



FLEXIBLE WORKING PROCEDURE

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1. About this procedure

1.1. St George's, University of London is committed to all employees achieving a productive balance between work and life outside work in order to facilitate good health and wellbeing. Experience during the Covid pandemic has shown that some flexible working is possible across most of the University.

1.2. The following principles apply to flexible working:

- St George's, University of London is a learning organisation that relies on employee interaction. In addition, it wants to encourage a vibrant workplace and study experience for students. As such, no job at St George's, University of London will be undertaken on a fully remote basis.
- Everyone is eligible to request flexible working. That does not imply that all employees will have access to the same flexible working options, as it will depend on the nature of their role.
- Flexible working should balance the University's needs and the individual's needs - business needs must be met.
- What counts is what employees and their team deliver.
- Managers will make the final decision on what flexible working options are feasible but should work with employees to try to find solutions that meet both the University's and individual's needs.

This procedure and these principles will be kept under review and adapted as required in the light of experience.

1.3. This procedure provides a framework for employees to discuss flexible working options with their manager. However, the different requirements of roles across the university means that there cannot be the same approach to flexible working in every

area. Employees and managers should work together to determine appropriate working patterns based on the outputs and requirements of the role undertaken.

1.4. This procedure applies to all employees. It does not apply to agency workers, casuals or contractors where working patterns will be determined according to work requirements and the contract in place.

1.5. Employees who have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment at the date an application for flexible working is made are eligible to make a flexible working request under statutory provisions. However, all employees at St George's, University of London may request to work flexibly, regardless of their length of service or circumstances. Further information about an employee's statutory right to request flexible working is available [here](#).

1.6. Appendix 1 provides some real-life examples of flexible working.

1.7. The [Special Leave Policy](#) provides further information on the types of special leave available at St George's, University of London, for example for employees to deal with unexpected domestic and personal events or perform a public duty.

2. Definition of flexible working

2.1. "Flexibility" and "flexible working" are terms used to describe a wide range of work styles and employment practices. Broadly speaking, they include all kinds of employment which differ from the traditional nine to five full-time job. Flexibility can be in terms of working time, working location or the pattern of working.

2.2. Flexible working supports employee wellbeing. In addition, it offers the University the opportunity to maximise space utilisation. From the employee's point of view, flexible working may allow more freedom to organise their employment to fit in with other parts of their life. For the employer, flexibility may enable the organisation of people more in line with peaks and troughs of demand or the varying needs of customers as well as freeing up office space for other uses. Flexibility can have a positive impact for all.

2.3. Flexible working practices include:

- Part-time working: work is generally considered part-time when employees are contracted to work anything less than full-time hours (usually 35 hours per week or 40 for clinical academics).
- Job-sharing: a form of part-time working where two, or occasionally more, people share the responsibility for a job between them.
- Flexible working hours: allows employees to choose, within certain set limits, when to begin and end work.
- Compressed hours: usually occur where an individual works a longer working day in order to complete their working hours in a shorter period, eg

a nine-day fortnight. Compressed working weeks, or fortnights, do not necessarily involve a reduction in total hours or any extension in individual choice over which hours are worked. The central feature is reallocation of work into fewer and longer blocks during the week.

- Term-time working/Annual hours: the total number of hours to be worked over the year is fixed but there is variation over the year in the length of the working day and week. For term time working the work pattern is clearly defined.
- Remote working: eg workers spend time working from home. This might be done on an ad-hoc or regular basis. Section 3 provides more details on the guidance and expectations for remote working.
- Career breaks: career breaks are extended periods of unpaid leave, normally between 6 and 12 months. Staff taking a career break will have the right to return to employment with St George's, University of London. This may be to their previous post or to a similar post on the same grade.

2.4. There are a number of reasons why managers should consider moving away from traditional patterns of work and offer flexible working. This includes the need to meet work demands that are increasingly outside traditional office hours, to recruit and retain the highest quality employees (the pool available will be bigger if flexible working is an option), to promote equality of opportunity, to assist employees in dealing with their out-of-work commitments, to meet the demands of customers, to consider cost savings/efficiencies and to improve employees' motivation and morale.

2.5. The University encourages teams to work together with their manager to come up with a team approach to flexible working arrangements taking into account work objectives and customer needs, for example to ensure that sufficient cover is provided onsite, as required. Managers will consider whether any proposed arrangements can be accommodated within the needs of the University and without creating additional work for the rest of the team.

3. Remote working guidance and expectations

3.1. An individual's normal place of work is as specified in their employment contract and is usually St George's, University of London, Cranmer Terrace, London SW17 0RE. However, many roles offer the opportunity for remote working, either on a regular or ad hoc basis, although as stated above, it is not expected that any job at St George's, University of London will be undertaken on a fully remote basis.

3.2. The following outlines the expectations of St George's, University of London with regard to remote working, eg working from home.

Guidance/Policy

- St George's, University of London does not require any employee to work remotely. As such, no employee will be designated as a home worker. Anybody who wishes to work onsite will be able to do so. Unless otherwise stated, Cranmer Terrace remains employees' usual place of work and the University will not cover the cost of travel to/from home and this location.
- Managers should be open minded to requests for flexible working, including remote working. The Covid pandemic demonstrated that remote working can be more successful than might initially be expected. Outputs should be the same when remote working, but just being carried out at a different location.
- Requests to work remotely for more than 40% of an employee's usual contracted hours must have Director approval. However, requirements for working onsite will differ according to job requirements, for example laboratory researchers, library staff, exam staff and estates and facilities staff are likely to be required to work onsite for the majority of their working hours.
- Employees may need to flex which days they work remotely in order to meet work requirements, for example if they are required to attend a meeting/event in person.
- Other than in exceptional circumstances, all employees must be able to be onsite the next working day if requested by their manager, for example to deal with an emergency. However, in general, it would be expected that more notice will be possible.
- Employees are only expected to read, respond or action emails within their normal working hours, whether working onsite or remotely.
- Remote working is not a substitute for childcare or other caring requirements. It is acknowledged that during the Covid pandemic many individuals did a fantastic job juggling caring responsibilities with work requirements. However, in normal circumstances, employees should ensure a work environment where they are able to work uninterrupted. Nevertheless, this does not preclude flexing working hours around caring responsibilities, if agreed with their manager.
- Remote working overseas at the employee's request will not generally be permitted. Overseas remote working would require management approval and would only be permitted for exceptional circumstances, for example for a prolonged visit to an ill relative. However, the maximum period will be no more than three months. Where the university requires an employee to work overseas for prolonged periods, further information can be found in the [additional terms and conditions for employees based overseas](#). For the avoidance of doubt, short-term remote working overseas while on university business, eg to attend a conference, is permitted.

Technology/Equipment

- As there is no requirement to work remotely, employees who choose to work remotely will be responsible for their own workstation set up, including the provision of a computer, desk etc. Some departments may provide a laptop for remote use, for example one which can be used onsite with a docking station and at home. This is at the discretion of each department/institute.
- St George's, University of London will not cover the cost of utilities or provide office supplies for remote working. This includes electricity, heating, broadband and printing. Employees who print work-related material at home should ensure that they abide by Information Governance requirements, including GDPR, and Records Management retention schedules.
- Where an individual works onsite for less than 80% of their contracted hours, they cannot expect to have a dedicated workstation onsite.

Meetings/Teaching sessions

- When remote working, individuals should always be contactable, and should dial into meetings. In general, it is expected that employees will have their camera on for meetings, especially if there are 8 attendees or less. Meetings do not have to be rearranged just because an individual is working remotely.
- St George's, University of London will provide the necessary equipment onsite to accommodate remote meetings/teaching, for example webcams and headphones.

Wellbeing

- It is recognised that remote working can have a positive impact on employee wellbeing and should be accommodated wherever possible, subject to business needs. However, it is also acknowledged that not all employees wish to work remotely, in which case they are able to work onsite.
- Any employee working remotely should ensure that their workstation meets health and safety requirements. Further advice can be obtained from the [Safety, Health and Environment Office](#).

4. Applying for flexible working

4.1. It is recommended that any employee wishing to request flexible working should approach their line manager and initially discuss the proposal. A discussion should take place that is both open and constructive. Ultimately it is for a manager to determine if the flexible working options proposed are feasible but both parties should

try to find a flexible working approach that works in the interests of the University and the individual.

4.2. The employee should provide an assessment of the likely impact of the change in working arrangements they are proposing, for example implications for productivity, for services provided to others, impact upon colleagues etc and provide suggestions as to how any potentially negative impact can be alleviated. They should explain why their preferred working pattern is compatible with the needs of the department/institute, as far as they can tell.

4.3. It is expected that through the discussions between an employee and their manager, a flexible working arrangement that meets the needs of both parties can be agreed, accepting that this may require compromise on both sides. However, in the event that such an agreement is not forthcoming, individuals may either submit a formal flexible working request under the statutory provisions or write to HR, setting out the basis of the disagreement and why they consider that the manager's decision is not appropriate. HR will facilitate the final decision-making process, including the involvement of a third party manager, if required.

4.4. A [changes to contracts and appointments form](#) should be completed where a flexible working request results in a change in working hours or working pattern, for example a move to part-time working or change in which days of the week are worked.

Appendix 1 – Flexible working case studies

Example 1 – part-time working

Please describe the flexible working you undertake

While part-time working is increasingly common, it is less evident in senior academic posts. For the past six years I have been working part-time (0.8FTE) in a senior academic role. When I took up my current post six years ago I was also returning to work from Maternity Leave. I discussed with my line manager whether it would be possible to work four days a week while my youngest son was little. Not only was this agreed, but the Dean offered to make the funding from the extra day a week available for research assistant support. I was able to recruit a fantastic researcher to support me in delivering research projects. I have recently returned to full time work for a fixed term to take on an additional project. I already miss my day off!

What are the benefits and challenges of your working pattern?

Working part-time has made a real difference to my ability to achieve some sort of work life balance. First and foremost, I have more time to spend with my three children. It means that there is always one day a week where I can collect my son from school and plan after school activities. At the same time, I don't feel that I have been "held back" as a result of my part-time role and have been promoted to Professor while working part-time. In particular, having the additional research support has been an amazing resource for me and my research work (and for the wider team).

The main challenge is that the provision of flexible working has felt like a privilege rather than a right. I think this is my own perception. However, the implication is that if I am ever asked to work on my day off I bend over backwards to make this possible. Like most part-time workers I am very focused when I am in the office and don't tend to feel there is time to take a break and catch up with colleagues. I am usually accessible on my day off and regularly end up doing a few hours work to "catch up". Despite the significant reduction in salary, it has felt worth it to have a day that is my own.

Example 2 - compressed hours

Please describe the flexible working you undertake

I work compressed hours, which means that I work five days in four, ie I work four longer days in order to complete my full hours for a normal working week.

What are the benefits and challenges of your working pattern?

For me the main benefit is having an additional day of personal time, as well as the weekend. I can organise my home priorities more easily, such as getting things delivered on my non-working day and it also offers me the opportunity to provide

more support for my elderly mother. From SGUL's point of view, I think they get a more productive and happy employee who puts in 100% effort while in work.

There are a few challenges. Firstly I'm in a senior professional services role and need to be accessible both to the people I support in my work and the team I manage. I therefore make sure I am contactable on my non-working day if needed and check emails. Checking emails is also so that I don't have too many to come back to on my next working day. Working longer days can sometimes be tiring and I also have to be very disciplined about my work hours. For example, I can't decide to get in a bit later one day and make up the hours another day as that would make the other day too long. Despite these challenges and the need to be as flexible as possible, I very much appreciate my working pattern and find it gives me a better balance in my life.

Example 3 – working as part of a job-share

Please describe the flexible working you undertake

I work in a full-time job but I share the work so that I work for half of the week and the other half is covered by my colleague. Together we work as a full-time role.

What are the benefits and challenges of your working pattern?

In my opinion to share a job successfully an individual must have two strengths, which are adaptability and flexibility in terms of working with your job share partner. There are pros and cons of a job share. Some of the pros are the flexibility of working part time only, it improves efficiency and holidays and other absences are covered (ie we wouldn't both be off in the same week meaning that there is always cover for part of the week).

Some of the challenges are that there can be too much reliance on one partner. In particular, some customers can focus on interacting with only one job share partner which can make it harder to work as a unified job share. Also, productivity can be impacted if there is a lack of communication between partners, which means partners need to communicate really well with each other to make a job share work. Finally, at times I find it difficult not having full time staff benefits, such as not getting Bank Holidays which fall on my non-working days.