



UNIVERSITY OF  
LINCOLN

# Formal Flexible Working Requests Policy

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

- 1.1 The University recognises the beneficial and positive impact that a hybrid and flexible operating culture has in helping to support the development and advancement of:
  - Overall business efficiency;
  - Service delivery and output for our students, employees, and internal and external customers;
  - Employee work life balance;
  - A positive and inclusive environment ;
  - A happy and healthy place of work and study.
- 1.2 For a wide range of roles within the University, hybrid ways of operating and levels of flexibility are either naturally afforded or required, and are exercised with a mutual benefit for both the University and the employee at a local level.
- 1.3 However, some employees may require a formal agreement to make a permanent change to their working arrangements that reaches beyond the scope of our general approach to hybrid ways of working. This could be due to a number of reasons, that may include, but are not limited to, a change in personal circumstances (e.g. caring responsibilities), or wanting to enable a career development goal or lifestyle goal such as retirement plans.
- 1.4 In these instances, a formal request for flexible working should be made following the process outlined in this document. For non-contractual changes to the way of working, such as Agile Working, Hybrid Working or Remote Working, please view the University's [Hybrid Working Guidance](#).

## 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all University employees and the requirements of the business will determine if a formal request for Flexible Working is appropriate.
- 2.2 The University has the responsibility to consider such requests in a 'reasonable manner' and make a response to the formal request within a timescale of 2 months, unless otherwise agreed.
- 2.3 Where an employee requires a reasonable adjustment in the form of a change to their work pattern due to a disability, these requests should be supported through line management, the Department of People, Performance and Culture (PPC) and where applicable, occupational health provisions.

## 3. WAYS OF WORKING

- 3.1 The term "flexible working" describes any working arrangements where an employee needs a guaranteed commitment that they can work certain hours or days which differ from their existing contractual employment agreement, or where they need to specify a specific day to work from another location. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- A change to the amount of hours of work;
- A change to the times of work;
- To work your hours over fewer days (compressed hours);
- To work remotely for an agreed number of days per week or month;
- Phased retirement - employees who may be considering flexible retirement should review the [Flexible Working into Retirement Policy](#).

3.2 A flexible working request can be permanent or for a limited time (for example a 6 month period).

#### **4. ELIGIBILITY**

4.1 Flexible working will be considered for all employees regardless of length of service. However, it is not a requirement or an automatic right. Each application will be considered on its individual merits.

4.2 Employees are eligible to submit a maximum of two Flexible Working Requests in any 12 month period.

#### **5. PROCESS MONITORING**

5.1 The University commits to monitor the outcome of all Formal Requests for Flexible Working and this data will be reported on annually to help inform the future development of practice and support our equality and diversity monitoring.

#### **6. PRINCIPLES**

6.1 The University's provision under the formal request for flexible working will aim to facilitate our duties under the Equality Act (2010), for instance, but not limited to, childcare and caring responsibilities.

6.2 In order to maintain the continuity of its business the University will be unable to provide flexible working as an automatic right for employees.

6.3 The University will consider all formal requests for flexible working upon each request's merit and assess each request based on the needs of both the business and the employee.

6.4 The University's agreement to one employee's formal request (either within the same area or in a different area of the University) will not set a precedent or create a right for another employee to be granted the same or a similar change to their working pattern.

6.5 It is the responsibility of the line manager to consider, assess and evaluate the potential business implications of implementing formal flexible working arrangements. It may not always be possible to grant a Flexible Working Request, and there are eight specific legitimate grounds for declining a request:

- The burden of additional costs
  - Inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff
  - Inability to recruit additional staff
  - Detrimental impact on quality
  - Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer and/or student demand
  - Detrimental impact on performance
  - Insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work
  - Planned structural changes to the institution
- 6.6 If the line manager deems the original request cannot be accommodated, it is their responsibility to initiate further conversation(s) with the employee to offer and explore alternative options.
- 6.7 The University reserves the right to operate a trial period, normally expected to be between 1-3 months, unless otherwise agreed. It is expected that there should be regular reviews during the trial period to assess whether the needs of both the business and the employee are being met, or whether any further modifications need to be made to the arrangements. Following the trial period, a final decision will be made as to whether the request can be accommodated or not. If at the end of this period, it is deemed that the new pattern is not suitable by either party, the employee will revert to their original working pattern. If it is deemed suitable, the terms and conditions will be made permanent. Working beyond the date of the agreed trial period will be deemed to have been an acceptance of the formal flexible working request.

## 7. FORMAL REQUEST FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

- 7.1 Before making an application employees need to be aware that:
- A formal request for flexible working is a request to make a contractual change to the terms and conditions of employment either permanently or for a limited time.
  - Such changes may have financial implications, it is the employee's responsibility to fully understand the nature and impact of their request upon their personal financial, pension or personal impacts i.e. work permit or visa requirements, in order that they make an informed decision before making a formal request for flexible working
  - If the request is in relation or in any way associated with a retirement, employees should contact Payroll Services, for further advice and guidance
- 7.2 All employees are strongly advised to make sure that they explore any potential implications before putting forward a formal request.
- 7.3 Employees will need to complete a [Formal Flexible Working Request Form](#) and submit it to their line manager.
- 7.4 The line manager will meet with the employee as soon as possible (within 28 days) to discuss the request in more detail. If the line manager has already agreed to the request, this meeting may not be needed.
- 7.5 After considering the request, the line manager will confirm if the request can be met (with or without a trial period) or not. Any outcome will be confirmed in writing by PPC.

## 8. LINEAR FLOW PROCESS

Employee informal considerations	1	Employee to consider formal flexible working arrangements.
	2	Informal discussion between employee and line manager to explore and consider formal flexible working arrangements in advance of any formal request being made.
Formal request made	3	Employee to complete and submit the <a href="#">Formal Flexible Working Request Form</a> and return to line manager.
Line Manager considerations	4a	Line manager to meet with employee as soon as possible after receiving the 'Formal Request for Flexible Working' to discuss the require in more detail and explore options.
	4b	If the line manager has already decided to approve the formal request, a further meeting may not be needed.
	4c	The line manager will consider the formal request and where necessary seek advice from PPC.
Request outcome	5a	Request Met – line manager will complete the application form and send to PPC, along with <a href="#">Amendment to Contract</a> form. PPC will notify the employee in writing.
	5b	If unable to meet the request but modification could be suggested, a trial period may be offered. This should be noted on the application form, and sent to PPC, along with <a href="#">Amendment to Contract</a> form. PPC will notify the employee in writing.
	5c	If unable to meet with the request – this should be noted on the application form by the line manager and the line manager will initiate further conversation(s) with the employee to explain. The application should be sent to PPC, who will notify the employee in writing.
PPC System	6	Employee's employment record will be updated to reflect the outcome.

## 9. THE RIGHT TO APPEAL

- 9.1. If after completing the above process an employee is dissatisfied with the outcome, they should initially raise this informally with their line manager. It can help to:
- explain why you feel the decision was wrong or unfair;
  - share any information that was missed or not available when your employer made the decision;
  - share any evidence if the request was not handled reasonably;
  - listen to your employer's reasons for their decision;
  - suggest any compromises you are willing to make.
- 9.2 If an employee wishes to formally appeal they should do so in writing to their People Business Partner within 10 working days of receiving the written notification of the decision, setting out the reasons for the appeal.
- 9.3 The People Business Partner will then arrange for the appeal to be heard by an appropriate manager who has had no prior involvement in the case. The appeal hearing will be a review of the decision and will be supported by an independent PPC representative.
- 9.4 The employee will have the right to attend the hearing and to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or other representative. The line manager who made the initial decision regarding the request may also attend if appropriate.
- 9.5 The decision may be given at the appeal hearing and will in any event be confirmed in writing within 10 working days of the hearing. The decision following the appeal shall be final.
- 9.6 The appeal process must be completed within 3 months of receipt of the original flexible working request.