

Flexible Working Policy

Vision and Introduction

To maintain the continued success of SOAS, the School needs to attract and retain world class academic and professional staff. We achieve this in a number of ways, including our flexible working approach.

Scope and Eligibility

The School (SOAS) recognises the importance of helping its employees balance their work and home life, and will consider and agree, wherever possible and practicable, requests for flexible working.

This Policy is inclusive of both statutory and discretionary provisions. All employees have the legal right to request flexible working after 26 weeks of service with their employer, however SOAS encourages employees and managers to consider flexible working requests from day one, including at the recruitment stage.

This policy should be used for permanent changes to an employee's terms and conditions of employment. Temporary changes are agreed at a local level within departments, subject to the normal arrangements for such changes.

The School recognises the link between equality and quality. As part of the wider commitment for a diverse and inclusive workplace we recognise that our staff who have protected characteristics may have different personal circumstances. These are to be taken into consideration with the application of this policy.

Principles

Flexible working options that are managed effectively, support our workforce in achieving our overall vision and strategy, improve the student and staff experience, and manage our physical resources more efficiently. Careful evaluation of SOAS's business needs must be undertaken before any arrangement is made.

Creating a positive working environment: At SOAS, we want to provide our staff with a positive, supportive and stimulating working environment in which they want to work.

SOAS students and research are the priority: Flexible working arrangements must take into consideration the potential direct or indirect negative or positive impact on SOAS students and research work, as well as colleagues.

A different approach may be needed for different staffing groups: The School aims to offer a range of flexible working practices for all staff, where possible. There are some staff groups whose role will not allow for a certain type of flexibility (for example, some roles cannot be done remotely). For these staff we would encourage staff and managers to consider flexible working in the widest possible sense.

Flexibility requires some give and take: Employees and managers need to be open and honest about potential challenges and opportunities of any proposed flexible working arrangements. All arrangements should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose and the timescale for review is established at the outset e.g. annual Staff Development Review (SDR). Any flexible working arrangements agreed would not override times when further flexibility is required to meet the business needs (for example during the student recruitment, clearing and/or enrolment periods).

Communication: All staff must be fully available during their normal working day. Any changes to working arrangements must be agreed with line managers and communicated to relevant parties, e.g. service users and other teams or departments.

Work-life Balance: All services have a presence on the SOAS site and staff are expected to attend on campus regularly, and have working days and hours compatible with the business needs of the team or department. Each department will have local arrangements about the required level of staffing that is needed on site. This may be varied on a weekly or termly basis, according to business need. Each department will have dedicated workspace on campus for their staff. There may be a times when staff may have to share that space with other colleagues.

Consistency: All staff members have clear and consistent work hours and these hours are made available to relevant parties (and are usually also placed on an email signature). Staff are available during remote working hours as they would be if working on-campus. For example, staff (whether working on-site or remotely) should be contactable by all communication methods, including email, telephone and meetings, although there will be times during the working day when contact is not possible (e.g. while teaching or taking a lunchbreak), and certain kinds of work (including research) may mean staff are not in a position to respond immediately. Previously established expectations around reasonable response times (e.g. to email) remain in place.

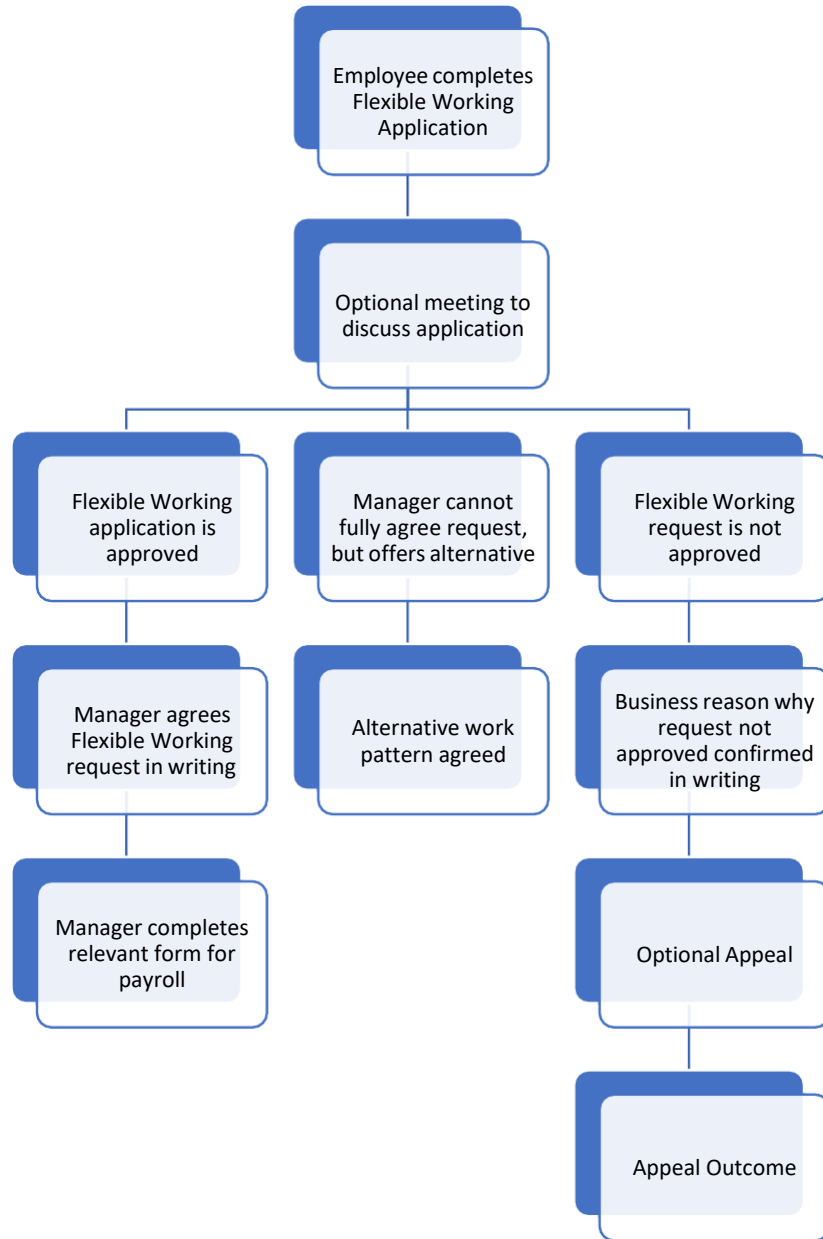
What does SOAS Offer?

SOAS offers the benefit of flexible working wherever possible, according to the nature of the role and business needs. Where remote working is agreed, SOAS will provide agreed levels of equipment and technical support to ensure that staff at SOAS are able to do their role efficiently.

If you can work remotely, as part of an agreed flexible working pattern, it is important that remote working arrangements are suitable. Things to consider may include;

- Health and Safety. Further details can be obtained from SOAS Health and Safety Manager
- Quiet, uninterrupted time and space to be able to complete the required tasks of your role. You must ensure that you can maintain confidentiality.

The process for applying for flexible working



Flexible Working Procedure

All flexible working arrangements should be initially discussed and agreed with the person's line manager who would also consult with the relevant Head of Department or Director of Professional Services. It is anticipated that local arrangements for short-term flexible working to meet a particular business or personal need can be made by mutual agreement and implemented accordingly. However, where there is a permanent change to an employee's terms and conditions, for example, a reduction in hours or a change in the time worked on-campus where an agreement cannot be made locally, a formal flexible working application should be completed.

Changes to Ways of Working

In most cases we expect new flexible working arrangements to be agreed between managers and individuals. We can also offer on-campus work space for people who are not able to work from home.

Where agreement cannot be reached, this procedure provides a formal mechanism to allow those requests to be considered in a structured way and offering a route of appeal if needed. It also ensures that we consider all formal requests in relation to the correct legal framework.

We also recognise that there are some front-facing roles where regular remote working is not possible, although this does not preclude formal flexible working applications under this policy. There may occasionally be cases where people who have remote working arrangements in place but wish to return to working on campus a higher proportion of the time, and this procedure can also be used to consider these requests to work on campus more of the time.

Types of Flexible Working Request

Flexible working describes any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when employees work. Employees can request a number of different types of flexible working. The School's core business hours are between 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday. Any flexibility should be considered around our core hours or as close to this as possible. Types of flexible working may include:

- amendments to working hours, patterns or times of work
- job-sharing
- remote or home-working (and the balance between this and on-campus working)
- annualised hours
- compressed hours
- term time working.

Making a flexible working application

Employees must submit their application using the School's Flexible Working Application (FWA). This ensures all information has been taken into account for all parties. By fully completing the FWA, employees will comply with the relevant statutory requirements for such written requests to work flexibly, in addition to providing the information the School requires to carefully consider their request.

Meeting to discuss flexible working request

A flexible working request can be approved without the need for a meeting. However, there may be times when a meeting is necessary to discuss further details of the flexible working request. The manager should invite the employee to the meeting and provide necessary details so that the employee can come to the meeting prepared. This should initially be an informal meeting.

Trial period

Once agreed, flexible working requests are a permanent arrangement, however, there are times when a 3 months' trial period may be set. This will be issued as a variation to contract letter so that the contractual implications of the change are clear, including details of any trial period. During the trial period either the individual or manager may wish to suggest changes to the new arrangements

When can a flexible working application be approved

Careful consideration for the job role and the team must be taken into consideration with all flexible working requests. We will aim to agree reasonable flexible working requests where possible.

Non approval of flexible working request

The School will only decline requests for flexible working arrangements where there is a good business reason and a clear explanation of the rationale for refusal will be provided in writing. A refusal of a flexible working request, will usually be for one of the following reasons;

- The department will incur additional costs as a result
- The quality and standard of service provided will be compromised
- The team performance will be affected
- The demand of the service will not allow for flexible working

Where it is not possible to accommodate the employee's requested working pattern, an alternative pattern of work will be offered wherever possible.

Appeal

An employee can appeal against the non-approval of a flexible working application. This appeal will be heard by a manager in a different department and supported by a People Services representative. The employee will have the right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or a union representative.

Timescale

We aim to complete the whole process within 3 months.

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