



ST. HUGH'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

Flexible Working Policy

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Flexible Working Policy

Introduction

St Hugh's College encourages staff to consider flexible working arrangements. The College recognises that a better work-life balance can improve employee motivation, performance and productivity, and reduce stress. Therefore, the College wants to support its employees to achieve a better balance between work and their other priorities, such as caring responsibilities, leisure activities, further learning and other interests.

The College is committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements that can reasonably be accommodated, provided that the needs and objectives of both the College and the employee can be met.

It is the College's policy to encourage open discussion with employees. If an employee thinks they may benefit from flexible working, they can either:

- contact their line manager to arrange an informal discussion to talk about the options, or;
- submit a flexible working request, by following the steps in this policy.

This policy does not form part of the employment contract, and can be amended at any time.

What flexible working is

Flexible working is any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when an employee works.

For example:

- hybrid working, where staff split their time between attending the College and working remotely;
- homeworking;
- job-sharing;
- part-time working;
- annualised hours;
- compressed hours;
- flexitime;
- term-time working;
- swapping hours;

- voluntary-reduced working time;
- flexible shift working.

These examples are considered to be the typical arrangements that employees will request. However, the College recognises that there may be alternatives or a combination of options which are suitable to both the College and the employee.

[The College's approach to flexible working](#)

The College is committed to providing a range of appropriate working patterns. There are many different types of flexible working. While some might not be practical for every job, it's likely other types will work. The College commits to look at what's possible.

Where a flexible working arrangement is requested, the College will take into account a number of criteria. This includes:

- the cost of the proposed arrangement;
- the effect of the proposed arrangement on other staff;
- the level of supervision that the post-holder requires;
- the structure of the department and staff resources;
- other issues specific to the individual's department;
- an analysis of the tasks specific to the role, including their frequency and duration;
- an analysis of the workload of the role.

The College is committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both the College and the employee can be met.

[Eligibility](#)

Any College employee can apply to work flexibly for any reason under the College's Flexible Working procedure from day one of employment. To be eligible to make a request for flexible working an individual must:

- Be an employee i.e., not an agency worker;
- Have not made more than two applications for flexible working within any 12-month period;
- May have only one live request for flexible working at any one time.

An employee who has submitted a flexible working request must wait until that one has been considered and any appeal has been dealt with, before submitting another.

However, we recognise the importance of providing flexible working for all employees. Therefore, if employees are not eligible to make a formal request for flexible working under

the statutory procedure, they may submit an informal request and we will consider this on an informal basis.

[Submitting a flexible working request](#)

An employee is entitled to submit 2 statutory flexible working requests in a 12-month period.

Employees who wish to be considered for flexible working arrangements should discuss this in the first instance with their line manager.

Employees should then apply in writing to their line manager using the flexible working request form (Appendix (i)), normally at least twelve weeks before they wish the proposed arrangements to commence.

Where the application is incomplete the line manager should request further information from the member(s) of staff and ask them to re-submit their application. Where this occurs the date of re-submission will constitute the formal date of application.

[Responding to a flexible working request](#)

Line managers will consider the proposed flexible working arrangements. They will look at the potential benefits and adverse effects to the employee and to the College in implementing the proposed changes.

Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in the order they are received. Agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create the right for another employee to be granted a similar change to their working pattern.

Where an employee's request needs further discussion, the line manager will invite the employee to a consultation meeting. If a meeting is arranged it will be held within 10 working days of the College receiving the request. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and the line manager.

Where an employee's request can be approved in full without a consultation meeting, the line manager will confirm this in writing within 10 working days of receiving the request. This will include details of the new arrangements and an invitation to talk about the new arrangements. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and the line manager.

The College will make a decision on all requests, including any appeal within a maximum of 2 months. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and the line manager.

The below timetable outlines the timescales that should be followed for each stage of the process:

1) Stage in Process

2) Normal time scale

3) Arrange a meeting to discuss an employee's application	4) 10 working days
5) Notify the employee of the College's decision regarding the application	6) 10 working days
7) Arrange a meeting to discuss the employee's appeal	8) 5 working days
9) Notify the employee of the College's decision regarding the appeal	10) 5 working days

As per the above, the College and the employee may agree to extend time scales for any part of the procedure.

Managers should ask members of staff to confirm that they have received notification of any extension to the timescale.

[Withdrawal of an application by employee](#)

The College will treat an application as withdrawn under the statutory provisions where the employee:

- has notified the employer, orally or in writing, that the application is withdrawn;
- without reasonable cause, fails to attend a meeting or appeal meeting more than once; or
- without reasonable cause, refused to provide the employer with information the employer requires in order to assess whether a contract variation should be agreed to.

The College will confirm the withdrawal of the application to the employee in writing unless the employee has already provided written notice of the withdrawal.

[Employee consultation / participation](#)

If the employee is invited to a consultation meeting, the line manager will discuss:

- the request;
- how the proposed working arrangements might work;
- how it could be of benefit to both the employee and the College.

The employee will be given advance notice of the time, date and place of the meeting in accordance with the timescales outlined above.

If the initial date is problematic then one further date will be proposed. This meeting will be in person or on Teams, or a telephone call if neither of those are possible.

At the meeting the employee may, if they wish, be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative.

If the employee fails to attend a meeting and then fails to attend a rearranged meeting without good reason, their request will be deemed to have been withdrawn.

At the consultation meeting, individuals are encouraged to be as open as possible about their needs so that the College is able to engage in a constructive discussion about what is feasible.

[Communicating a decision after consultation](#)

After a consultation meeting, the request may be granted in full, in part or refused.

The College may:

- propose an alternative option
- grant the request on a temporary basis
- ask the employee to try the flexible working arrangement for a trial period

If a working arrangement is agreed, the employee will be sent a confirmation letter within 10 working days of the consultation meeting. This will include details of the new arrangements and an invitation to talk about the new arrangements.

If the College refuses the request, the employee will be given the decision in writing within 10 working days of the consultation meeting.

[Right to appeal a decision](#)

An employee has the right to appeal the decision if their request is refused or is only agreed in part.

The employee may submit an appeal within 7 working days of being notified of a decision on their request. This should be done in writing to the HR Department and clearly state the reasons for their appeal.

The appeal will be heard within 5 working days.

Meeting attendees will normally comprise of the employee and the following:

- An independent manager of the same or higher grade than the manager who originally dealt with the flexible working request, providing they have not previously been involved in the case and they have the authority and ability to overturn the original decision.
- An HR Advisor who will be able to advise on process.
- The employee's chosen companion i.e., a trade union representative or work colleague.

It is not necessary for the original decision-making manager to attend the appeal hearing, but the appeal hearing manager may consult with them either before, during or after the meeting if they need to clarify anything.

Before confirming the outcome of the appeal, the manager hearing the appeal must consult with the relevant manager and discuss the proposed outcome.

The employee will then be informed of the outcome of their appeal within 5 working days of an appeal meeting. These time limits may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and the HR department.

Requesting a reasonable adjustment

The College is committed to reducing and removing disadvantages for disabled employees.

If an employee needs to change where, how or when they work because of their disability, they can request a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010. If an employee requests a reasonable adjustment, they do not need to also make a flexible working request.

To request a reasonable adjustment, send your request by email or letter to your line manager and include:

- that you're making a request for a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010;
- the adjustment you're requesting.

Your line manager will discuss your request with you within 10 working days of the College receiving the request. The outcome will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days of the discussion, including any agreed reasonable adjustments. These time limits may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and the line manager.

Trialling new working arrangements

Where there is some uncertainty about whether the flexible working arrangement is practical for an employee or the College, a trial period may be agreed.

A trial period will allow enough time to implement and get used to the new arrangement before making any decisions on its viability.

The College will put any trial arrangements in writing to the employee. This will include their new working pattern and make clear that it is only a temporary change to the employee's terms and conditions.

The employee will be informed in writing of the start and end dates of the trial period. The College may reduce or lengthen the trial period where necessary, with the agreement of the employee.

The College will reserve the right, at the end of the agreed trial period, to require the employee to revert to their previous working arrangement. In this situation, the College will give the employee 4 weeks' notice.

Varying an employee's contract

Where flexible working practices are agreed as a permanent change, any variation to the employee's terms and conditions will be put in writing. Written confirmation of the changes will be sent to the employee within one month of the change being agreed.

If the employee has any questions or concerns, they should contact their line manager or the HR department.

Complaints and further information

An employee should raise any concerns with their line manager or the HR department if they are:

- are not satisfied with any stage of the flexible working request process
- feel they have been treated unfairly because they've made a flexible working request

If informal discussions do not resolve the matter to an employee's satisfaction, they should raise a grievance under the College's grievance procedure.

For further information an employee should contact the HR department.

Appendix (i)

FORM FW: FLEXIBLE WORKING APPLICATION FORM

Note to the employee

You can use this form to make an application to work flexibly for any reason under the College's procedures. It will help your manager to consider your request if you provide as much information as you can about your desired working pattern. It is important that you complete all the questions. Once you have completed the form, you should forward it to your manager (you should keep a copy for your own records). Your manager will then have 10 working days after the date that your application is received in which to arrange a meeting with you to discuss your request. If the request is granted, this will be a permanent change to your terms and conditions, unless otherwise agreed.

1. Personal Details

Name:

Department:

Manager:

To my manager

I would like to apply, under the College's flexible working policy, to work a flexible working pattern that is different to my current working pattern. I confirm that [use either A or B]:

- [A] I have not made any previous statutory flexible working requests.
- [B] I have previously made [a statutory flexible working request / statutory flexible working requests] on [give dates].

2. My current working pattern is (give details of days/hours/times/place you work):

3. I would like to [give details of the change you would like to make to your working pattern. For example:

- reduce my hours from 35 to 30 per week
- work from home 2 days per week
- start at 7:30am and finish at 3:30pm, instead of working from 9am to 5pm]:

(you may wish to consider alternative possible flexible working options which you could negotiate with your department; continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

4. I would like this working pattern to commence from:

Date:

5. The reason I want this change is [give details]:

Name.....

Date

Appendix ii

Guidance for employees

These notes set out some of the issues which it would be helpful for you to consider as well as what to expect from the consultation meeting. Employees will be able to request a change to the hours you work; a change to the times when you are required to work; or to work from home.

Points to consider

- A new working pattern will normally result in a permanent change to your contract of employment, unless otherwise agreed. So, think carefully about your request, as you will have no right to revert to your former hours of work once the new pattern has been put in place.
- Think about the date when you would like your new working pattern to begin. Be aware that the decision-making process can take at least 2 months to complete.
- If you are going on maternity leave, you should think carefully about when to make your request. You are encouraged to mention to your manager or HR before you take maternity leave if you wish to apply to work flexibly on your return. Bear in mind that you may need to attend meetings with your manager so that your request can be properly considered. If you want the changes to start on your return from maternity leave you should make your application in good time.
- The more notice you are able to give your manager, the more likely (s)he will be able to implement any change when it suits you. So, once you have completed your application form, you should submit it to your manager as soon as possible.
- Remember that if you request a flexible working pattern that will result in you working fewer hours, your pay, pension contributions and benefits will also be reduced on a pro rata basis. You may wish to take advice from the pension's office about the effect of changes on your pension. If you have a certificate of sponsorship, you should ask HR to liaise with the Staff Immigration Team.
- Try to provide as much detail as possible about the pattern you would like to work.
- When it is completed, your application should be submitted to your manager.

What will happen at the consultation meeting?

The consultation meeting provides a good way for both you and your manager to understand each other's position and to try to identify a solution which suits you both. You will be able to discuss the proposed work pattern in depth and consider how it might be accommodated. You should be prepared to be flexible because if the original working pattern cannot be accommodated, the meeting will also provide an opportunity to see if an alternative working arrangement may be appropriate. Trying a new working pattern for an agreed trial period in order to see how it would suit you and your department might also be an option.

To ensure you get the most from the meeting you should:

- be prepared to expand on any points in your application,
- prepare to be flexible. Your department may ask if there are any other working patterns you would be willing to consider or if you would consider another start date or a trial period,
- make sure, if you are taking a trade union representative or a friend or colleague along, that he or she is fully briefed on your request before the meeting, provide him or her with a copy of your application and this guidance, and inform your department that you are bringing your representative. This will save time during the meeting, and
- make sure you and any representative have read this guidance before the meeting so that you are familiar with the College's procedures on requesting flexible working.