



Flexible Working Arrangements Guide

Practical guidance for staff and their managers

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Acknowledgement of Country

At ACU we acknowledge and pay our respects to the First Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways. We recognise their spiritual and ongoing cultural connection to Country. We respectfully acknowledge Elders past and present and thank them for their wisdom and guidance as we walk in their footsteps.

A Prayer for Work-Life Balance

From the ACU Book of Prayer:

Dear God,

*Help me to be fully present in my work:
to give all that I can to the task at hand,
to teach and to learn from my students, colleagues and community,
but also to recognise the 'life' in my work,
to support, encourage and empower those I work with.*

*Help me to be fully present in my life:
to love and be loved by my family and my friends
to enjoy and celebrate the big moments and the little moments
but also to recognise the 'work' in my life,
to take the time to nourish my soul.*

*Help me to accept that it isn't always easy:
to miss the 'life' moments that happen while I am at work
to ask my colleagues to manage the 'work' when I am away
to accept that there will be times when 'work' interferes with life and
when 'life' interferes with work.*

Help me to live fully in every moment of my work and my life.

Amen.

Introduction

Connection, belonging and a common purpose contribute to a flourishing ACU campus environment that all of us can enjoy, benefit from and feel proud to share. This guide assists both staff and managers, to navigate flexible work arrangements to better manage their professional and personal circumstances, whilst preserving the collaborative spirit and engagement that defines our unique national community. The guide includes:

- options for flexible work,
- practical information when considering flexible work arrangements,
- a process checklist, and
- useful links to internal and external resources.

It starts with a conversation....

If you are interested in exploring options for flexible work, you should start a conversation with your manager to discuss and agree on an arrangement **before** submitting an application form for approval.

1. Principles guiding ACU's position on flexible working arrangements

The following principles guide ACU's approach to flexible working arrangements (FWAs):

- **Engagement** – The care and support of our students is our priority, and their interaction with staff members positively impacts their experience, and staff availability on campus is an incentive for student attendance.
- **Prioritising wellbeing** - Staff attendance on campus contributes to building vibrant multi-campus environments that the university community benefits from. Sharing time on campus creates social connection that positively impacts staff wellbeing and enhances opportunities for collaboration.
- **Fairness** - All staff members are entitled to apply for a FWA so their request can be considered by their manager.
- **Accountability** – Approval of FWAs sits with local managers, who are best placed to balance individual requests with the university's requirements and the needs of the team. This includes consideration of operational requirements such as semester-based availability for teaching. This approach is supported by senior leadership.
- **Health and Safety** - The health, safety and wellbeing of our people is prioritised by ensuring staff are working safely from remote locations and local managers are notified of team member's work locations. This includes temporary or longer-term changes to arrangements.
- **Collaboration** - Staff and managers are expected to adopt a collaborative and reasonable approach to FWA requests.
- **Teamwork** - Team based approaches to flexible work are encouraged that include implementing weekly "anchor days" to enable collaboration and strengthen working relationships.
- **Compliance** - ACU's obligations under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, anti-discrimination legislation, and work health and safety regulatory requirements will require specific consideration by managers when assessing individual requests (refer to section 2 below).

- **Consistency** - In the absence of an approved FWA, the employment conditions set out in a staff member's employment contract will apply, including the default work location and work hours.

2. Flexible working arrangements – additional considerations

2.1 Fair Work Act 'right to request' a flexible work arrangement

Some staff have a specific '*right to request*'* an FWA under the [Fair Work Act 2009 \(Commonwealth\)](#), which must be considered and formally responded to in writing within 21 days of an application being submitted. Staff have a right to request if they:

- are pregnant
- have responsibility for the care of a child who is school age or younger
- have a child who is under eighteen (18) years of age and who has a disability
- are a carer (as defined)
- are fifty-five (55) years or older
- have a disability
- are experiencing family, domestic or intimate partner violence or a member of the staff member's immediately family or household is experiencing family, domestic or intimate partner violence.

In considering FWA requests from staff, managers may need to prioritise applications that are made in accordance with the 'right to request' an FWA.

General tip:

'the right to request'*: If a staff member or manager require further information about the difference between an FWA request under the Agreement or Policy **vs the '*right to request*' under the Fair Work Act, they should submit a Service Central general enquiry to seek assistance from a member of the People and Capability (P&C) team.

3. Flexible working arrangement options

A range of options are available that can form an FWA request. For more information refer to the [Flexible Working Arrangements Policy](#) or **Table 1**.

Note: FWAs are temporary and require regular review prior to their renewal. FWAs can be approved for a period of up to 12 months in duration, dependent on the requirements of the work area. For example, they may need to be semester based for staff with teaching or other student facing responsibilities and managers will need to consider timetabling.

Table 1: Summary of FWA workplace options

Workplace option	Information	Action required
Adjust work location	Work from home arrangements: Work is conducted remotely from home in accordance with the approved days as per the FWA form approved by the manager. Any unplanned change to the approved arrangements must be approved by the line manager. Temporary alternate locations: • Requests may include working remotely (domestic/international) or an alternate campus location. • Requests to work remotely must align with the expectation that staff are attending campus for the majority of their working hours. Permanent alternative locations: • Staff will need to discuss it with managers before form submission, and managers must seek P&C BP advice for case-by-case consideration by exception.	Work from home: • Staff member is required to submit an 'FWA' in Staff Connect to seek formal manager approval after discussing their request with their manager. • Staff member must provide a photograph of their home workstation/work area as part of the application process. This is an ACU Work Health and Safety requirement. Temporary or permanent alternate location that does not involve any time on campus: • Approvals must be gained in line with the Delegations of Authority Policy and Register (Section 6.10A Vice Chancellor with advice from Chief People Officer).
Variation to work hours	• Requests for a temporary reduction in work hours can be made to managers. • This will result in a change to pay (e.g. full time to part time). • A permanent request to vary hours requires consideration by the manager, taking operational needs into account. • Staff are advised to seek independent financial and superannuation advice about any impacts to pay before making a permanent or temporary change. • Requests should avoid any start or end dates in the month of December due to university shut down and compressed payroll administration deadlines.	• For temporary fraction changes – staff member to submit an 'FWA' in Staff Connect for approval. • For permanent or temporary fraction changes – manager to submit a 'Request to Vary' form in Staff Connect for approval.
Work pattern change	• Request to change the way the hours are worked. • Seek own independent financial and superannuation advice about any impacts to pay before changing.	• For temporary work pattern changes – staff member to submit an 'FWA' in Staff Connect for approval.

Work pattern change cont'd	Examples: i) Compressed work hours over a weekly or fortnightly basis (e.g. 35-hour week worked over 4 days rather than 5). ii) Expanded working hours (for example, part-time hours can be completed across more days). iii) Change in workdays if working part time (e.g. changing the non-workday from a Monday to Thursday).	For permanent work pattern changes – manager to submit a 'Request to Vary' form in Staff Connect for approval.
Adjust start/finish times	- Start work later or finish work earlier. - Any request for start or finish times outside the hours specified in the Enterprise Agreement must be carefully considered as exceptions by the manager with advice from Employment Relations. - Provides for more capacity on weekday mornings/afternoons to attend appointments or other responsibilities such as caregiving. - Managers will consider the team's capacity for overall service coverage during standard business hours.	- Local arrangement between staff member and manager. - Arrangement is detailed and approved by the manager via email.
Changing work arrangements, including job share	- An employment arrangement where two (or more) staff members, each working part-time, share all the duties and responsibilities of a full-time position. - Consider what hours/days will be worked, with the remaining hours/days to be reallocated. This will result in a change to pay due to reduced working hours (e.g. full time to part time; part time reducing hours/days worked). - Seek independent financial and superannuation advice about any impacts to pay before changing to a job share arrangement.	Manager to raise a Service Central enquiry to discuss the process with P&C prior to providing approval.
Ad-hoc request to change work location, hours or pattern of work	- An informal request outside a formal FWA. - To respond to a short-term issue or one-off need.	- Local arrangement between staff member and manager which must be requested and approved by the manager. - Arrangement is to be detailed and approved via email between staff member and manager.

4. The Flexible Work Arrangements Request Process

The five key stages of the FWA application process in the diagram below will guide you through the process. The process is cyclical in that arrangements are temporary and require review at least every 12 months.



4.1 Guidance for staff

Plan, prepare and implement your FWA request using this checklist:

Staff member checklist	
Arrange a meeting with your manager before lodging a flexible work arrangement application to discuss your requirements and any personal circumstances related to your request. If a request is lodged without discussion with the manager, they will request a meeting.	
Prepare	Prepare for the conversation Prepare for the conversation with your manager by: - familiarising yourself with this guide, the relevant Agreement provisions and the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy. Further information can also be found on Service Central - considering options that best fit your personal circumstances (refer to Table 1 on Page 6), keeping in mind the requirement to spend the majority of your work time on campus - preparing to discuss and agree on an arrangement with your manager that suits you, your team and the university.
Meet	Meet with your manager You must meet with your manager to discuss: - the arrangements you are requesting - any relevant personal circumstances you are comfortable sharing, including if you have “right to request” characteristics outlined in the Fair Work Act - options that will work best for you, your teammates and the university - be open to considering alternatives to what you’ve proposed - how the proposed arrangement will work to ensure the team works productively, fairly and equitably

	- start and end dates for the arrangement, allowing time for the approval process and any pay impacting changes, such as change in fraction and compressed working weeks that will need to commence on the Monday of pay week (refer to ACU Payroll Calendar). <i>Before lodging your application, you must:</i> - make arrangements with your manager for any follow up meetings that may be needed - provide any additional information requested - ask questions if you need any more information or clarity. Note: If your request relates to a non-work injury or medical condition, your manager will seek advice from the relevant P&C Business Partner before progressing the application to consider any accommodations or supports that may be required.
Submit	Submitting the application After meeting with your manager, lodge your application to work flexibly guided by the instructions in Table 1. The options available to your manager in responding to your request include: - approve the request, or - return it to the staff member for further discussion and revision, or - decline the request, after speaking with the staff member. University policy requires that a written response is provided within 21 days of the application's submission.
Confirm	Confirming the outcome Where confirmation is received, verify the arrangements are correct and note commencement and expiry dates. If your request is not initially approved, participate in further conversations with your manager to consider alternative options that may work for you, your team and the university.
Monitor and review	Monitor and review Participate in follow up meetings with your manager about how the arrangements are working and make any adjustments required. Discuss any proposed changes to arrangements with your manager at the earliest opportunity. Remember, arrangements are not permanent and require review, and a further conversation prior to their expiry date before any future FWAs are approved.

4.2 Guidance for managers

As a manager you have the responsibility to consider and make decisions about your **team member's** requests to work flexibly. Your considerations should align with **your responsibility for ensuring a safe, productive, fair and equitable work environment for all**.

This checklist will assist you to navigate the **five stages of the process**.

Manager Checklist

It starts with a conversation

Meet with your team member to discuss their request and the reasons for it prior to formalising an arrangement to work flexibly. If the flexible work request form is lodged without the staff member meeting with you first, arrange a time to speak with them.

Prepare

Preparing for the Conversation

To prepare for the conversation, you should:

- familiarise yourself with this guide, the relevant [Agreement provisions](#) and the [Flexible Working Arrangements Policy](#)
- review your team's current working arrangements to inform your consideration of operational requirements including on site availability of team members, staff with protected rights under the Fair Work Act, and health, safety and wellbeing; and reasonable adjustments being accommodated.

Further information is available in Service Central.

Meet

Meeting to discuss the request

Meet with the staff member to explore the FWA requested, the staff member's personal circumstances where relevant and confirm their planned attendance on campus is consistent with university requirements.

Note: If the staff member discloses their request relates to a non-work injury or medical condition, seek advice from your P&C Business Partner **before** progressing the application to consider options to manage accommodations or supports that may be required.

Management Decision

Prior to making a decision to approve the application consider:

- the expectation that staff spend the majority of their work time on campus,
- the team's existing FWAs, including those with protected rights and reasonable adjustments;
- any operational requirements, including coverage for client/student facing roles, and ensuring an equitable team workload; and
- options for shared time on campus or "anchor days" for team interaction where members are co-located on the same campus.

Note: Staff are expected to seek approval on a case by case basis if they need to informally vary their approved FWA to meet a one-off specific need.

Making a decision

After considering the relevant circumstances:

- decide if the FWA request can be accommodated;
- speak with your manager and/or P&C Business partner for further guidance and clarification where required;
- inform the staff member of your decision and discuss next steps.

Confirm

Confirming the outcome

When you receive the application, the options are to:

- approve the request, or
- return it to the staff member for further discussion and revision, or
- decline the request, after speaking with the staff member.

A written response must be received by the applicant within 21 days of the submission of the request in line with the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy. If there is a delay that might exceed the 21 day timeline, keep the staff member informed of the request's progress.

	<i>Returning or declining requests</i> Seek assistance from your manager and/or P&C Business Partner where required to assist you in finding a suitable solution. Consider potential impacts of declining the request for the staff member's health and wellbeing, their right to request and any other potential consequences of declining. Discuss options with the staff member and work with them to identify a suitable alternative arrangement where possible. If the request is declined, provide the reason in writing as per instructions in the FWA form.
	When the arrangement is approved and confirmation is received, verify the arrangements are correct and note commencement and expiry dates.
	Monitor and Review Arrange follow up meetings with the staff member to check in on the arrangements and make any adjustments required. Remember arrangements are not permanent and require review, and a further conversation prior to their expiry date before renewal.

5. Support and resources

5.1 Staff

- Staff are encouraged to speak with their manager about any support they may need.
- [Service Central](#) offers advice, knowledge articles and a live chat function. If further information is needed, submit a general enquiry for a member of Service Central or People and Capability to respond to.
- Use [Staff Connect](#) to determine personal leave balances, submit a FWA or lodge a leave request.
- Raising concerns - Refer to the University's [Staff Complaints Management Policy](#) or the [ACU Complaints Portal](#) for further information.

5.2 Managers

In addition to the services above, managers are encouraged to:

- speak with their manager for support and advice.
- contact a People and Capability Business Partner.
- reach out to specialised [manager support](#).
- visit [Leaders – Acacia EAP](#) or call Manager Support on 1300 364 273.

5.3 Support services for all staff and managers – physical and emotional wellness

For a range of additional services (both internal and external) refer to the tables below

Acacia EAP : ACU's Employee Assistance Program is available to staff and their immediate family members at no cost.
ACU Campus Ministry : Embracing peoples of all faiths and traditions.
ACU Medical Centres : Brisbane and Melbourne offer high-quality healthcare services to staff, students and the local community.
ACU Sport Facilities and Gyms
ACU Safety and Wellbeing
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
CatholicCare/CentreCare: Brisbane Archdiocese Canberra Archdiocese Melbourne Archdiocese Sydney Archdiocese Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains Diocese Ballarat Diocese
UniSuper members can access 360Health , a suite of medical and wellness services available online or over the phone.

5.4 ACU policies, procedures and related information

General policies, procedures:	
Academic Workload Policy	Flexible Working Arrangements Policy
Children of Staff and Students on University Premises Procedure	Paid Outside Work Policy
Childcare Support for Academic Staff Policy	Pre-Retirement Agreement Policy

Employment of Part Time Staff Policy	Recording of Hours Worked Policy
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Leave policies:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural and Ceremonial Leave Guideline	Leave Without Pay Policy
Australian Defence Forces Reserve Leave Policy	Long Service Leave Policy
Community Engagement Time Release Policy	Parental Leave Policy
Community Service and Emergency Services Leave Policy	Personal Leave Policy
Compassionate Leave Policy Extraordinary Leave Policy	Recreation Leave (including Annual Leave) Policy

Information and resources:

ACU Staff Enterprise Agreement 2022-2025
People and Capability
Ways of working
Transition to retirement
Flexible Working Arrangement User Guide (Staff Connect)

5.5 External organisations, services and resources

Fair Work Act National Employment Standard – Flexible working arrangements
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Flexible Working Arrangements
Job Access Australian Government, Employment Assistance Fund
National Employment Standards (NES) - Personal/carer's leave
Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA): Employee Manager Flexibility Toolkit
Australian Human Rights Commission

6. References

Resources acknowledged in the research for the preparation of this guide:

- [Fair Work Act 2009 \(Commonwealth\)](#)
- [Fair Work Ombudsman](#)
- [Fair Work Act National Employment Standards \(NES\)](#)

