



Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) at Columbia

May 2009



FWA Policy Statement

Columbia University allows flexible work arrangements subject to meeting the needs and operational goals of the department.



Flexibility ROI

Increased Productivity

Highly engaged employees expend 57% more effort than non-engaged peers, which leads to time and cost savings for an organization.

FWAs also result in reductions in stress and commuting time, which can negatively impact productivity.

Higher Attendance

Decreasing an employee's "work/life conflict" by offering flexibility leads to higher overall attendance (absenteeism costs can equal 11% of an organization's payroll expenditures)

A study by the Canadian Policy Research Network reports that decreasing work/life-related scheduling conflicts leads to a more than 40% drop in unscheduled absences.

Quality of Work Improvement

Higher productivity allows employees to seek out ways to better perform their jobs, resulting in higher quality of products and services produced.

A survey by Boston College indicates that 65% of organizations surveyed reported a "positive" or "very positive" impact on quality of work after implementing a flexible program.

Attracting Talent

The opportunity for flexibility enhances the talent pipeline by attracting individuals who seek a diverse and inclusive environment acknowledging the fullness of their lives.

Watson Wyatt reports high-performing employees under age 30 rank flexibility as their 2nd most valuable benefit.

Long Term Retention

Greater job satisfaction leads to long term retention over the course of an employee's career, resulting in lowered cost of turnover and recruiting.

SHRM estimates the cost of replacing employees is 150% to 250% of annual compensation figures.

Key Component for Best Places to Work

Flexibility empowers employees to have more control over their time, a key criteria for "best of" employers.

84 of Fortune's "100 Best Companies" permit telecommuting at least 20% of the time.



FWAs at Columbia

- A FWA is any variation in scheduling work hours and/or location from the traditional on-campus daily pattern.
- Types of FWAs available:
 - Flextime,
 - Telecommuting,
 - Nine, Ten, and Eleven-Month Employment Program
- FWAs can be:
 - Formal: Requires proposal form; ongoing arrangement
 - Informal: Requires management approval; short-term basis



FWA Governance

- Department managers may initiate FWA's for their staff with review and approval by CUHR.
- Employees may apply for FWAs for themselves.
- The FWA policy applies to all Officers of Administration and the Libraries, and Non-Union Support Staff
 - Not applicable to Officers of Instruction and Research
 - Not applicable to staff covered under Collective Bargaining Agreements



Flextime

- Flextime allows for variations in starting and departure times, but it usually does not alter the total number of hours worked in a work week.
- Flextime options:
 - Fixed starting and departure times that are selected periodically
 - Starting and departure times that can vary daily
 - Variations in the length of the workday
 - Compressed work schedules
 - Customized work schedules



Flextime Examples

- Examples of Reasons to Use Flextime
 - Informal: Susie needs to attend a parent-teacher conference at her child's school so she requests to start an hour earlier so that she can leave an hour earlier.
 - Formal: Ricky wants to volunteer at another organization so he decide that he wants to work his full-time work week in fewer than 5 days (i.e. 4-ten hour days vs. 5-8 hour days).
 - Formal: Josie wants to start or stop her day at a certain time so that she can match the public transportation time tables.



Flextime Considerations

- **Managers must consider the following questions to determine if flextime is a viable work option:**
 - How will flextime affect the unit's other work functions?
 - Can the manager measure results and productivity effectively without frequent and regular supervision?
 - Can the manager provide accountability and clear performance expectations?
 - Can the department maintain its present level of customer service without undue hardship on customers/clients?



Flextime Considerations

- **Managers must consider the following questions to determine if flextime is a viable work option (continued):**
 - Can the department establish “core hours” for managing peak periods, coordinating work among staff, scheduling meetings, office events, etc.?
 - Can the department apply technology to help facilitate successful outcomes?
 - How will the manager communicate assignments to the staff member?
 - How will this FWA affect team projects, work with other departments, and other such strategies?



Flextime Considerations

- **Departments should also consider the employee attributes when evaluating flextime as an option:**
 - The employee should have excellent time management skills and a demonstrated history of satisfactory, independent work performance.
- **Special Considerations for Non-Exempt Staff:**
 - The University allows flexible work arrangements for non-exempt staff, except for situations that may alter a schedule such that overtime occurs.



Telecommuting

- Telecommuting entails working outside of the office for at least part of the workweek on a regular basis.
- Telecommuting guidelines:
 - A specific work schedule should be agreed upon in advance.
 - Employees should maintain a “normal” workload.
 - Employees must be on-site as necessary to attend meetings, training sessions, or similar events or occurrences.
 - Employees who are unable to work because of illness must use sick leave, and report their absence to their supervisor.
 - Employees who wish to be relieved of responsibility for work on a particular day(s) must use vacation or personal leave.
- Note: Additional guidelines exist for tax, insurance, and university property which can be found on the HR website under “telecommuting policies.”



Telecommuting Example

- Formal: It takes Brooke two hours to get to work; she asks to telecommute on Fridays so she can save time and money on commuting.
- Informal: Nathan has work being done on his house that can only occur during the work week; he asks to telecommute for two days so that he can let the workers into his home.
- Informal: Brenda needs to go out of town to attend to an elder care matter for a week, but she wants to work part of that time and requests that her manager consider that she telecommute from her parents home for an agreed upon number of hours/days.



Telecommuting Considerations

- **Generally, requests to telecommute should be contemplated when:**
 - The staff member has demonstrated sustained high performance (meets or exceeds expectations on performance management review) and can maintain the expected quantity and quality of work while telecommuting.
 - The department can maintain quality of service for students, faculty, and other members of the University community.
 - Telecommuting is appropriate considering the nature of the job.



Telecommuting Considerations

- **Generally, requests to telecommute should not be contemplated when:**
 - Telecommuting would negatively impact the school or department's efficiency.
 - The job requires the employee's physical presence, or the employee requires frequent supervision, direction or face-to-face input from others who are on-site.
 - The employee's performance evaluations do not indicate sustained high performance (does not meet or exceed expectations on performance management review), observed productivity levels are problematic, the employee has received disciplinary action or has a demonstrated attendance problem.
 - The employee does not have a suitable off-site work location.



Nine, Ten, and Eleven-Month Employment Program

- May be initiated by the department for a new position, or a vacant full-time position may be re-designated as a nine, ten, and eleven-month position.
- Employees may also request this work arrangement.
- Program highlights:
 - Employees are paid their salaries on their regular payroll cycles over a 12-month period
 - Continuation of full-time employment status and designated benefits



Nine, Ten, and Eleven-Month Employment Guidelines

- Salary is pro-rated based on the number of months the employee is scheduled to work.
- Vacation benefits and personal days is prorated based on vacation eligibility status.
- If a University holiday falls on a day that the employee is scheduled to work the holiday will apply.
- If a University holiday falls on a day the employee is not scheduled to work the holiday will not apply and not be made up in any other way.



Nine, Ten, and Eleven-Month Employment Guidelines

- Program participants must work the minimum number of days described below, before any scheduled time off:
 - Eleven month program: One complete working month
 - Ten month program: Two complete and consecutive working months
 - Nine month program: Three complete and consecutive working months
- The time away from work must be taken in 30 day increments, but not necessarily consecutive months.



Nine, Ten, and Eleven-Month Employment Examples

- Jake's child's school is closed over summer and Jake wants to stay home with his child instead of having to pay for child care; he requests a Nine-Month Employment arrangement.
- Percy likes to travel for two months every year for his personal fulfillment; he requests a Ten-Month Employment arrangement.
- Chloe wants to go to a different country to do an intensive volunteer program that requires her to be gone for a month; she requests an Eleven-Month Employment arrangement.



Nine, Ten, and Eleven-Month Employment Considerations

- Requests for nine, ten and eleven month positions should be considered when:
 - Looking for cost-efficiencies
 - The business operations are slower during a certain time of year (i.e. summer)
 - Looking for an alternative for a part-time appointment
 - When the position is project-focused and can be completed in less than a full year



Part-Time Employment

- May be considered by an employee and/or manager for either a new or existing position.
- The scheduled work week must be at least 20 hours, but less than 35 hours per week.
- The position must be a Grade 10 or higher at Morningside, Lamont or Nevis, or Grade 103 or higher at CUMC and Harlem Hospital.
- An eligible Part-Time Officer of Administration may elect from the an array of benefits, and may also be eligible for other types of FWA's.



FWA Process Overview

- All FWAs:
 - must allow the department to meet business needs and operational goals.
 - must be put in writing to ensure that management and staff have a mutual understanding of the specifics.
 - made as a condition of employment cannot be revoked without department head and HR approval.
 - decisions are to be made on a case by case basis and must be approved by the department in advance;
 - FWA approval processes to be established by department; minimum of immediate supervisor and their manager.



Sample FWA Proposal Form

The Flexible Work Arrangement form is used to request, modify, and review flexible work arrangements.

*This form should not be used for FWA's that are agreed upon as a condition of employment or for informal/short-term FWA's.

Employee Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Employee ID: _____

Employee Email: _____

Department: _____

Supervisor's Name: _____

Supervisor's Email: _____

Date request submitted: _____



Sample FWA Proposal Form (continued)

Flexible Work Arrangement Requested:

- Flextime
- Telecommuting
- Nine-month Employment Program
- Ten-month Employment Program
- Eleven-month Employment Program

Describe your current schedule and your proposed schedule

Days/Hours	Current Schedule		Proposed Schedule	
	On-Site	Off-site	On-Site	Off-site
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				
Total Hours				



Sample FWA Proposal Form (continued)

1. Briefly describe your job including the functions you perform on a daily basis. Please include any daily, weekly, or monthly activities that require your participation.
2. Based on your functions described above, how will coverage be ensured when you are not on-site? How will your participation in the workplace be altered?
3. What are the core time periods involved in your work? How do you plan to cover these periods?
4. What review process do you propose that you and your manager use to constructively monitor and address any issues about your FWA?
5. What communication tools/equipment will you be using to support your FWA?
6. How flexible can your arrangement be? Can you alter your schedule temporarily if operational needs arise?
7. What other challenges should we discuss?



Managers:

Roles and Responsibilities

- Review and evaluate the proposal; review with your HR client manager if necessary; meet with the employee to discuss.
- If the proposal is accepted, develop an implementation plan; discuss timekeeping issues, expectations and outcomes.
- If the proposal is denied, schedule a meeting with the employee to explain the business rationale.
- Communicate the change to the department and any necessary business partners.
- File approved proposal forms and any backup documentation for the department; ensure the staff member keeps copies.
- Monitor the employee's progress and remain supportive.



HR Client Manager: Roles and Responsibilities

- Know FWA policies and guidelines.
- Be available for consultation with department managers on FWA-related issues.
- Encourage department managers to think creatively about how to make FWAs work.
- Recognize and address red flags: unfair or inconsistent application of policy.



Ownership and Resolution

- If an employee has a dispute, he or she should bring the matter to the attention of the next level of management, and if necessary, to the department head.
- Management and the employee should pursue all options, including consultation with HR, with a focus on resolving concerns.
- Departments should consult with their HR Client Manager during decision-making, especially when a department is considering denying a FWA request.
- The decision to grant a FWA ultimately belongs to the dean or department head.



In Conclusion

- FWAs often promotes productivity, enhance job satisfaction, and enable recruitment and retention of valuable staff.
- FWAs are a business tool and strategy that a department can employ
 - Telecommuting, flextime, and Nine, Ten, and Eleven Month Employment Programs are available
- HR & department manager = FWA Champion
- Department managers should consult with their HR representatives in difficult situations pertaining to FWAs.
- FWA decisions reside with the department manager.



Questions?

- Contact the:
 - CUMC HR at 212-305-3819
 - Employment and HR Client Services via email at hrcs@columbia.edu or at 212-851-7008.
 - Office of Work/Life via email at worklife@columbia.edu or at 212-854-8019.