

**Retirement Policy
(including Flexible Retirement)**

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy and the associated procedure is to enable both management and staff to effectively plan and manage retirement and succession planning.

2. Full Retirement

- 2.1. From 1 October 2011, under the Employment Equality (Repeal of Retirement Age Provisions) Regulations 2011, the University no longer operates a Default Retirement Age.
- 2.2. To help facilitate workforce planning, it is appropriate that a discussion should take place with an employee at appraisal regarding where they see themselves in the next few years and how they see their contribution to the University. The range of issues covered may be very wide: for some it might be their aspirations for different roles within the University, for others, who may be considering retirement, it may cover whether they see themselves working in the University in the longer term. As an employer, the University cannot hold staff to what is said as part of this discussion, it does give the opportunity for managers to explore the longer-term aspirations of their employees including retirement in the context of succession planning.
- 2.3. Staff wishing to retire should do so in accordance with their normal contractual notice period which, dependent on staff category, will range from one to three months. Full details can be found [here](#).

A summary is outlined below:

	Notice Requirement from Employee	Notice Requirement from University
Academic Research	3 months' notice ending on: 31 January* or 31 July*	3 months' notice
Academic Related	3 months' notice ending on: last day of month	3 months' notice ending on: last day of month
Other Staff	Less than 5 years' service – 1 month 5 - 9 years' service – 1 to 2 months 9+ years – 1 to 3 months	Less than 5 years' service – 1 month 5 - 9 years' service – 2 months 9+ years – 3 months

*This is considered necessary to enable the University to plan the delivery of teaching and other related activities.

- 2.4. Any member of staff who is considering full retirement, and is a member of one of the University Pension Schemes, is strongly advised to consult the pension scheme rules and guidance on the [USS website](#) and [RBP information page](#) as early as possible. Further information can be obtained from the University Pension Office.

3. Flexible Retirement

3.1. The University is committed to adopting a more phased approach to retirement and recognises the potential benefits that it can have for both the employer and employees – this is commonly referred to as flexible retirement (see [Appendix 1](#)).

3.2. Employee Benefits

Many employees, currently move from working full-time to full retirement, which is a significant life change. Working flexibly up to retirement can allow employees a more gradual transition from full time work to retirement. Potential benefits of flexible retirement for employees include:

- the passing on of skills and knowledge to other employees from experienced staff;
- providing a development opportunity to other employees as colleagues reduce their hours or responsibility level;
- enabling an employee to strike an effective work life balance;
- to plan a phased move into retirement

3.3 Employer Benefits

- It helps the University facilitate workforce planning and proleptic recruitment into key positions;
- The retention of skills and experience of employees which otherwise may be lost helping prevent knowledge gaps;
- Reducing capacity without some of the disadvantages associated with full retirement;
- It may assist in restructuring;
- It may assist in achieving salary savings within a School/Directorate.

4. Flexible Retirement Process

4.1. In facilitating flexible retirement, the University will very much build on developments within and outside the sector. Under this process, employees may reduce their working hours whilst drawing some of their accrued pension benefits.

4.2. The detailed procedure to arrange and support flexible retirement is set out in [Appendix 1](#).

4.3. Members of USS Ltd

USS requirements for flexible retirement are set out in [Appendix 2](#).

4.4. Members of RBP

RBP requirements for flexible retirement are set out in [Appendix 3](#).

4.5. Non-Members of USS/RBP

For those employees who are not members of USS/RBP, the same principles underpinning flexible retirement will be applied. Clearly, there will be no pension implications for such employee.

Flexible Retirement Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Bearing in mind the need for succession planning, normal resource planning and ensuring that the critical important needs of key customer groups can be met, the normal requirement will be that a request for flexible retirement, if approved, will only be agreed as part of a package that will include final retirement at a specified date normally within four years (or five in some exceptional circumstances).
- 1.2. Approval of the package will, therefore, constitute a binding commitment on both the employee and the University to vary the contract of employment and for the final retirement of the employee to take place on, or before the specified date. For those who decide to leave before the specified date, the normal contractual notice period will continue to apply.
- 1.3. Full retirement will commence within four years, or five in some exceptional circumstances, of the start of the flexible retirement period (this includes any extension periods, as permitted under the USS Scheme).

2. Considering a Flexible Retirement Application

- 2.1. The University recognises the potential benefits of flexible retirement and any request will need to be considered having regard to the individual's needs and the needs of the School/Directorate.
- 2.2. The University is required to give approval to the application for flexible retirement and whilst all flexible retirement requests will be given thorough consideration, it may not be possible to give approval in all cases.
- 2.3. Heads of School/Directors will need to follow the specific approval process and cannot give any commitments to staff until the Flexible Retirement Panel has decided on the merits of the case and confirmed the outcome. In the case of Clinical Academics who undertake both clinical work for Hospital Trusts and academic work for the University, the Senior Management of the Hospital Trust or Health Body for whom the Clinical Academic employee works, will be consulted on the application for flexible retirement prior to the Head of School completing the documentation.
- 2.4. In assessing the potential benefit to the University, Senior Managers should take into account:
 - the ability to implement planned structural changes;
 - the impact on teaching and research and the ability to continue to deliver this at a high standard;
 - applications which may assist in restructuring or the resolution of redeployment issues;
 - applications which may assist in achieving savings within a local salary budget;
 - applications assisting staff with work/life balance after the managerial interest has been considered.
- 2.5. The following factors should also be considered when determining whether management support should be given to an employee's application for flexible retirement* :
 - the individual circumstances of the person;

- the practical implications of agreeing to a request – the likely impact upon the quality of services delivered to students and others;
- the likely possibility of recruiting extra staff;
- the nature of the work undertaken by the employee – is it of a type which would be suited to a flexible working arrangement?;
- the employee’s skills, and whether there are other employees carrying out the same or similar duties;
- the likelihood of being able to recruit successfully an employee to undertake the duties not being completed;
- the cost implications of a flexible arrangement.

*these will not over-ride the managerial needs of the University.

2.6. Where approval has been given, the University will do its utmost to uphold the agreement. Where, in exceptional circumstances, it has not been possible to properly cover the work that would arise the arrangement could be deferred and/or varied.

3. Flexible Retirement Panel

3.1. The annual timeline that will be applied in considering applications for flexible retirement is set out below.

Timeline	Action
Stage 1	Applicants complete application form (Sections 1 and 2) and pass to Head of School/Director by Friday, 8 January 2021.
Stage 2	Head of School/Director meets individual to discuss the request, makes his/her recommendation (Section 3 of application form) and submits form to People and Culture by Friday, 29 January 2021.
Stage 3	All applications for flexible retirement considered by the Flexible Retirement Panel by 19 March 2021.
Stage 4	The Flexible Retirement Panel will notify the applicant of the decision by 23 April 2021.
Stage 5	The applicants who have been granted flexible retirement by the Flexible Retirement Panel to notify People and Culture of acceptance/non-acceptance within two weeks of receipt of outcome letter.
Stage 6	Normal date of implementation shall be 1 August 2021 (this date may be varied by agreement).

3.2. The Reward Manager, or nominee, shall convene a meeting of the Flexible Retirement Panel in February/March each year. The Panel shall consist of:

- Registrar and Chief Operating Officer (Chair);
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students;
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
- Director of People and Culture;
- Director of Finance;

- Head of Reward and Performance, or nominee (in attendance).

3.3. Each application, including the views of both the employee and the Senior Manager, will be considered by the Panel. The employee will be entitled to attend the panel meeting and may be accompanied, in accordance with section 5 of this procedure. The Panel may decide to invite the Senior Manager to attend the meeting. Following the meeting of the Flexible Retirement Panel, the employee will be notified in writing of the decision.

4. Review Panel

4.1. Employees who wish to have the decision of the Flexible Retirement Panel reviewed must do so in writing to the Reward Manager, People and Culture, within 10 working days of the date of the letter of notification, setting out the grounds on which they consider the matter should be reviewed.

4.2. The Reward Manager or nominee, shall convene a meeting of the Review Panel within a reasonable period. The employee will be entitled to attend the review and be accompanied, in accordance with section 5 of this procedure.

4.3. The Review Panel shall consist of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Dean, Director, whom shall not have had previous involvement with the case, and Reward Manager, or nominee, (in attendance).

4.4. The decision of the Review Panel shall be given in writing to the employee as soon as is reasonably practical after the review meeting. The decision will be final.

5. Representation

5.1. The employee is entitled to attend the meetings of the Flexible Retirement Panel and/or the Review Panel and be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work colleague.

6. Further Monitoring/Review

6.1. The implementation procedure will be reviewed every three years to assess uptake, application and the impact of the procedure on the University. Further amendments will be made as appropriate in consultation with the recognised trade unions.

7. Further Information and Advice

7.1. Further queries arising from any member of staff who is considering full or flexible retirement should be addressed with the University's Pensions Office, in respect of the pensions benefits. Employees are advised to obtain pension calculations from the University's Pensions Office prior to submitting an application for Flexible Retirement.

7.2. Senior Managers and/or employees should contact the People and Culture Directorate to obtain information regarding the application of this procedure.

Flexible Retirement – USS Requirements

1. USS Requirements

An employee who is a member of the USS pension scheme is able to make an application for flexible retirement if the following requirements are met:

- (i) the member must be aged 55 or above;
- (ii) he/she must have 'qualifying service' (normally a period of at least two years' pensionable service);
- (iii) a member must reduce their working hours by a minimum of 20% and also reduce their salary by a minimum of 20% on a long term basis;
- (iv) the proportion of benefits to be drawn is a minimum of 20% and a maximum of 80% of the member's total pension and lump sum at the date of flexible retirement (and note that benefits will be actuarially reduced to the extent that they are payable before the member's normal pension age);
- (v) a member may elect to flexibly retire on a maximum of two occasions and must access a portion of their pension benefits on each occasion, accessing at least 20% on the first occasion.

2. Guidance

Any member of USS who is considering flexible retirement is strongly advised to consult the pension scheme rules and guidance at www.uss.co.uk

Flexible Retirement – RBP Requirements

1. RBP Requirements

An employee who is a member of the RBP pension scheme is able to make an application for flexible retirement if the following requirements are met :

- (i) the member must be aged 55 or above;
- (ii) he/she must have 'qualifying service' (normally a period of at least two years' pensionable service);
- (iii) a member must reduce their working hours by a minimum of 20% and also reduce their salary by a minimum of 20% on a long term basis;
- (iv) the proportion of benefits to be drawn is a minimum of 20% and a maximum of 80% of the member's total pension and lump sum at the date of flexible retirement (and note that benefits will be actuarially reduced to the extent that they are payable before the member's normal pension age);
- (v) a member may elect to flexibly retire once.

2. Guidance

Any member of RBP who is considering flexible retirement is strongly advised to consult the pension scheme rules and guidance at

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/FinanceDirectorate/Visitors/PensionsTaxandInsurance/Pensions/RBP/>

APPLICATION FOR FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT

The Head of School/Director should forward this completed form to Reward and Performance, People and Culture, Administration Building, Level 4 or email Wendy Marsh, W.Marsh@qub.ac.uk, by 29 January 2021. (A copy should also be sent to the employee).

Section 1 – Applicant Details	
Staff Number	
Full Name (PRINT)	
Position	
School/Department/Unit	
Staff Category	
Applicant's Signature	
Date	Click or tap to enter a date.
Section 2 – Arrangements	
Background explanation to support application.	
Please state your current working pattern (days/hours/times worked).	
Please state the working pattern you would like to work in the future (days/hours/times). Please also include details of any further 2nd flex you wish to take before retiring in full (NB: 2nd flex is only available to members of USS).	
Please state the impact of new working pattern and how it can be accommodated.	

Dates of any previous requests made.

Please state the date you would like your flexible retirement period to end, and for full retirement to commence - this is normally within four years (or five in some exceptional circumstances) of the start of the flexible retirement period.

NB: Flexible Retirement will commence on 1 August unless otherwise stated.

Have you obtained calculations from the University's Pensions Office?

Choose an item.

Please submit this form to your Head of School/Director to complete Section 3.

Section 3 – Head of School/Director Recommendation

As Head of School/Director you should arrange to meet with the employee by no later than 31 January to discuss the request and make your recommendation accordingly.

Please tick as appropriate: Support Request Do Not Support Request

Please provide an explanation which summarises the basis upon which you have reached your decision. Where you are supporting the request, you need to specifically address how the quality of service will be maintained.

Click or tap here to enter text.

HoS/Director Signature

Print Name

School/Directorate

Date

Click or tap to enter a date.

A Flexible Retirement Panel will be convened to make the decision regarding the outcome of this request.