



Charles Sturt
University

Manager's Guide

Considering Requests for Flexible Working Arrangements

Division of People and Culture

**For further information please contact your People and Culture
Business Partner**

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Manager's Guide *Considering Requests for Flexible Working Arrangements*

Flexible Working Arrangements – What Are They?

Across the course of their careers, most staff will experience periods where family or caring responsibilities influence how they engage with work, including caring for children, ageing relatives, or family members with disability or illness. As a CSU people leader, you play a critical leadership role in enabling flexible working arrangements that support workforce sustainability while meeting operational and strategic objectives. While balancing flexibility with business demands can be complex, particularly where multiple arrangements exist, this guide provides practical solutions to support consistent, informed decision making aligned with CSU's priorities.

Recommended Process – Guidance from Our HRBP's

When a staff member requests flexibility in their working arrangements, it is recommended that you follow these steps. These are discussed further in the attached appendix:

1. Ask for a formal proposal
2. Assess its workability
3. Meet with the staff member to discuss and gather more detail
4. Negotiate to ensure a good fit
5. Ensure support from their colleagues
6. Formalise
7. Implement
8. Review

Why We Do It?

Flexible working at CSU strengthens our ability to attract and retain talented staff, enhance productivity and performance, and deliver on our strategic objectives. It supports effective workforce planning, enables broader service coverage, and can contribute to cost efficiencies. Importantly, flexibility promotes staff motivation, wellbeing, and sustained engagement which all helps to maintain a capable, energised workforce.

The National Employment Standards (NES)

Under the NES in the *Fair Work Act 2009*, certain eligible employees have a legal right to request flexible working arrangements (such as changes to hours, patterns of work or work locations). Employees must have been with CSU for at least 12 months before making a written request.

Please note, casual employees also have a right to request flexible working arrangements. Please speak with your HRBP to go through the eligibility.

An eligible employee can make a request if they:

- are pregnant,
- are a parent or have responsibility for the care of a child of school age or younger,
- are a carer (as defined under the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*),
- have a disability,
- are 55 years or older,
- are experiencing family and domestic violence, or
- are caring for or supporting an immediate family or household member experiencing family and domestic violence.

Employers must respond in writing within 21 days of receiving a valid request, either approving, refusing on reasonable business grounds, or setting out any alternative arrangements agreed with the employee. A

refusal must be explained in writing and only be based on reasonable business grounds after genuine consideration and discussion with the employee.

Your HRBP will assist you in meeting these obligations. Please contact them at the earliest opportunity.

Know The Options for Flexible Working

Below are some options for flexible working, you may consider other options which are not seen below. Please discuss the suitability of options with your HRBP. You may also like to ask your team on their ideas for flexible working.



Important Reminders

- Assess each request on a case-by-case basis
- Be careful of setting a precedent for an unwarranted arrangement
- Be consistent with your approach to considering all requests
- Document the agreed arrangements
- Seek advice from your HRBP as soon as possible

Don't be pressured into accommodating all requests as originally presented, alternatives should be explored which reasonably meet the needs of the staff member and the University.

Associated Forms and Information

Access to further information is linked below. A link has also been provided to ELMO training on managing FWA. For all CSU Forms, please search for the below applicable form name and follow the prompts to complete online. Associated forms:

- Leave – Purchased: Application to Purchase
- Leave – Purchased: Application to Take Leave
- Individual Flexibility Agreement
- Change of Fraction
- Remote Work Agreement

If you encounter any difficulties or need assistance finding a particular form, please reach out to dpc@csu.edu.au and a member of the People and Culture Service Centre team will assist you.

[CSU Forms](#)

[Enterprise Agreement](#)

[Flexible Hours of Work Scheme](#)

[Employee Leave](#)

[Working Conditions](#)

[Fair Work Flexible Working Arrangements](#)

[ELMO Learning Module – Managing Flexible Work Arrangements](#)

Flexible Leadership Mindset at CSU

1. Lead with Outcomes

Focus on output, not hours.

Think in terms of roles, deliverables, performance and tasks rather than time spent in the workplace.

2. Think Beyond 1.0 FTE

Design work around demand.

Consider workflow cycles and peak periods. Temporary mixes of full-time and part-time arrangements may better meet operational needs.

3. Model the Culture

Actively support and promote flexibility.

Flexibility is a CSU initiative. Leaders set the tone.

4. Challenge Assumptions

Examine your own views.

Test whether perceived barriers are structural realities or habits of thinking.

5. Take a Whole-of-Life View

Recognise changing circumstances.

Staff needs shift across career and life stages. Sustainable teams account for this.

6. Think Strategically

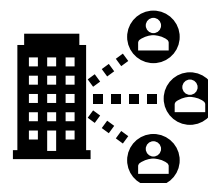
Use flexibility as a business tool.

It can support workforce planning, project delivery, vacancy management and service expansion.

7. Lead by Example

Demonstrate balance.

Utilise flexibility appropriately and visibly. Leadership behaviour shapes team norms.



Appendix 1. Recommended Process

You are encouraged to contact your People and Culture Business Partner if you require further assistance with the below recommended process. Please contact dpc@csu.edu.au if you do not know who your HRBP is.

1. Ask your staff member for a formal proposal

Provide your staff member with clear instruction on what you expect in the proposal. Ask them to review any relevant policies/procedures beforehand. Proposal should include reason for request, proposed arrangements, proposed start and length of arrangement, their view of impact on work unit/organisation/students and any proposed solutions to impacts.

Prompts:

1. *How do you see this arrangement impacting your role, the team, and our students, and what solutions would you suggest?*
2. *Have you reviewed the relevant policies and considered how your proposal aligns with operational requirements?*

2. Assess workability of the proposal

Review current team arrangements

Map who is working when and where to confirm coverage during business hours, identify task dependencies, and ensure critical knowledge is shared.

Work schedules, task lists, and buddy arrangements support efficient teams and should always be in place, not just when flexible arrangements are requested.

Assess role requirements

Consider the nature of the role, including student/client contact, supervisory responsibilities, core hours, task divisibility, and any requirement for on-site presence.

Check alignment with the request

Assess how the request fits with existing team arrangements, identifying any risks to coverage, capability, or service delivery.

Confirm the most appropriate option

Consider whether alternative flexibility options, backfilling, or performance factors should be considered to meet both business needs and the staff member's circumstances.

Prompts:

1. *How will this arrangement affect team coverage, service delivery, and critical knowledge sharing?*
2. *Which aspects of the role require on-site presence, supervision, or core hours, and which can be performed flexibly?*
3. *Is this the most workable option? Is there a better option to balance business/individual needs?*

4. Meet with staff member to discuss

Support the staff member to consider all aspects of their request by having a structured discussion that balances personal needs with work unit requirements.

- This should cover the type and details of the flexible arrangement sought.
- The reasons for the request (with confidentiality assured).
- Potential impacts on the staff member, if refused.
- The operational, service, and cost implications for the work unit, if approved.

Consider the staff member's performance, work style, and suitability for the arrangement, as well as whether there is flexibility in the request.

Take clear notes and ensure expectations are set. The staff member needs to understand that requests are assessed against multiple factors and may not always be accommodated.

5. Adaptation to make the fit

After the discussion with the staff member, if you have concluded the proposed work arrangement genuinely will not be suitable in the current structure, you and the staff member should consider what reasonable changes could be made to 'make the fit'.

The following options can be considered:

- adapting the staff member's request
- adapting work of other team members (requested changes must be communicated).

There may be staff members who want to increase their work hours, change their work times, change their work responsibilities etc which then 'makes the fit'.

Explore other options for flexible work that may be more suitable for the work unit, while still meeting the staff member's needs.

6. Ensure support from fellow team members

Generally, a request for flexible work by one staff member affects others, particularly their team members. While your support for the arrangements is crucial, support from colleagues is just as important for it to be successful.

It is up to you to determine:

- Who is affected?
- What are their perspectives?
- What are the objections/barriers/concerns?
- How can the concerns be addressed?

These issues can be explored in team or individual discussions, as appropriate. While team input can support successful arrangements, the final decision rests with you. Confidentiality must be maintained, with the staff member's agreement on what information is shared with the team.

7. Formalise an agreement

- Confirm any new arrangements with your supervisor, relevant budget areas and People and Culture.
- Document the arrangement.

Trial and review

When trialling flexible work, clearly document all arrangements, including position details and any job-sharing arrangements, confirm whether the arrangement is temporary or ongoing, agree on start and end dates, and schedule regular reviews. People and Culture believe best practice is to align the reviews with PPDR.

Performance management

Manage performance consistently for all staff, regardless of work arrangement. While expectations should be discussed during approval, once in place, flexible work should not attract separate performance processes. Regular reviews should focus on whether the arrangement continues to meet both individual and operational needs.

8. Implementation

Interventions for efficiency

Use simple, practical measures to support effective flexible work arrangements, including buddy systems or accessible work procedures to ensure coverage, shared calendars to provide visibility of availability, call forwarding when staff work away from the office, and clear email signatures that communicate working patterns. Schedule team meetings at times that enable broad attendance and use technology where needed to maintain connection and information flow.

Managing urgent situations

Discuss in advance how unexpected priorities will be handled, including flexibility to adjust hours or days, capacity to pay additional hours where appropriate, and whether staff can be contacted outside normal hours for genuine emergencies. Managers should apply judgment, recognising that short-notice changes may not always be feasible, particularly where caring responsibilities apply.

9. Review

You and the staff member should have negotiated and recorded a date for review of the arrangement. You may wish to seek feedback from colleagues as part of the review. Confidentiality in this process is vital, and colleague feedback can provide useful input to refining flexible work arrangements. This ensures the arrangement is working for the whole team.

Appendix 2. Contacts

People and Culture Service Centre

- (02) 6338 4884
- dpc@csu.edu.au

Employee Assistance Program

- 1300 361 008
- Offers coaching and leadership support

Human Resources Business Partners

- An up to date list of HRBP's and their portfolios can be found [here](#)