Flexible Work Options Guidelines

Introduction

Goal 3 of Plymouth State University’s Strategic Plan is to: create a work environment where faculty thrive in their teaching, service, and scholarly and creative endeavors; staff are supported in their work environments; and all are provided with rich professional development opportunities.

Priority 1 - Be an employer of choice for PSU faculty and staff, who excel in their areas of expertise, are committed to student success, and advance the mission of the University.

Flexible Work Options (FWO) offer a way to provide excellent customer service while managing people, time, space, and workload in an effective and efficient manner. Plymouth State University recognizes the importance of flexibility and quality of life to staff and the value that employees provide to the University.

Potential Benefits:

- Increased employee initiative
- Increased productivity
- Increased loyalty and morale
- Increased employee satisfaction
- Expanded number of hours office is open to customers
- Continuous time for getting work done without impacting customer service
- Reduced absence and tardiness
- Reduced turnover
- Reduced overtime/compensation time
- Decrease in workplace stress
- Better balance between work and personal responsibilities
- Greater commitment to the organization

FWO can be used to enhance job satisfaction and quality of life for PSU employees. FWO enable staff and management to serve customers well, meet University goals and balance personal and professional responsibilities. PSU supports flexible work options when they meet the needs of both the department and the individual. FWO are adjustments to an employee’s regular work schedule on a recurring basis. Flexible work options may be revised or revoked by management as needed.

Because of PSU’s diverse work environment, flexible work arrangements may not be available or successful in some departments. Flexible work arrangements will be reviewed and decided upon by the supervisor.

- NOTE: Flexible work options are meant to be adjustments to an employee’s regular work schedule on a recurring basis. FWO are not temporary changes in order to adjust for an unplanned, short-notice or sporadic event. If a temporary change is required in an employee’s schedule, it is not subject to these guidelines.
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Use of these guidelines should be the result of open and ongoing discussions within each department and/or unit and between the supervisor and the employee. The determination of whether a staff member will be allowed to participate in a flexible work option will be made on a case-by-case basis by an employee’s supervisor, and in accordance with the department business needs, requirements, and constraints of both the department and staff member. Final approval and arrangements for situations covered by these guidelines are at the discretion of the Supervisor/Dean/Principal Administrator and are not subject to complaints or grievances. (Note: The criteria for FWO in this document are general guidelines; departments and units may choose to utilize criteria that are more restrictive.) All FWO must conform to overtime, record keeping, and meal break provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act and New Hampshire labor law for staff covered by those provisions.

Examples of Flexible Work Options:

- An employee who works 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. carpoolss with others from a long distance and the other employees must be at work at 7:00 am. The employee requests to work from 7:00 am to 4:00 pm.
- An employee lives quite a distance from the University and would like to reduce the number of trips made to work each week. The employee requests to work from 6:45 am to 5:15 pm four days per week and takes 1/2 hour off for lunch.
- An employee is taking a class that meets once a week at another university that is two hours away. The employee requests to work nine hours per day for four days and one four-hour day.

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Typical flexible work options are flextime (flexible start, stop and lunch times), compressed work schedules (compressing standard work week hours into fewer days), and flexplace (work away from the office, typically at home).

Managing Flexible Work Options

Supervisors are responsible for setting work schedules and assignments based on the business needs and resources of the department. Supervisors are encouraged to be as flexible as possible in accommodating flexible work option requests, but the decision to allow and/or adjust changes in work schedules is made by management. Supervisors are encouraged to allow flexible work options when possible and to apply work arrangements fairly and as equitably as possible.

Definitions

Core time — Staff are required to be present or accessible during a certain core period of hours each workday or during peak workload periods; may also require staff to be present during a particular day of the week.

Flextime — arrangement that allows a full-time exempt or non-exempt staff member to, with his or her supervisor, set the starting and ending times of their work day. A flextime arrangement may require that an employee work core hours identified by the department. For non-exempt employees, this arrangement must include a bona fide meal period. Flextime arrangements do not reduce the
number of hours or total effort worked in a given week by an employee.

**Examples of Flextime Arrangements:**

- Individualized start and quit times that remain constant each work day (7:30 am to 4:30 p.m.)
- Individualized start and quit times that vary daily, however, the same number of hours are worked every day (7:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday and 9:00 am to 6:00 pm Tuesday and Thursday)
- Individualized start and quit times with varied daily hours but consistency in the total number of hours worked every week
- Extended lunch times offset by additional hours at the beginning and end of the day 7:30 am to 5:00 pm with 1-1/2 hours off for lunch daily
- Mandatory core-time with individualized start and end times with varied daily hours but consistency in the total number of hours worked every week

**Compressed work week** – arrangement that enables a full-time employee to complete 40 hours of work in fewer than five full days.

**Examples of compressed work week arrangements:**

- Four 10-hour days per week
- Four 9-hour days and one 4-hour day per week

The Fair Labor Standards Act requires that non-exempt (hourly) employees receive time and a half for working more than 40 hours in a week.

**Telework** – allows for all or a portion of the job to be performed off-site, on a regular, recurring basis, usually at the worker’s home. Telework arrangements are most appropriate for work that has clearly defined tasks, measurable work activity and does not require the individual’s presence in the workplace. Typically a Telework arrangement will specify the number of hours to be worked at home and the specific time at which this will occur. If granted, the staff member is responsible for home computer security and maintaining confidentiality of data. No reimbursement is provided for the staff member's own computer or internet coverage. Workers' Compensation and professional liability apply.

Telework is not provided to an employee to allow for childcare or dependent care while working at home. In order for an employee with children to work at home, appropriate childcare or dependent care must be arranged so childcare or dependent care does not distract from work duties.

Telework does not mean the professional or management practice of working at home after hours to work on reports or presentations or to catch up on reading.

*Prior to approving a Telework option, the supervisor should discuss technology and user support needs/issues with ITS.*
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Additional requirements for on-going Telework need to be completed prior to finalizing the arrangements. These include equipment arrangements, dedicated space, health and safety liability and data security. Information can be found in the Telework Tool Kit and Telework Agreement Form & Telework Guidelines.

Leave time usage – Non-exempt staff members on a telework or compressed workweek schedule will deduct the number of hours scheduled to work on the day(s) off for Earned Time and/or sick pool. For example, 10 hours of vacation would be deducted if a staff member uses vacation on a day with 10 scheduled work hours. Exempt staff members on a telework schedule will deduct either a ½ day or full day of vacation or sick time. This applies to all paid leave time except for holidays as described below.

Holiday pay – PSU holidays are based on a 7.5-hour or 8-hour day. Any regular employee will receive prorated pay based on regular hours worked during the pay period with the maximum being 8 hours of holiday pay. During weeks where paid holidays occur, the employee’s schedule may need to be adjusted so that holiday pay does not increase or decrease the total hours scheduled in the workweek or result in an overtime situation.

Eligibility for Participation in Flexible Work Options

Eligibility depends on an assessment by the department supervisor that the employee’s proposed work schedule will enable the employee to fully meet job responsibilities and performance expectations, along with any collective bargaining agreements and work rules that apply to the employee/position. FWO are to be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be reviewed on the basis of feasibility and assurance that the department’s efficient and effective services will not be interrupted. It is important to understand that not every employee, nor every department, may be able to accommodate this type of scheduling. An employee will not be granted flexibility unless his or her prior performance has demonstrated the skills and qualities necessary to succeed in the proposed flexible work arrangement. Employees eligible for FWO will need to have successfully completed their introductory period and demonstrated satisfactory performance.

Guidelines

- Flexible work options include flextime, compressed work week, part-time and telework.
- May include required core time days or hours during which an employee must be present.
- Working hours must be balanced to meet operating needs of the department and, if possible, an employee’s own preference as to hours worked.
- Supervisor has responsibility to establish and adjust work schedules in order to accomplish objectives and requirements of the department or organizational unit. Schedules should not cause a non-exempt employee to work overtime.
- Supervisor must pre-approve a FWO prior to implementation. Final approval and arrangements for situations covered by these guidelines are at the discretion of the Supervisor/Dean/Principal Administrator and are not subject to complaints or grievances. Supervisor is responsible for verifying and overseeing performance of employees with FWO.
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- FWO can be altered or terminated at any time according to the business needs of the department or organizational unit.
- All flexible work options are subject to ongoing review and may be terminated at any time, given cause, or when business needs dictate.
- The approval of a FWO does not mean that any employee who later may fill that position would automatically be authorized to have the same arrangement.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Human Resources** – monitors FWO campus-wide to ensure they are administered in a consistent and equitable manner throughout the University. Human Resources also ensures that flextime schedules conform to appropriate state and federal laws and University policy, but does not approve or deny requests.
- **Department Management** – ensures that FWO are administered in a consistent and equitable manner within the department and that FWO conform to University policy. Also ensures that staffing is available at all times to meet the operational requirements of the department.
- **Supervisor** – maximizes resources and utilizes staff talents and approval of FWO. Supervisors are also responsible for managing the work under the conditions of the arrangement.
- **Employee** – plans and organizes his/her time to meet the job requirements as established by the supervisor.

*PSU expects supervisors to make reasonable efforts to accommodate employee requests for FWO. If an employee requests a FWO, supervisors are urged to consider the options and examine the feasibility of implementing a FWO.*

Reporting hours away from the office is the same for employees working under a FWO as for those working a standard schedule. Normal hours will no longer apply – they will vary depending upon the FWO agreement.

The guidelines provided in this document are not intended to serve as policy, nor is this a legal document. The University reserves the right to change, amend, or terminate any or all of these guidelines at any time for any reason.

The University expects and requires no reduction in service, loss of customer service, decrease in the quality of work and/or productivity due to implementation of FWO. It is the employee’s responsibility to make the flexible work arrangement a success. If an employee fails to comply with the requirements of the position, he or she will be returned to the standard work schedule and may be subject to disciplinary action. Supervisors may need to make adjustment to an employee’s flexible work schedule. The supervisor should provide the employee with reasonable notice of the change whenever possible.
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Work hours, overtime, compensation and vacation schedules will conform to applicable policies and applicable labor agreements. Requests to work overtime, and to use sick time/sick pool, vacation time/earned time or other leave, must be approved by the eligible staff member’s supervisor in the same manner as when working at the primary work site. Requests for changes in the work schedule should be approved by the eligible staff member’s supervisor.

The information contained in this document is based on policies and practices at the University. If there is a conflict between the information presented here and the information contained in Human Resources/Benefits documents and/or University policies, the HR documents and University policies always govern and are the controlling legal documents. Information in this document does not represent terms or conditions of employment, nor is the language intended to establish a contract between the University and its faculty and staff members. Positions may qualify for a flexible work arrangement if the proper conditions exist, as described herein, and supervisor/dean/PA approves the arrangement.