

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is a Flexible Work Arrangement?

A flexible work arrangement is when the work hours or location established by the employer is changed at the request of the employee. A flexible work arrangement is often requested by an employee who is trying to successfully meet work obligations while fulfilling a personal need or concern. There are four types of flexible work arrangements. They are: flextime, compressed work week, telecommuting/alternative work site and reduced hours/part-time.

- Flextime. This refers to changing a work schedule that permits an employee to change start/end times within certain limits established by the employees department.
- Compressed Work Week. This refers to working a standard 40 hours work week in fewer than five days.
- Alternative Work Site. This refers to the employee working at a location other than one owned or operated by UMMS.
- Reduced hours/Part-time. This refers to the practice of decreasing the number of regular hours worked to less than a full-time position. Reducing hours worked may affect salary, benefit levels and accrual rates of vacation, sick and holiday leave.

Why flexible work options?

National surveys repeatedly show that staff members seek flexibility in the workplace as a key response to competing demands in their lives. A recent study found that the number one work factor determining employee commitment and loyalty was recognition by the institution of the importance of personal and family life and support for these responsibilities.

There is a strong business case for flexible working arrangements. The benefits include:

- Improved retention and staff commitment: staff may remain with an employer longer and have a higher level of commitment when an organization provides access to more flexible work arrangements
- Improved productivity: flexible arrangements can provide uninterrupted time for creative, repetitive or highly detailed work; they can also help take advantage of different work styles (early energy vs. late energy); flexible arrangements may also help to reduce tardiness and absences due to personal commitments.
- Improved service: a flexible approach to working time can potentially be used to extend service delivery, improve customer relations and deal with time zone differences.
- Cost savings: reduced staff turnover, training costs and possibly accommodation costs contribute to improving competitiveness.
- Improved recruitment: more flexibility can attract potential staff members when vacancies arise, especially in a situation where applicants can make comparative evaluations of job offers; skilled and experienced people may be attracted back into the work force, and a match can be achieved between skills and current market shortages.

If flexible work arrangements are available to all staff members, how will supervisors handle all of the requests and ensure adequate coverage?

Traditional schedules meet the needs of the majority of staff members. Staff members who do request flexible work arrangements most often ask for slight changes in their daily arrival and departure times, changes that pose the least challenge for a staff member's supervisor and co-workers. Of course, a supervisor/manager must assess the needs of the office prior to approving a flexible work arrangement.

Can all employees apply for a flexible work arrangement?

Any employee may submit a proposal for a flexible work arrangement. However, not all jobs are suitable for such an arrangement. Unionized staff should consult their individual collective bargaining agreements. Depending on the nature or location of a particular job, some types of alternative work schedules may not be appropriate. Also, it is possible that, due to their specific requirements, some types of jobs may not accommodate flexible work options at all. Nevertheless, supervisors/managers are encouraged to give positive consideration to requests where they meet the needs of both UMMS and the individual.

As a supervisor, can I say “no” to an employee’s proposal?

Accepting or rejecting a proposal is a supervisor/manager’s decision and should be based on sound business reasons, which include performance issues. It is helpful to discuss with the employee whether any alternatives to the original proposal might work better. If you do not approve a request, document the business case for your decision and discuss your reasons with the employee. You may also talk to your Human Resource Consultant or the Work-Life Manager who can help support you and your decision.

What if my supervisor says “no” to my proposal?

UMMS is not obligated to provide flexible work arrangements to any employee. Each proposal will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Make sure you clearly understand the business reason(s) that your supervisor presented when he or she was unable to approve your proposal.

Can my supervisor change my flexible work arrangement back to my original schedule at any time?

Yes, the arrangement can be amended or ended. It is important to remember that your work schedule is subject to change based on business needs. Your supervisor will try to provide you with reasonable notice before altering the current arrangement.

As a supervisor, how do I fund technology for someone who wants to work at home?

Unless the arrangement to work at home is mandated by UMMS, there is no requirement to provide any technology or to pay for any technology costs for telecommuters. In some cases, however, supervisors/managers may agree to pay for or provide some technology. As with any budget decision, managers need to determine if there is a benefit to the office that would justify

the expense. Any agreements to pay for technology or resources should be clarified and documented when the proposal is approved

How will a flexible work arrangement affect my pay and benefits?

If you request a work schedule that reduces your regularly scheduled hours, your pay will be pro-rated accordingly. Depending on the total number of hours worked, some benefits may be affected. Additional information on how flexible scheduling could impact benefits and paid time off is available by calling the Benefits Office.