

## Flexible Work Arrangement Employee and Manager Guidelines

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Employees and managers are encouraged to refer to these guidelines to understand the criteria and review process for considering Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) requests.

### **FWA Standards of Practice**

- FWAs may be granted under appropriate circumstances to employees in good standing and whose job responsibilities are suited to such an arrangement. A manager's decision to allow a FWA should be based on the operational needs of the department and the employee's job function, and the process for evaluating FWA's should be transparent, fair and equitable.
- The job should be performed as well as or better than the prior arrangement.
- A specific work schedule, including work days and hours, must be agreed upon by manager and employee in advance. Employees must be onsite as necessary to attend meetings, training sessions, or similar events activities, or if there are core hours/days for all team members established by the manager or leadership.
- Employees must maintain a normal workload, and be responsive and available during agreed-upon work hours. Times when the employee will not be available should be noted appropriately on their calendars.
- Employees cannot serve as a primary caregiver for a dependent while working remotely. If extenuating circumstances arise, they should consult with their manager and investigate University resources. More information about caregiver support can be found on the [Office of Work/Life website](#).
- Just as they would in a standard work arrangement, employees who are unable to work due to illness should take the day(s) off as sick leave, and must report their absence to their supervisor. Vacation or personal days should also be reported according to the standard practice for their unit.
- FWAs should be evaluated at least annually, and employees and managers should remain flexible if an employee's job requirements change.
- An effort should be made to maintain and support teamwork, through special opportunities for Unit members to have shared hours and constructive interactions.

### **Flexible Work Arrangement Process**

#### **FOR EMPLOYEES:**

Employees interested in a FWA should complete the [Flexible Work Arrangement Proposal Form](#), which will need to be evaluated at least annually, and clearly address the ways in which their job responsibilities can be met while working flexibly. It is helpful to focus on the core functions of the job and address any

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impact that a FWA may have on the work. Remember that FWAs should have a net-neutral or net-positive impact.

Writing the proposal will help you think through the issues from both your own and other perspectives, and provide a document to use as a basis for discussion.

### **Assess your readiness for a FWA**

Review the guidelines and requirements, your job description and your tasks. Think about, and be prepared to answer questions on how such an arrangement would affect service delivery, deadlines, etc. Consider ways in which digital technology (video conferencing software, eSignature programs, etc.) may support your ability to meet your job responsibilities while maintaining a remain flexible work arrangement.

Please review the process for requesting an FWA as outlined in the [FWA Policy](#).

### **FOR MANAGERS:**

Flexible work arrangements can be a useful strategic tool for managing the operational functions of a department and the needs of employees. Columbia's FWA Guiding Principles can help support this review process:

### **FWA Guiding Principles**

- **The decision to allow a flexible work arrangement is based on operational needs of the department and an employee's job function.**

When evaluating a request for a flexible work arrangement, the most important thing to consider is the nature of the work being performed and whether or not a FWA is appropriate for that position. Managers may want to consider the following questions:

- Is any of the work tied to a specific time or place? If so, how much is fixed and how much is flexible?
- Is in-person interaction a core function of the role? If so, how much?
- Will this role still be in service to the mission of the reporting unit if some of the work is conducted flexibly?
- Will flexibility impact any of the people being served by this role?
- What (if any) technology or equipment will be required?

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- **The job should be performed as well as or better than the prior arrangement; having a net-neutral or net-positive effect.**

Granting a FWA should not negatively impact the quality of work being performed, nor should it have a negative impact on the needs of the people being served by that role or the other employees who work with the person who is requesting an FWA.

- **The process for evaluating FWA requests must be transparent, fair, and equitable.**

Decision making around allowing a flexible work arrangement must follow the same process for all employees. This does not mean that all decisions will have equal outcomes, as there are many variables related to each situation. Managers should discuss the process openly with employees so that they are aware of what criteria are used to make these decisions including, but not limited to:

- the responsibilities of the job function,
  - the needs and priorities of the department,
  - the interaction between colleagues and people served by the role,
  - the employee's skills and performance history.
- FWAs must be evaluated at regular intervals and employees and managers should remain nimble if job requirements change.
  - It is recommended that flexible work arrangements begin with a three-to-six-month trial period, at which point the arrangement can be evaluated. There should also be regular check-ins throughout this period so that any needed adjustments can be made. After this point, FWAs should continue to be evaluated regularly. **FWAs are a privilege which may be granted under appropriate circumstances to officers whose job responsibilities are suited to such an arrangement and whose work performance meets or exceeds standards.**

Generally, requests for flexible work arrangements should be contemplated when:

- The employee has demonstrated sustained performance, and when the manager believes that the employee can maintain the same expected quantity and quality of work as before.
- Quality of service can be maintained for students, faculty, and other members of the University community.

Generally, requests for flexible work arrangements should not be contemplated when:

- The nature of the job requires the employee's physical presence (e.g. the work of the employee requires daily face-to-face interactions with staff, faculty, or students who are

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- onsite), or efficiency is compromised when the employee is not present during core business hours.
- A new employee (less than six months) is asking for a schedule that differs from their agreement at the time of hire.
- The employee's current assignment requires frequent supervision, direction or input from others who are on-site or only available during shared core business hours.
- An effort should be made to maintain and support teamwork, through special opportunities for Unit members to have shared hours and constructive interactions.
  - When granting approvals for FWA requests, it may be helpful to maintain a core day or set of hours when all or most of your team will be in one place. This time can be used for team meetings, collaborative work, social gatherings, professional development opportunities, and more.

### **Guidance on the Review Process**

- Review an FWA request and evaluate against the criteria set forth in the evaluation guidance above.
- Consult with local HR and/or the Office of Work/Life for guidance and to ensure adherence to policy.
- Once the FWA request has been approved by local HR, meet with the employee to discuss.
- If request is approved, inform the employee as soon as possible and schedule a meeting with employee to develop an implementation plan.
- Review and confirm expectations and deliverables.
- If request is denied, schedule a meeting with employee to explain the business-based decision.
- Communicate the change to the team and any relevant business partners.
- Monitor the employee's progress and remain supportive.