

Compressed Work Schedule Guidelines

A Compressed Work Schedule is when a full-time workload is compressed into less than a typical five full-day work week (e.g. four 8.75 hour days vs. five 7 hour days). As long as office operations are covered during core business hours, this kind of schedule can allow full-time employees to work longer days for part of the week or pay period, in exchange for shorter days or a day off each week or pay period.

These schedules can be beneficial in certain settings because it may allow for longer operational hours each day. Compressed Work Schedules are best suited for clinical staff, operational positions, or task-based work (such as data entry or call center work). Most *officer roles are not well-suited for compressed work as the expectation is that Officers of Administration work until their tasks are completed, no matter how much time that takes. And, anyone who manages others is expected to be available to their team during regular business hours. Therefore, it would be unusual for a Compressed Work Week to be approved for Officers except in the roles cited above.*

Examples of Compressed Schedules

Columbia traditionally operates on a 9:00am – 5:00pm schedule, with one hour off, resulting in a 35-hour work-week. Here are how alterations to that schedule might look:

- Four 8.75 hour days each week and a day off each week;
 - Employee works from 8:00am – 6:00pm Tuesdays – Fridays and is off on Mondays.
Referred to as a 4/35 schedule – 4 days worked in a 35-hour work week.
- Eight 7.75 hour days and one 8 hour day (one day off every pay period);
 - Week 1: Employee works from 9:00am – 6:00pm Monday – Friday.
 - Week 2: Employee works from 9:00am – 6:00pm Monday – Thursday and is off on Friday.
Referred to as a 9/70 schedule – 9 days worked in a 70-hour pay period.
- Four 8 hour days and one 3 hour day each week (one afternoon or morning off each week);
 - Employee works regular hours on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and has a half day on Wednesdays.

These schedules can be set in whatever time blocks and combination of days work best for the department and the employee.

How to Manage Time and Time Off

A minimum of a ½ hour lunch must be factored into the work day for daily hours greater than 4-hrs per day. Employees can choose up to a 1-hour lunch period that is permanently built into their schedule.

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When managing paid time off (PTO) and University Holidays, you must think of the time in terms of hours, not days.

Paid Time Off

If an employee gets 20 vacation days each year, this would translate to 140 hours in a 35-hour week.

Three personal days becomes 21 hours.

- **Scenario 1:** An employee working a 4/35 schedule would like to take three vacation days. 8.75 hours per day over three days is 26.25 hours, so this employee would deduct 26.25 hours from their bank of 140 hours of vacation time, leaving the employee with 113.75 hours of vacation remaining.
- **Scenario 2:** An employee on a 9/70 schedule needs to take a personal day. This is the equivalent of 7.75 hours and so that amount of time would be deducted from their bank of 21 hours of personal time. This would leave 13.25 hours of personal time for the rest of the year.

Sick leave is managed in the exact same way as described above.

University Holidays

Management of university holidays will differ depending on if the holiday falls on a day the employee is scheduled to work or on an “off” day. This will still involve converting days to hours and adding/subtracting time from the employee’s bank of PTO.

- **Scenario 1:** If a University holiday falls on a day that an employee is scheduled to work, 7 hours is deposited in their bank of PTO and 7.75 hours (for a 4/35 schedule) are withdrawn. It may seem as if the employee is losing something, because this results in a deficit, however they are getting a day off every week in exchange for the longer days they work. The number of hours of vacation and holiday are the same for employees on traditional and compressed schedules.
- **Scenario 2:** If a University holiday falls on an employee’s “off” day, 7.75 hours (for a 4/35 schedule) is deposited in their bank of PTO. They should then have the opportunity to take those 7 holiday hours on a day they are scheduled to work within a two-week period of the day of the University holiday (ideally, the next business day if it does not impact operational needs).

Managers and employees will need to maintain a Compressed Work Schedule tracking system in order to accurately account for PTO and University Holidays.

Overtime

This type of arrangement may not be appropriate for hourly employees because of potential overtime implications. It is important that schedules be viewed as the two week time period in an employee’s pay

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check. This is to ensure that the right number of hours are being worked (or taken as PTO) in that timeframe – and that one paycheck does not end up with more than 35 hours per week (triggering overtime) while the subsequent one has less than 35 hours per week.

General Requirements for Compressed Schedules

- All full-time employees must work a 35-hour week (or 70-hours each pay period)
- Operational requirements must be met
- Service to the customer must be maintained or improved
- Costs to Columbia University will not be increased
- Each office or operation must be covered during normal (or core) business hours
- Compressed Work Week schedules will not diminish the ability of Columbia University to assign responsibility and accountability to individual employees for the provision of services and performance of their duties
- In positions where a Compressed Work Week schedule is permitted, requests from employees for any type of change in work schedule or work hours will be considered on the basis of the above standards and the workload of the department
- Compressed Work schedule agreements must be documented and reviewed by PSRC for P&S departments or senior HR personnel for other departments
- Compressed Work Week schedules must be set (not varying from pay period to pay period)
- Compressed Work Week schedules must be reviewed annually; but are subject to change, at any time, based on operational needs with advance notification
- Employees must request a Compressed Work Week schedule in writing via the Flexible Work Arrangement Proposal Form