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## FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES

[Chancellor]  
Scope: SHRA  
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## Introduction

With the changing demographics of our workforce, economic challenges, volatile fuel prices, and transportation challenges for employees, flexible work schedules may be an option that can meet the needs of both the department and the employee. Departments may be as flexible as possible, but must continue to offer full services during the core business hours of the university (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday), in allowing for alternative work schedules when it is determined to be in the best interests of the employee and the University.

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## Definition of a Flexible Work Schedule

There are three major types of work schedule flexibility - **flexible work hours**, **flexible work schedules**, and **flexible work locations**.

**Flexible work hours** are temporary changes in an employee's regular work schedule in order to adjust for a planned or unplanned, short-notice, or sporadic event. The flexibility helps the employee to avoid working more than 40 hours in a work week or to avoid having to take paid or unpaid time off for an absence. Any flexible work hour adjustment is at the total discretion of management and is not grievable. Two examples of flexible work hours might include the following:

- An employee (with management's approval) worked an additional two hours on Monday in order to complete a report due by Tuesday. The manager then adjusted the employee's schedule later in the week to allow the employee to leave work two hours early on Thursday so that the employee did not work more than 40 hours in the work week.
- An employee got stuck in traffic behind an accident on the way to work, and as a result, the employee arrived one hour late to work. Although the late arrival might still be considered tardiness and subject to progressive discipline, the employee could, with management's approval, work an additional hour that evening (or sometime that work week) to make up the time.

**Flexible work schedules** are adjustments to the employee's regular work schedule on a recurring or occasional basis to respond work/life needs of an employee or operational needs of the department or university. The revised schedule must be in writing and continue to support the operational needs of the organization and allow for appropriate oversight of the employee's work. Flexible work schedule adjustments may be revised or revoked by management at any time. Three examples of a flexible work schedule might be:

- An employee carpools with two other University employees. Each employee takes the role of driver one week at a time. As a result, it is difficult for the employee to arrive at work by 8:00 am the week that she drives the carpool. The supervisor allows an adjustment to the employee's schedule so that on her carpool driving weeks, her start time is 8:15 am rather than 8:00 am and her lunch break is reduced to 45 minutes rather than her regular 60 minutes.
- An employee must pick up his child from daycare on the way home from work (his wife drops the child off in the morning because she must work until later in the evening.) As a result, the employee needs to leave work earlier than 5:00 pm each day in order to avoid paying late pick-up penalties from the daycare. The supervisor allows an adjustment in the employee's work schedule, 7:30 am - 4:30 pm, to respond to the transportation needs of the employee's family.

- A University department, with Vice Chancellor approval, decides to adopt a 4-10 work schedule for the summer months while the faculty and most of the students are off campus. Employees work from 7:00 am until 6:00 pm Monday through Thursday and take off on Friday, Saturday and Sunday each week from mid-June through mid-August.

**Flexible work locations** are adjustments to the employee's regular worksite on short-notice or on a recurring basis to respond work/life needs of an employee and/or operational needs of the organization. The alternate location schedule must continue to support the needs of the organization and allow for appropriate oversight of the employee's work. Flexible work location adjustments may be revised or revoked by management at any time. Two examples of a flexible work location might be:

- An employee is expecting a furniture delivery at her home "sometime Friday," according to the delivery company, and must be home to receive the delivery. With advance approval from her supervisor, she works from home that day while awaiting the delivery.
- An employee's regular commute is an hour each morning and evening in congested traffic. The employee's work allows for a great deal of independence and most of his communication with other employees is achieved through email. The supervisor allows the employee a teleworking schedule, that adheres to the [OSP Teleworking Policy \(.pdf\)](#), so that the employee may work from home one day a week. This reduces the employee's weekly commuting time and expense by 20% without sacrificing employee productivity.

## Reasons For and Types of Flexible Work Schedules

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A flexible work schedule may be implemented for a variety of reasons that benefit both the employee and management. Some common examples include:

- Adjusting for a long commute to/from work by starting (or ending) the work day earlier (or later)
- Offsetting peak traffic to reduce an employee's time on the road
- Matching work schedules to time schedules for mass transit or other commuting alternative programs
- Reducing the number of days (i.e., number of commutes) to and from work each week
- Attending classes for a degree program or academic enrichment
- Transporting children to/from day care or school
- Accommodating a mild illness that is not severe enough to inhibit work productivity but would otherwise prevent an employee from coming to his/her regular workplace
- Matching employee work hours to peak productivity time periods
- Increasing flexible use of time-sharing or to offset peak use of centralized offices or equipment
- Extending customer service hours
- Seasonal schedule for a university department

Scheduling options may include shifting the start/stop hours of the regular (8 hour) work day, shifting the work site to a location off the UNCG campus, or making a "compressed" work schedule (40 hours of work in less than 5 regular work days). Some examples are:

- The "4-10" (or "4-40") work week (4 days at 10 hours per day)
- The "4-9-4" work week (4 days at 9 hours per day, and one 4-hour day)
- Working 7:00 am to 4:00 pm or 9:00 am to 6:00 pm
- Working from home one or more days per week
- Working off site on a semi regular or sporadic basis

Flexible work schedules can also occur regularly but less frequently than every work week. For example, an employee could work, with management approval, eight hours each day of the first week of the biweekly, then work a 4-10 the second week of the biweekly. This would allow for one "day off" each biweekly rather than each week.

## Benefits and Disadvantages of a Flexible Work Schedule

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### Benefits:

Flexible schedules tend to be more successful when they meet both the employee's personal needs in balancing work and life and department operational needs in providing efficient and effective services. Some benefits of a flexible work schedules may include:

- Reduced commuting fuel costs
- Increased transportation options and parking availability
- Reduced stress through the ability to better balance work and personal responsibilities
- Improved morale and productivity resulting from matching work time and employee work style
- Longer blocks of time away from the office without reduction to employee leave balance
- Extended service hours with minimal to no increase in budget or overtime expense
- Reduced absences and tardiness through finding a more agreeable start/stop time
- Reduced loss of work product due to mild illness
- Enhanced recruitment and retention through "family-friendly" management practices
- Greater flexibility in available office space or equipment due to shifts in peak use
- Increased opportunities for cross-training due to some shared job duties and coverage adjustments
- Longer blocks of personal time when the university may not be holding classes or reduced number of classes, such as a summer 4-10 work schedule.

### Disadvantages:

Some flexible work schedules may not be the best solution for particular work/life needs, or scheduling needs of the department, or optimal achievement of the universities strategic goals and objectives or for particular positions due to deadlines, need to be accessible to the public or UNCG stakeholders. An example might include: a teleworking schedule for a receptionist may not meet operational needs of a department. Disadvantages that should be considered include the following:

- Reduced face-to-face time may cause a loss of work unit cohesion
- Some employees may feel distanced from the social aspects of working in a central location
- Working from home may result in greater distractions and lowered productivity
- Working from home may blur the boundary of work time and personal time
- Some employees may feel "dumped on" in accommodating the flexible schedules of other employees in the work unit
- Conflicting requests by multiple employees make some requests difficult to accommodate
- Tracking employee work time becomes more complex
- Direct observation by supervisor of employee work becomes more difficult
- Management of time worked for wage-hour non-exempt employees becomes more difficult
- Direct costs of some teleworking schedules (furnishings, communications) may not be offset by increased productivity, reductions in central work location resource requirements, or decreased commuting costs
- Increases cost of workers' compensation claims since the numbers of off campus worksites increase to include the home or other off campus locations.

## Administrative Oversight for Flexible Work Schedules

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University administration must establish a flexible work arrangement according to operational needs and the university strategic plan. Divisional management is responsible for adhering to the flexible work schedule policy and setting work assignments and work schedules for employees based on the operational needs and resources of the division, department or work unit. Managers are encouraged to be as flexible as possible in accommodating the work/life needs of employees, but the decision to

develop and/or adjust employee work schedules is made by management, not by the individual employee. Management is expected to apply flexible work schedules fairly and equitably.

## Factors To Be Considered When Approving a Flexible Work Schedule

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In reviewing requests for flexible work schedules, supervisors need to consider the overall needs of the university, the supervisor, and the employee. A review of the following considerations will assist management in making the appropriate decision regarding a request for a flexible work schedule:

- What are the operational needs of the university?
- What are the customer needs of the university?
- What are the work/life needs of the employee?
- Are there restrictions on when and where work must be performed?
- Does the employee function as part of a team that would require a matching schedule of all team members or significant face-to-face communication?
- Is the work unit able to provide coverage for functions handled by the employee in his/her absence without undue burden on other employees in the unit?
- Are requests for flexible schedules being handled equitably?
- Does management have sufficient budget to provide necessary office supplies and equipment for alternate work locations?
- Can management continue to monitor effectively employee work that occurs outside the supervisor's regular schedule or work location?
- Can management continue to adhere effectively to federal wage-hour regulations regarding work that occurs outside the supervisor's regular schedule?
- Does the schedule result in continued or increased worker productivity for the employee, the manager, and/or the work unit?

Human Resources can assist managers in reviewing requests for flexible work schedules, assuring compliance with OSP policies and procedures regarding teleworking, and finding strategies to implement employee requests based on the department's operational needs and university, state and federal policies.

## Process For An Employee to Request a Flexible Work Schedule

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Different work units may have different procedures for requesting adjustments to work schedules. Human Resources is available to assist both management and employees in identifying possible flexible schedules. Issues that should be addressed in requesting a flexible schedule include:

- The organizational and/or work/life benefits of the proposed schedule
- A plan for continued fulfillment of work expectations, including:
  - How communications with co-workers, customers, and the manager will occur during work hours outside the regular schedule
  - How customer or organizational needs that arise during the employee's absence will be handled
- Willingness to be flexible, make any necessary changes, or consider alternative proposals to ensure the success of a flexible schedule

For teleworking, the employee and his/her supervisor must ensure that the teleworking schedule adheres to all University policies that would also apply to the employee at a University work location. Specifically, teleworking schedules must comply with:

- [OSP Teleworking Policy](#)
- [UNCG Teleworking Agreement \(.pdf\)](#)
- Wage-hour rules, including overtime and leave use,
- Offsite use rules for University-owned equipment,

- Purchasing rules for office equipment and supplies,
- Reimbursement rules for work-related expenses,
- Personal use rules for University-owned resources,
- Security rules for information and equipment,
- Ergonomic and other safety requirements of home office environment, and
- Any other workplace policies/procedures of significance to the effective execution of the employee's job duties.

If the home is being used as a teleworking location, a supervisor or appropriate university official (example: representative from the University Safety Department) may request to visit the worksite during the employee's regularly scheduled work hours (approved in advance by the employee) to ensure that the home office environment meets work and safety requirements.

Dependent care needs are a common reason for a flexible work schedule to occur, especially for flexible work hours or work schedules due to child care drop-off and pick-up and other child-related events. In the case of caring for a sick child, a teleworking schedule might be beneficial to the employee. However, the child must not require the employee's primary attention during work hours or significantly detract from the employee's ability to perform his or her work duties. The employee must receive approval from his/her supervisor in advance for such a temporary schedule.

## **Process to Review and Terminate a Flexible Work Schedule**

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It is recommended that any approved flexible work schedule begin as a "pilot program" to be re-assessed after 4-6 weeks to see if the department's and employee's needs are being met through the adjustment in work schedule. Additional "tweaks" to the schedule may be needed, or the flexible schedule may be terminated. Possible reasons for a supervisor to modify or discontinue a flexible work schedule include, but are not limited to:

- business needs or coverage needs change
- valid negative customer feedback occurs
- performance or attendance deteriorates
- departmental staff shortages occur
- becomes too disruptive to work unit
- employee is dissatisfied or his/her needs have changed
- funding availability or equity concerns make such schedules prohibitive

All efforts should be made between the supervisor and employee to reach an equitable, resolution, however the final decision is at management's discretion. Human Resources can provide assistance to management and employees in evaluating the effectiveness of flexible work schedules.

The Flexible Work Schedule Policy and all parts thereof is not grievable and is at the sole discretion of management.

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