and from work each week
 - Attending classes during the regular work day
 - Transporting children to and from day care or school
 - Matching employee work hours to peak productivity time periods
 - To accommodate job-sharing or to offset peak use of centralized offices or equipment
 - Extending customer service hours
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What are some examples of a flexible work arrangement?

Scheduling options include shifting the start and stop hours of the regular (8 hour) work day or making a "compressed" work schedule (40 hours of work in less than 5 regular work days).

Some examples:

- Working four ten-hour days
- Working four nine-hour days and one four-hour day
- Working from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm , 9:00 am to 5:30 pm , 7:00 am to 3:30 pm or other variations on the usual 8:00 am to 4:30 pm schedule

Flexible work schedules can also occur regularly but on a less frequent basis than every work

week. For example, an employee could work, with the supervisor's approval, a schedule that alternates, with the employee working eight hours each day of the first week then working four ten-hour days the second week, with this pattern repeating regularly.

What are some benefits of a flexible work schedule?

Flexible schedules work when they meet both employee's personal needs in balancing work and life and the employing unit's operational needs in providing efficient and effective services.

Some benefits of a flexible work schedule may include:

- Reduced commuting fuel costs
 - Increased transportation options and parking availability
 - Reduced stress through the ability to better balance work and personal responsibilities
 - Improved morale and productivity resulting from matching work time and employee work style
 - Longer blocks of time away from the office without reducing the employee's leave balance
 - Extended service hours with minimal to no increase in budget or overtime expense
 - Reduced absences and tardiness through finding more agreeable start and/stop times
 - Enhanced recruitment and retention through "family-friendly" work schedules
 - Greater flexibility in available office space or equipment due to shifts in peak use
 - Increased opportunities for cross-training due to some shared job duties and coverage adjustments
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What are some disadvantages to a flexible work arrangement?

Some flexible work schedules may not be the best solution for particular work/life needs or for particular positions; for example, a four ten-hour days arrangement will not usually work for a receptionist position. Other disadvantages occur should also be considered, including:

- The effect of reduced face-to-face time on work teams or work unit cohesion
- Employees feeling distanced from the social aspects of working the same hours as colleagues
- Some employees may feel resentful about accommodating the flexible schedules of

other employees in the work unit

- Conflicting requests by multiple employees may make some requests difficult to accommodate
 - Tracking employee work time becomes more complex
 - Direct observation by supervisor of employee work becomes more difficult
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Who decides if an employee can have a flexible work schedule?

Supervisors are responsible for setting work assignments and work schedules for their employees based on the operational needs and resources of the employing unit. Supervisors are encouraged to be as flexible as possible in accommodating the work/life needs of employees, but the decision to set or adjust employee work schedules is made by the supervisor, not by the individual employee. Supervisors are also expected to approve flexible work schedules fairly and equitably.

What factors should be considered in planning a flexible work schedule?

In reviewing requests for flexible work schedules, supervisors need to consider the overall needs of the employing unit, the supervisor, and the employee:

- What are the operational needs of the unit?
- What are the customer needs of the unit?
- What are the work/life needs of the employee?
- Are there restrictions on when and where work must be performed?
- Does the employee function as part of a team that would require a matching schedule of all team members or significant face-to-face communication?
- Is the work unit able to provide coverage for functions handled by the employee in his or her absence without undue burden on other employees in the unit?
- Are requests for flexible schedules being handled equitably?
- Can the supervisor continue to monitor effectively employee work that occurs outside the supervisor's regular schedule?
- Can the supervisor continue to monitor effectively compliance with federal wage-hour regulations when the work occurs outside the supervisor's regular schedule?

- Does the work schedule result in continued or increased worker productivity for the employee, the supervisor, and the work unit?

Human Resources can assist supervisors in reviewing requests for flexible work schedules and finding strategies to implement employee requests based on the department's operational needs.

How does an employee request a flexible work arrangement?

Either employees or supervisors may request adjustments to work schedules. Human Resources will assist supervisors and employees in identifying possible flexible schedules. Issues that should be addressed in requesting a flexible schedule include:

- The organizational and work/life benefits of the proposed schedule
- A plan for continued fulfillment of work expectations, including:
 - How communications with co-workers, customers, and the supervisor will occur during work hours outside the regular schedule
 - How customer or University needs that arise during the employee's absence will be handled
 - Both the employee's and the supervisor's willingness to be flexible, make any necessary

changes, or consider alternative proposals to ensure the success of a flexible work schedule.

What if my flexible work schedule doesn't work out?

Any approved flexible work schedule may begin as a pilot program to be re-assessed after four to six weeks to see if the employing unit's and employee's needs are being met. Changes to the schedule may be needed, or the flexible schedule may be cancelled. A supervisor may modify or discontinue a flexible work schedule when negative consequences occur, such as:

- Business needs or coverage needs change
- Valid negative customer feedback occurs
- Performance or attendance deteriorates
- Staff shortages occur
- The flexible schedule becomes too disruptive to the work unit

- The employee is dissatisfied or his or her needs have changed
- Funding equity concerns make such arrangements prohibitive

The supervisor and employee should try to reach an equitable resolution when problems occur; however, the final decision is the supervisor's. Human Resources can provide assistance to supervisors and employees in evaluating the effectiveness of flexible work schedules.

Can I use a flexible work schedule to care for a sick child?

Dependent care needs are a common reason for a flexible work arrangement to occur, especially for flexible work hours or work schedules due to child care drop-off and pick-up and other child-related events. An employee may use sick leave when caring for a sick child, but a flexible work schedule is not usually a good solution, because a sick child will usually require the employee's primary attention during work hours and caring for the child would detract from the employee's ability to perform his or her work duties.

How does a flexible work schedule affect sick days, vacation days and official holidays?

Actual sick leave hours taken and annual leave (vacation) hours taken must be reported on the monthly report of hours worked or leave taken. An employee who has a regular flexible work schedule of four ten-hour days would report ten hours of sick leave if she were not able to work on one of her regularly scheduled days because of illness. Similarly, an employee who regularly works four nine-hour days and one four-hour days and who takes annual leave on one of the nine-hour days would report nine hours of annual leave. Official University holidays are eight hours long, so an employee who regularly works four ten-hour days would be charged two hours of annual leave if an official holiday fell on one of his regularly-scheduled work days and he did not work at all that day. Human Resources can answer questions about leave-reporting for employees with flexible work schedules.
