**Queen’s University Belfast**

Flexible Working Practice Guiding Principles

1. Purpose

Queen’s University values flexibility within our workforce and recognises the importance of helping our employees to balance their work and personal life, as well as helping to attract and retain the best global talent.

We aim to support and trust our managers to deliver flexible services that meet the changing needs of our students and other customers, while ensuring that we continue to deliver quality research, teaching and service, and assisting our workforce to achieve a positive work-life balance. The University has a range of flexible working arrangements to support this aim.

The University recognises the benefits and positive impact of flexible working arrangements to:

* 1. Improve health and wellbeing and work-life balance\*
  2. Reduce stress, creating a happier and more engaged workforce\*
  3. Create a more agile workforce which will in turn improve efficiency and successful delivery of our strategic priorities
  4. Create a positive and inclusive working environment and reduce the gender pay gap\*
  5. Reduce the need to travel, energy consumption and effective workspace management\*

\* Aligned to UN Sustainable Development Goals[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Scope

These guidelines apply to all employees across the University. There are eligibility requirements for formal flexible working requests which are detailed in the [Flexible Working Policy and Procedure.](http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/hr-filestore/Filetoupload,865655,en.pdf)

1. Principles

The following principles are intended to underpin our approach to flexible working across the University, creating consistency, while at the same time allowing flexibility to reflect local differences.

1. Discussions and decisions on all flexible working requests should be underpinned by our core values [ICARE](https://www.qub.ac.uk/about/Leadership-and-structure/Core-Values/).
2. Flexibility involves compromise and mutual trust, with responsibility for identifying and maintaining a workable solution being shared by managers and staff.
3. All staff have the right to request flexible working, however, it may not be possible to agree to a particular working pattern due to business need. Students, customers and research excellence are of paramount consideration.
4. Working arrangements are tailored to the individual and to the job. An agreement to one employee’s request 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. There is no “one size fits all” solution.
5. There should be no detriment to the careers of those working flexibly. Business need, performance and skills should be the basis for career progression.
6. Arrangements should normally be reviewed annually or when there is a significant business change to ensure they continue to be effective in meeting both the needs of the employee and the University.
7. Types of Flexible Working

There are a range of formal and informal flexible working practices across Queen’s including:

* Formal arrangements are requested in line with the Flexible Work Policy. These require manager agreement and result in a change to the employee’s terms and conditions (examples include holiday entitlement, grade of post, terms of visa for international staff, funding for externally funded positions). The most common requests include those to work part-time or job-share.
* Informal arrangements are those which require agreement by a manager but do not result in any change of terms and conditions. These are typically described practices which support agile working and include working core hours e.g. 10.00 am–4.00 pm with flexibility outside of these, staggered start/finish/break.

While the above provides examples of current practice in Queen’s, it is recognised that this may not suit all business areas. For example, some roles may be less suitable for working at home, such as those using specialist equipment, those where sensitive data may be being processed or a student/customer facing role. Similarly, core hours may not suit student/customer facing roles.

1. University Responsibilities

While the manager and employee have responsibility for implementing and upholding the principles and guidance, the University also has core responsibilities which are set out below:

* Recognise and embrace the importance and value of work-life balance.
* Ensure that decisions in relation to requests for flexible working, are made in accordance with employment legislation, our policies and procedures and in line with our [core values ICARE](https://www.qub.ac.uk/about/Leadership-and-structure/Core-Values/).
* Communicate the available flexible working options and provide guidance on the potential associated impacts to both the University, its business, and the individual.
* Provide managers with appropriate guidance and support on how to consider requests for flexible working arrangements fairly and consistently.
* Provide support and guidance for both managers and employees on how best to implement and manage flexible working arrangements and relationships.

1. Managers’ Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for thinking about how flexible working in their team may help them to achieve their key priorities.

Requests to work flexibly must be managed in line with the flexible working principles using the supporting guidance. Managers should encourage and support requests that have a positive impact on the University.

1. Employee Responsibilities

Employees who wish to make a request for flexible working, are responsible for considering the possible business implications associated with adopting flexible working arrangements. These considerations will help employees better explore and discuss the proposed changes with their manager.

1. Monitoring

It is recommended that Schools and Directorates monitor flexible working within their areas and identify any barriers experienced by employees seeking a flexible working arrangement.

1. UN Sustainable Goals on Good Health and Wellbeing (SDG 3), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Decent work and Economic Growth (SDG 8) and Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)