Flexible Work Schedule Arrangements
A Manager’s Guide

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Flexible Work Schedule Arrangements

In reviewing the options described in this guide, the success of any of them depends a great deal on you as the manager. While flexible work schedules may enhance employee productivity and morale, such arrangements can also lead to problems, if not implemented correctly. This guide is intended to offer information that will help you to manage flexible work schedule employees effectively, if such an arrangement is appropriate to your overall organizational needs.

The Human Resources Office is available to assist if you have questions or concerns about flexible work schedule arrangements. The supervisor and unit head must review and approve any flexible work schedules prior to changing any work hours, establishing performance standards, or before changing the terms and conditions of employment of any other employee as a result of a decision to create a flexible work schedule position.

Definitions of Flexible Work Schedule

Flexible work hours usually begin with an eight-hour work day, but include a starting and quitting time different from the traditional 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. work day. It may include a core period of time in which the employee is required to be in attendance at the work site. For example, an employee may have an eight-hour work day which starts sometime between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. He/she is required to be at the work site from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (with a scheduled lunch hour), and may leave between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. (depending upon the starting time). A core period may or may not be required, depending upon the requirements of the position as well as the needs of the department and the employee.

Flexible work schedules are outside the traditional 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. but have a fixed arrival and departure time, e.g., 6 a.m. to 3 p.m., 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. They may also include a 4/40, that is, four 10-hour days that comprise a 40-hour work week.

Advantages of Flexible Work Schedules

The experiences of other organizations that have implemented flexible work schedules have shown the benefits described below. Only your experience will ultimately demonstrate whether such benefits accrue to your department/unit.

1. Increased productivity. Other departments/units have noted productivity increases after having implemented flexible...
work schedules. There are several possible reasons: elimination of commute stress during peak traffic time; increased morale which may serve as a motivator; and work schedules which can be arranged to take advantage of the employee's most productive work periods.

2. **Lower use of sick leave.** Flexible work scheduling can reduce the amount of sick leave used by employees in two ways: escaping the pressure of tight daily schedules can make some employees less susceptible to illness; flexible schedules give employees an opportunity to conduct personal business during the day and reduce the amount of time off work.

3. **Improved employee morale.** Employers who have instituted flexible work schedules have noted some increase in employee morale. This may be due to the increased flexibility and time for personal business; ability to schedule work around "personally productive" hours, rather than adhering to an organizational norm (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.); and/or the employee's appreciation for the convenience, independence, and supervisory trust shown by such a program.

4. **Expanded service hours/reduced traffic and parking pressures.** Among the benefits of flexible schedules are the opportunities for expanded hours of service by the department, including coverage during the noon hour. For example, one employee may work 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., another 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Such an arrangement allows departmental services to be available from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., rather than the normal 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and with flexible work schedules, lunch hours will be staggered. Increased services can be directed to the public served or to departmental demands (e.g., availability of typing services, filing, etc.). In other instances, where service to others is not required, it can provide uninterrupted work time when fewer people are present and phones are quieter. A further advantage can be the maximizing of equipment use. An employee working 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. can utilize equipment for three additional hours that is otherwise only available on a shared basis when everyone works 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Additional advantages accrue to the institution through a lower demand for access and parking at peak commute times.

5. **Improved recruitment and retention.** It is important for The Agriculture Program to be able to recruit and retain the best employees possible. Flexible work scheduling can help in these areas. By increasing flexibility and autonomy, reducing commute time, flexible work scheduling can make your department a more attractive place to work for both current and future employees. In addition, flexible work arrangements can make working for The Agriculture Program more convenient and attractive to people living in outlying areas, thus giving all of us a broader base from which to draw new applicants.

**Disadvantages of Flexible Work Schedules**

In making a management decision about whether or not to implement a program for flexible work schedules, you must also consider the disadvantages which could arise.

1. **Staffing/vacation/leave coverage.** Having employees who do not keep the same hours as others, may make vacation, sick leave, and other types of leave coverage somewhat more difficult. It may be necessary, at times, for a manager to temporarily alter a flexible work schedule arrangement if staff coverage is necessary in the primary work location. It may also take some adjustment for department staff (including managers and supervisors) to learn new schedules, and adjust to not always having everyone there. Routinely posting flexible work schedules would provide necessary information to other staff.

2. **Scheduling meetings.** As with coverage, scheduling meetings can become more complex. Trying to accommodate meetings to flexible work schedules, reduces the core period of time employees will be in the same place, at the same time. It may, at times, be necessary for an employee to adjust his/her schedule in order to be available for a meeting.

3. **Loss of cohesiveness/interpersonal dynamics.** Altering the dynamics of the work place, and the relationships that have been established, can have consequences (though not always negative). There can be a loss of "team" feeling; there may be feelings of increased isolation and loss of social contact for flexible work schedule employees; hard feelings can develop among employees whose positions or personal circumstances do not allow them to have a flexible schedule.

4. **Safety/security/liability.** Supervisors and managers need to be cognizant of safety issues when employees work
outside of the traditional work hours. It is important to make certain that security matters are understood by employees who work alone or who work early or late (e.g., doors locked, lights on, proper identification prior to allowing access). The University Police Department should be made aware of employees who consistently work in isolated or remote areas, or whose schedules include particularly early or late hours.

5. **Parking.** Parking can be more difficult for individual employees who drive to work at a later hour. Current demands are such that parking lots fill quickly during the early morning hours.

**Questions Managers Ask**

The following are frequent questions and concerns expressed by managers and supervisors when considering a flexible work schedule arrangement.

1. **Who can work a flexible work schedule?** The supervisor may wish to consider employees who:
   - have passed their probationary period;
   - have maintained a satisfactory work performance (e.g., have demonstrated self-motivation, good organization and time management skills, and a high degree of job knowledge).

   This consideration can only be given after the supervisor has determined that a flexible work schedule arrangement is appropriate to the overall organizational needs of the unit, the job assignment, and departmental budget and staffing needs.

2. **How will I know if the flexible work schedule employee is really working during nonroutine office hours?** The most common concern expressed by managers is that if they can’t see their employees, they have no way of knowing if they are really working. One response has been that, even when an employee can be seen, a supervisor can’t be certain that the employee is working. Flexible work schedule arrangements may bring about a change in the way you, as a supervisor, supervise. To effectively manage a flextime employee, the supervisor must manage what the employee produces. The important question becomes can the employee turn out a good product in a reasonable period of time? Decide what tasks the employee will be performing, and when each of those tasks will be completed. Make certain the goals/timelines are discussed with the employee, and that the standards are reasonable, and would be reasonable if the assignment was being performed during regular office hours.

3. **What if the flexible work schedule employee doesn’t seem to be getting the job done?** If you permit an employee to work during a flexible schedule and the work is not being done in the time or manner you have outlined, discuss your expectations with the employee again. Remind the employee that the hours of work are those that were set in the flexible work schedule arrangement, and the work expectations are the same as those of an employee working during routine office hours. If discussion with the employee is not successful in improving unsatisfactory work performance, you as the supervisor, must determine the alternatives available. It is important to continue to communicate expectations to the employee and to consult with your Human Resources Office regarding alternatives.

4. **Will flexible work schedule employees lose their loyalty to the department if they work nontraditional office hours?** Employees working flexible work schedules see their schedule as a great benefit and realize the trust that is expressed in such an arrangement. It can actually increase loyalty to the organization.

5. **What do I tell employees who want to work a flexible schedule but don’t have the right kind of job?** Some employees will not be able to work a flexible schedule due to the nature of the position. This issue can be addressed to some extent by making known the types of positions that do and do not allow for flextime. However, in reviewing a particular position with an employee, there may be functions/tasks which allow one day a week of flextime. If that is not possible, explain the reasons to the employee and that the decision is not an arbitrary one. If it is a performance-related decision, that too should be explained, basing your discussion on previously documented and discussed employee performance appraisals.

6. **What do I do if a flexible work schedule employee doesn’t want to work nonroutine office hours any more?** A flexible work schedule may be an arrangement begun in response to a request by an employee. It may also be a
condition of employment, at the time of hire, which cannot be altered due to a lack of office space. If it is a request to return to a routine office schedule, every effort should be made to accommodate the employee as soon as possible. If it is a condition of employment, whether such an arrangement can be changed will depend upon the circumstances of the unit and management’s evaluation of organizational needs.

7. **Will this take a lot of management or supervisory time?** At first, you may devote a certain amount of time to assisting employees in establishing their flexible work schedule and setting performance goals for them. However, once initial issues are resolved flextime employees should not require more supervisory time or attention than other employees.

8. **Can I, as a supervisor/manager, also have a flexible work schedule?** Some managers and supervisors assume that they must work a routine (8 to 5) work schedule, even when their employees do not. That is not necessarily true. Supervisors and managers also have functions/tasks that can be performed during flexible work schedules (e.g., organizational planning, budget proposals, report writing or employee performance appraisals). It may, in fact, be the case that such functions/tasks can be better accomplished during nonroutine office hours without the usual interruptions that can take place in the office.

**How to Implement Flexible Work Schedules**

Prior to implementing a flexible work schedule arrangement, you will need to consider the following issues.

1. **Evaluate organization needs.** All programs require management approval. Therefore, before specific approval is given, it is important to assess the particular request in light of departmental programs and needs, as well as budget and staffing, when making a decision about a flexible arrangement within the organization.

2. **Consider positions/employees.** In deciding whether or not a particular employee and his/her position are suitable for flexible work schedules, you should consider each employee’s job responsibilities, and each employee’s past work performance.
   - **The position’s responsibilities.** Review the position description of the position being considered for a flexible work schedule. Are there functions/tasks which can be performed at a time when other employees are not available? Does it involve writing, reading, research, thinking, editing, data entry, word processing or coding? Is it project oriented? Does the position provide immediate response to a request for services (e.g., does it provide a service either in person or by answering phones)? Does it provide backup to any other position (backup that cannot be provided by another employee, e.g., special skill or training)? Can accommodation be made to any areas of concern?
   - **The employee’s previous work performance.** Review the employee’s previous performance appraisals and other pertinent records of performance. You are probably familiar with the work habits of the employee being considered for a flexible work schedule. Flextime requires self-motivation and self-discipline. It also requires an employee who works well without direct supervision, has good time management skills, a good understanding of his/her duties and responsibilities, and is well organized. If you are unsure about whether or not an employee is a good candidate for flextime, you should contact your Human Resources Office to discuss your questions or concerns.

One option is to allow the employee to begin working a flexible schedule on a trial basis; perhaps one day a week. If you determine after a sufficient period of time that the employee is not effective during the flexible schedule, or that it is not organizationally effective for that employee to be away from the office during routine office hours, you, as the supervisor, have the right to terminate the flexible work schedule arrangement. This must only be done with prior notice to the employee.

If you must deny or terminate a flexible work schedule arrangement, be sure it is for business reasons only, and be clear in your explanation to the employee that it is neither a personal nor an arbitrary decision.

3. **Set goals and timetables.** It is critical for you and the employee working a flexible schedule to set goals and timetables by which you both can determine if the work is being done in a satisfactory manner. Carefully managing
the work output of your flextime employees is important. Many managers already use this management style, which is sometimes referred to as “management by objectives” or MBO. It is the managing of employees through setting goals and objectives rather than by observing them at work.

For other employees, they may be involved in projects that will vary from week to week or month to month. In these instances, each project should have a time frame, a format, and an end product by which you will measure productivity and the quality of the work performed. Does the employee have a work plan with assignments and products understood? Are your expectations clearly outlined to the employee? Is the employee willing to be accountable for the results and the work performed under such an arrangement?

4. Establish performance criteria. It is important that you be clear with all employees on the performance criteria by which they are evaluated. In managing by objectives, the focus will be on the product and not the process, that is, what is accomplished and not the direct observation of it being done. The measure will be the results. Some of the questions to be answered are: What is the required product (report, study, budget, outline, or forms to be processed)? Is there a quantity that is reasonable to expect? And if so, what is the expected time frame (when, how often) for completing the assigned product? Whatever the functions/tasks, you should use the same standards for determining the flexible work schedule employee’s work performance that you would use for all employees.

5. Determine communication arrangements. Once the goals, objectives and performance criteria are set, you should meet with employee on a regular, predetermined basis to discuss progress and any problems. There should be a commitment to maintaining that communication schedule whether daily, weekly, or whenever agreed upon. You should make yourself available between meetings, in case the employee needs assistance to continue the work. You may also wish to specify how often the employee is expected to call in for messages (e.g., every hour, once or twice a day, etc.). And it will be important for other employees to know how to reach the telecommuter.

Since flexible work schedules reduce the amount of face-to-face contact, it is important that you be active in maintaining communication and keeping those lines open. All employees perform better and remain loyal if you remain available, recognize their contributions, and keep them feeling like integral members of the group. Remember, too, that it may be necessary to publicize the new hours of service, or the availability of certain staff members to those “clients” or “client departments”.
## Summary of Procedures - Flexible Work Schedules

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<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>1. Considers proposal to implement a flexible work schedule for particular position; if request made by incumbent, acknowledges request, discusses proposal.</td>
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<td>2. Reviews the following: functions/tasks of position under consideration, departmental staffing needs, space and budgetary considerations.</td>
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<td>3. Consults with Human Resources Office on proposal.</td>
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<td>Human Resources Office</td>
<td>4. Advises on policy/practice/FLSA considerations, performance standards; reviews proposed flexible work schedule; recommends an alternative schedule, if necessary; directs supervisor to Human Resources website to access Flexible Work Schedule rule and request form.</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>5. Employee completes Flexible Work Schedule Request (AG-430) and supervisor makes a recommendation regarding the proposal.</td>
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<td>a. If proposal is disapproved as not appropriate to department needs, and request was made by incumbent, explains decision to employee.</td>
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<td>b. If proposal approved as appropriate to department needs, supervisor signs Request for Flexible Work Schedule (AG-430) and forwards to unit head for final review and approval.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>6. Notifies employee to begin flexible work arrangement.</td>
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<td>7. Monitors arrangement; maintains open communication with employee; discusses any concerns with employee; consults with Human Resources Office, if questions arise or concerns continue.</td>
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The Agriculture Program
Flexible Work Schedule Request

Name __________________________ Social Security number __________________________

Title __________________________ Department __________________________

I request that I be permitted to work the alternative work schedule outlined below.

Instructions: In the “Work Times” column, fill in the specific hours you propose to work each day; for example, 7 am. to noon, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Total the number of hours you will work each week in the last row of the “Total Hours” column. If you are nonexempt (eligible for overtime pay/compensatory time), you may not schedule more than 40 hours during a Thursday-through-Wednesday workweek.

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Explain any variations to the above schedule: __________________________________________

I am ☐ nonexempt (eligible for overtime) ☐ exempt (not eligible for overtime)
I believe that my work can be completed within the above schedule with no loss of customer service or disruption to others in my department or to the Agriculture Program. I understand that my supervisor may require me at any time, for any reason, to return to the regular Agriculture Program work schedule. I agree to do so upon request. I also understand that I must submit a new Flexible Work Schedule Request anytime I wish to make a change in my schedule, including a change back to regular work hours.

_________________________________________  ____________
Employee Signature                      Date

Approved

_________________________________________  ____________
Supervisor’s Signature                   Date

_________________________________________  ____________
Unit Head Signature                     Date

(With few exceptions, you have the right to request, receive, review and correct information about yourself collected using this form.)