HARVARD
Human Resources
WORK/LIFE

2022

Flexwork Policy & Guidelines

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Contents

Executive Summary

The University aims for inclusive excellence in all of its operations and the employment experience it provides. Flexwork – a time-tested approach to variations on how, where, and when work is performed – contributes to Harvard's excellence by enabling employees to perform consistently at the highest levels. Within a campus-based community, some roles and functions will always require physical presence and standard hours. But many others can use flexwork principles and practices to work together efficiently and effectively within their teams to meet the University's academic and business objectives.

These guidelines, first produced in 2017, have gone through several iterations to keep them current with the needs of the University and its employees. Now, as we enter a new phase of resuming some familiar practices and experimenting with new ones, Harvard will use flexwork as a dynamic tool both to discover and invent the workplace of the future. These guidelines elaborate on a long-standing practice of flexwork at Harvard, and name emerging questions that will only be resolved over time. These include concerns about maintaining the spontaneous interactions between mission-driven people and teams, savings and costs associated with a redesign of office space and occupancy, distribution and provisioning of resources, and the interests of the individual employee in the context of the needs of the collective. Considerations of these concerns require a change mindset, a sense of personal responsibility, and a tolerance of a future that has yet to come into focus.

Policy and Principles

Harvard's flexwork policy states that the University provides options and procedures for flexwork. It further states that no staff shall be excluded from proposing flexwork regarding the times and places where their essential duties are performed, that all staff shall have access to an equitable process by which flexwork proposals are considered, and that proposals shall not be unreasonably denied. Final approval is at the discretion of management.

Flexwork at Harvard is Guided by Six Principles:

1. The process is equitable.
2. Decisions are without bias or favoritism.
3. Flexwork is job appropriate.
4. Flexwork has a net-neutral or net-positive effect.
5. Flexwork is responsive.
6. Approved flexwork arrangements should be documented.

Flexwork Frameworks and Definitions

Flexwork is a term that captures variations in where, when and how work gets done. Schools, departments, and units should decide which flexwork frameworks will best serve their local business needs and are the best fit for the nature of their work, while also addressing University goals of sustainability; diversity, inclusion and belonging; and employee wellbeing. Please check with your local unit or school for its approach to flexwork. Specific terms are defined here.

Making it Work, Measuring Success

Flexwork has long been a part of Harvard's workforce strategy. As remote and partially remote work (also called "hybrid") practices have become mainstream due to the COVID-19 pandemic, flexwork — always guided by the nature and the needs of the work — is now further and permanently integrated into the University's approach.

Written Proposals/Documentation

Within the framework set by a school, department, or unit, employees can propose variations. All employees can make a proposal, which must be written. Managers are required to review all proposals. Managers and employees alike should not focus unduly on the reason for the request, but rather on how the request might be met in a "net-neutral" fashion as regards the work requirements. The final decision lies with the manager, who may deny proposals based on business reasons. Denials should be documented. Managers are encouraged to consult with their local Human Resources (HR) office before denying a request. Employees are free to propose adjusted or new arrangements. All approved flexwork arrangements must be documented.

Both employees and managers should particularly note that when health issues emerge in the context of a conversation about flexibility, HR and University Disability Resources (UDR) should immediately be consulted.

Flexwork Basics

- Successful flexwork requires individuals and groups to address such basics as technology and equipment, information security, ergonomic considerations, employee wellbeing, non-Harvard work – including dependent-care – while teleworking, and work location.
- **Communication**: Communication planning within and between teams is at the core of all successful flexwork arrangements. A high-quality communications plan will include considerations of which University or school-approved technologies and tools will be used. It will also address: accessibility/inclusivity, formal and informal communications, expectations of team members and mutual accountability, evaluating communications success, and guarding against the signaling of constant work.

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- **Managing Teams:** At its core, managing team performance is about setting expectations and measuring performance outcomes in relation to these expectations, but empowering and managing hybrid teams does require some extra insight. Tools and resources are available to help managers with this skillset.
- **Measuring Success:** Flexwork is successful when teams manage productivity by setting goals and timetables and defining deliverables clearly. Managers and employees should consider whether the quantity, quality, and timeliness of work has been maintained, enhanced, or diminished. They should also consider how the flexwork arrangement has affected stakeholders, whether the arrangement has encumbered or streamlined processes, and whether flexwork has led to new opportunities or helped meet the University's overarching goals.
- **Trial Periods and Reviews:** Trial periods of 30 days are recommended for new arrangements. All arrangements should be reviewed at least annually.

Documentation

Approved flexwork arrangements must be documented. A single form allows for two kinds of documentation. Part A is required for all employees. (If an equivalent document is used, it must contain all of the same information). It should be submitted to and held by both the local manager and the department's HR representative. It should be entered into PeopleSoft, when this feature becomes available. Part B is optional. It allows for a more thorough exploration of how, where and when work will get done and provides managers and employees with tools for thought and conversation.

Tools and Resources

Tools and resources for both managers and employees are available. A summary of tools and resources is provided here.

Introduction

The University aims for inclusive excellence in its operations and the employment experience it provides. Flexwork contributes to this excellence by providing the potential for employees to perform consistently at the highest levels, work together efficiently and effectively within their teams to meet the University's academic and business objectives, rise together to the challenges facing the contemporary workforce, and remain nimble during periods of disruption. 2020 was a transformational year for flexwork at the University where the majority of employees shifted to remote work.

These flexwork guidelines, first produced in 2017, have gone through several iterations to keep them current with the needs of the University and its employees. Now, as we enter a new phase of resuming some familiar practices and experimenting with new ones, Harvard will use flexwork as a dynamic tool both to discover and invent the workplace of the future. The guidelines elaborate on a long-standing practice of flexwork at Harvard, and name emerging questions that will only be resolved over time. These include concerns about maintaining the spontaneous interactions between mission-driven people and teams, savings and costs associated with a redesign of office space and occupancy, and the interests of the individual employee in the context of the needs of the collective. Considerations of these concerns require a change mindset, a sense of personal responsibility, and a tolerance of a future that has yet to come into focus.

Within a campus-based community such as Harvard, physical presence will always be required for certain roles — and for most roles at certain times. A University is a people-based enterprise and interpersonal relationships will always need to be fostered actively, whether through in-person and on-campus interactions or through creative and intentional remote activities.

With this in mind, as the University prepares for a return to campus for many of those who haven't been required to work on-site in the past year, Harvard intends to maintain access to expanded flexwork options, including telework, remote work, and approaches that combine on-campus presence and telework, also known as "hybrid" frameworks.

To successfully integrate new ways of working, leaders and managers will need to examine and re-ground themselves in their unit's core purpose, objectives, and deliverables and — in consultation with their teams — evaluate how their work has evolved in a mostly remote world. Through this team-focused lens, leaders and managers are charged with considering available flexwork frameworks for the future and with integrating employee proposals where possible and appropriate to establish the team's best-fit options.

These guidelines provide time-tested principles for implementing flexwork effectively and equitably, frameworks (also referred to as models) for structuring work, and shared definitions of common terms. The guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive or permanent, however: individual schools, departments and units will need to adapt them to their local circumstances. For example, while the University has authorized a return to campus on August 2, 2021, leaders will determine the dates and phases that work best for their units. Finally, acknowledging that we are once again in uncharted waters, portions of these guidelines will necessarily be iterative, subject to change as the University gains experience and sees the results of transitional and experimental flexwork efforts.

Flexwork Policy

Flexwork arrangements have long been part of Harvard's workforce practices. When implemented by schools, departments, and units as appropriate to their local business needs, flexwork becomes a strategic tool to achieve institutional goals, empower employees to do their best work, foster individual and collective wellbeing, maintain business continuity in the case of disruption, and support a diverse and inclusive work environment.

To achieve these aims, the University provides options and procedures for flexwork in accordance with its Flexwork Guidelines. No staff shall be excluded from proposing flexwork arrangements regarding the times and places where their essential duties are performed. All staff shall have access to an equitable process by which flexwork proposals are considered and not unreasonably denied. Managers shall provide concrete feedback when they decline a proposal. Final approval is at the discretion of management.

This policy applies to non-teaching exempt and overtime-eligible staff. Bargaining unit staff should consult their collective bargaining agreement to review any flexibility provisions. If there is a conflict between the language in one of Harvard's union contracts and these flexwork guidelines, the union contract language shall prevail. Those who seek flexwork arrangements to manage a health situation for themselves or a family member may receive additional guidance from their local HR business partner or University Disability Resources.

Please see the full policy statement here.

Six Principles of Flexwork

These principles are intended to provide a conceptual foundation for best practices and common-sense decisions. Any consideration of remote or hybrid work must first be aligned with the University's teaching and research missions and closely coordinated with schools' and departments' specific needs and goals. The nature of the work should be the primary guide for when and where work is carried out, but it is also the case that other factors will necessarily have to be considered, including, for example, capacity limits on spaces. Managers and employees will benefit from sharing the burden of trade-offs to protect an effective way of working and to promote inclusive excellence and personal wellbeing throughout the University.

1. **The process is equitable**: The ultimate decision to approve or deny a flexwork arrangement is the manager's, often in conjunction with Human Resources (HR), and it is paramount that the process for making decisions — about when, where, and how work gets done — be equitable. As teams experiment with and adapt to long-term frameworks for flexwork, there will be situations in which employees or managers want to adjust their on-campus/hybrid/off-campus status, or their schedules, or both. The manager's role is to set parameters, evaluate the team's work, and prioritize what must be completed and by whom; however, it is essential that managers work with individual employees and their whole teams objectively when evaluating flexwork arrangements. Given the new reality of such widespread work from home, it is likely that personal circumstances may indeed factor into some decisions. Longer term organizational planning may play a role. Some jobs will have little to no room for alteration. Indeed, outcomes will not be the same for everyone. But the key to equity is a fair process by which flexwork proposals are assessed, and this process must be consistent and transparent.

2. **Decisions are without bias or favoritism**: It is critical to remove personal bias from flexwork discussions and decisions. Previously, Harvard's flexwork guidelines emphasized that the manager should not ask about an individual's personal circumstances or base their approval or denial of a flexwork arrangement on the employee's reason for the request. The principle of respecting an employee's privacy and evaluating a proposal on its business merits holds true during and after the pandemic. When taking a view of the business needs first, a team approach can help integrate individual autonomy and need into decision making without compromising collective effectiveness. Managers should touch base with local HR to ensure that new arrangements make sense in the context of local policies and practices.

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3. **Flexwork is job-appropriate**: Flexwork is not suitable for every job. Historically, many types of jobs have been understood to require employees to be on-site full time or at regularly scheduled times. Through the pandemic, however, employees and managers have found new and innovative ways to flexibly accomplish job responsibilities and determine which tasks must be accomplished on-campus, which can be done off-campus, which can be done at different times, and sometimes combining all three approaches. As more people return to their primary workplace, it is essential to integrate the lessons of the past year in a way that balances the focus of being on campus with a new perspective that much more can be performed remotely — or at non-standard times — than we may have previously thought and have recently found to have enhanced accessibility and service.

4. **Flexwork has a net-neutral or net-positive effect**: Under optimal conditions, once approved and implemented, flexwork should have either a net-positive or net-neutral effect on business results and the work environment. In other words, the same work is getting accomplished at another time, in another place, or in another way, ideally having a positive effect. In some cases it might have a mixed effect — but one where, on balance, the arrangement does not have an overall negative impact on the team or on individual performance. At times when social infrastructures are disrupted, managers should empower employees to explore pragmatic, ad-hoc approaches to accomplishing as much as possible when working remotely and to understand what other options are available, should their arrangements become untenable (see, for example, Use of Sick Time and Dependent Care Sick Time.)

5. **Flexwork is responsive**: Flexwork arrangements are intended to be responsive to the changing needs of the workplace and should not be considered permanent. They should be reviewed and updated both as business drivers change and, at a minimum, annually. In earlier versions of these guidelines, a trial period was strongly encouraged in advance of a manager's approval. Now, as Harvard's workforce transitions, experiments and adapts to new frameworks, we will be in a somewhat fluid period during which employees, teams, and managers are encouraged to have frequent and thoughtful conversations about how arrangements are working and make adjustments as needed along the way.

6. **Approved flexwork arrangements should be documented**: All final, approved arrangements should be documented in Part A of the Flexwork Documentation Form and stored with the manager and/or HR, depending on local practices. This information should also be added to PeopleSoft, when that feature becomes available. Employees and managers are also encouraged to use Part B of the form to guide them as they discuss, agree to, and document their approach to work. These practices help set expectations and provide guidance with planning both on personal and business levels.

Flexwork Frameworks and Definitions

Flexwork refers to flexwork arrangements that vary from the standard in-the-office, nine-to-five approach. They typically include flexibility of place and/or time. A shared understanding of key terms and their definitions is critical since misunderstandings can lead to confusion, conflict, or missed opportunities.

As we emerge from several intense phases of the pandemic, Harvard will continue to support effective flexwork arrangements. Units and teams should always be guided by the nature of the work and are encouraged to focus their attention around one of several frameworks for structuring flexibility. The most common has come to be known as a "hybrid" work arrangement, in which teams combine on-campus work with continued telework or fully remote work. These frameworks are described below.

The University also acknowledges that teams may have developed their own approaches to flexwork, born out of necessity during the circumstances of 2020. Even if approaches developed during the pandemic appear to be working well, managers and staff are asked to look critically at their practices. Any consideration of remote or hybrid work must first be aligned with the University's teaching and research missions and closely coordinated with schools' and departments' specific needs and goals. The nature of the work should be the primary guide for when and where work is carried out, and mangers should also look through multiples lenses and consider several factors: core activities should be fairly distributed; all team members should have access to an equitable process for determining participation in flexwork; and both long-term sustainability and employee wellbeing are recognized as critical factors for success. Multiple tools and resources are available to managers and team members to help determine the best approach and implementation practices.

Where

The range of formal frameworks to choose from may be determined at the school, department, or unit-level. Some choices, such as geographic location of work, will be determined by University policy. Guidance on this issue is evolving, and a new policy on out-of-state workers is forthcoming. Questions about out-of-state work should be directed to local HR. More information is coming in July about remote work and special tax considerations for employees working remotely from states outside Massachusetts and California. In the meantime, you can visit the Central Payroll website for the latest information.

All formal approaches generally use three constructions which rely on transparency and strong communication practices with team members, managers, and stakeholders:

- **Fully On-site:** Working on-campus for all working hours, with flexibility in schedules as appropriate. Fully on-site can be further defined as:
  - **Always at the Formally Designated Workplace** — Expected to be on-campus for all working hours

- **Partially Remote (Telework)**: Working some number of days in an on-campus environment. Sometimes referred to as a "hybrid" model or framework, partially remote can be further defined as:
  - **Anchor/Flex** — Anchor day(s) is/are designated for everyone on a team to be on-campus and can flex the rest of the week (location is principally determined by the employee, within context established by the University and the unit)
  - **Fixed in/out** — Assigned a number of days per month or quarter on campus and the remainder remotely
  - **Flex around core obligations** — Individuals flex their location around their need to be on-campus and based on the work they are expected to carry out

- **Primarily Remote (Remote Work)**: Individuals are expected to work off-campus (at home or elsewhere) for all working hours. Remote work can also be further defined as:
  - **Seasonal —** Remote 10 to 11 months of the year, expected on-campus one or two months
  - **Periodic —** Majority remote, but expected on-campus at designated intervals (e.g., once per month or once per quarter)
  - **Fully fluid —** Working location is principally the employee's decision, within Harvard's specific constraints and requirements regarding remote work (such as working out of state).

Whatever the approach, all units should remember that informal or occasional flexibility remains a potent tool to support individuals and teams when unanticipated circumstances intrude on business operations, personal obligations, and wellbeing.

When

- **Regular Work Hours**: Team members work regularly scheduled hours aligned with their department

  - **Flextime**: Employees work a standard full-time or part-time workweek with start and end times that differ from the regularly scheduled workday. Flextime may include:
  - **Split Schedule** – Employee works a full 7, 7.5, or 8-hour day in two or more periods. (e.g., 6AM -10AM, and 4PM - 8PM)

- **Compressed Workweek**: Full-time employees compress a full-time workload to complete all job responsibilities into fewer than five days per week (usually completing one week's work in four days, known as a "4/5" schedule) or in fewer than ten days over two weeks (usually completing two weeks' work in nine days, or "9/10"). Compressed workweeks, in any configuration, bring special challenges. In the context of a team, compressed workweeks offer both puzzles (how to ensure coverage and equitable workloads) and opportunities (extended coverage if compressed weeks are appropriately sequenced). To learn more about how compressed weeks can work for exempt employees, please visit the communication section's discussion of team expectations.

How

- **Reduced Hours**: A form of part-time work in which an employee reduces the number of hours of employment from their regular full-time or part-time schedule, either working some portion of every day or fewer than five days per week, with reduced job responsibilities. Salary and some benefits are pro-rated.

- **Job Sharing**: A form of regular part-time work in which two employees share the responsibilities of one full-time position (FTE) with salary and some benefits shared/pro-rated. The division of hours and responsibilities between job-sharing partners can vary.

> **Employees may propose combining arrangements, for example: working from home full-time (remote work) _and_ adjusting their hours to differ from standard schedules such as 6AM – 2PM (flextime). Moreover, all employees will be permitted to request informal or occasional flexwork options; managers are expected to approve these ad hoc arrangements when they are feasible from a work perspective, and decline them when they are not.**

Any consideration of hybrid/remote work must be aligned with the University's mission and closely coordinated with the school's/department's/teams' specific needs and goals.

2020 had a significant impact on many employees, and job structures may have changed, either temporarily or indefinitely. Defining and documenting expectations going forward is critical for transparency and trust. For in-depth help making decisions about ways of working, please see the Center for Workplace Development (CWD) "Leading and Managing in a Hybrid Work Environment Toolkit", which offers two workforce assessment models for evaluating the best flex framework for your team, depending on its particular work functions. Additionally, your local HR office is a resource to managers when analyzing and making decisions about work models.

Managers are encouraged to work with teams to generate their own document that outlines critical factors for success and lays out not only how each individual will work within the chosen framework, but also how the parts of the team interact and work together. This effort supports a smooth structure for team operations and helps to build trust, accountability, and goodwill.

Creating and Reviewing a Proposal

For Employees: Creating a Proposal

Although many employees have been working flexibly for a year or more, it is still new for others. Previous versions of Harvard's Flexwork Guidelines required employees to submit a proposal when seeking a flexwork arrangement. During the pandemic, this requirement was suspended, but managers and employees were encouraged to use the flexwork form to document their own agreed-upon work arrangements and best practices. As we emerge from the pandemic, a written proposal can play a new role. As units define their preferred frameworks, employees and managers may want to adjust arrangements, new employees may wish to make proposals, and existing employees may want to propose different arrangements within the context of their unit's defined choices.

Employees and managers may follow these steps in ways that make the most sense for them and their teams:

- **Review the definitions** of the various <u>components and frameworks of flexwork</u> and the <u>six principles of flexwork</u> at Harvard.
- **Refer to your bargaining unit agreement,** if applicable, to review any flexibility provisions if you are a union member, or a manager of a union member. If there is a conflict between the language in one of Harvard's union contracts and these flexwork guidelines, the <u>union contract </u>language prevails.
- **Download the** <u>Flexwork Form</u> and use it as a template or guide for your own thought process.
- **Address how, when, and where work will get done.** Under optimal conditions, once approved and implemented, flexwork should have either a <u>net-positive or net-neutral effect </u>on business results and the work environment. Your proposal should address the potential impact on teammates, customers, and other stakeholders. For help thinking through the degree to which the various aspects of your job are flexwork-ready, see "<u>Leading and Managing in a Hybrid Work Environment Toolkit</u>." It offers several approaches to evaluating how, when and where work can be done depending on the relevant work functions.

Note: When health may be at issue

If you are seeking a flexwork arrangement to manage a health situation for yourself or a family member, you should consult with HR to determine if your situation would be more appropriately considered under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or the Massachusetts Paid Family Medical Leave Law (PFML), or should be explored as a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees and managers are encouraged to learn more about reasonable accommodations from <u>University Disability Resources</u> (UDR).

For Managers: Evaluating a Proposal

All employees may propose a flexwork arrangement, and each proposal should be evaluated on its merits. Managers and supervisors are responsible for considering proposals objectively and fairly but are not obligated to grant approval (unless otherwise directed by the University or their individual school).

Employees wishing to propose a change from their department's standard arrangement are encouraged to develop written proposals using this underline>form</underline>, and managers may wish to bookend a proposal with conversations. A conversation might begin by setting expectations on the individual or team level about the proposal process. It is ultimately the manager's decision to approve or decline a proposal. If a proposal is declined, however, managers must provide a carefully considered reason for the decision. It is strongly encouraged that managers consult with local HR before denying a proposal.

Managers and employees should be in touch with local HR to make sure that the proposed arrangement makes sense in the context of local policies and practices, and this is especially important as we transition out of the public-health emergency and experiment with new ways of working long term.

Managers may refer to the following steps in ways that make the most sense for them and their teams. Additional in-depth discussion on the role of the leader can be found in CWD's "Leading and Managing in a Hybrid Work Environment Toolkit."

- **Setting expectations:** Managers determine the criteria they will use and ensure that all team members understand these criteria. Managers and employees alike may go here for a summary.
- **Consider each employee's proposal:** Does it address their work priorities? Has the employee reviewed and affirmed that they meet the information security requirements for working off campus? Has the employee considered how a flextime arrangement might affect collaboration with others? Has the employee shown that job duties (including those that affect others) can be performed fully under the proposed arrangement? Does performance history show that this employee can manage the arrangement? Have you had candid conversations about anything that might make you hesitate to approve the proposal? Are unaddressed issues of trust —about the employee, the manager, or the team — complicating the decision?
- **Consider a group of proposals together, if applicable:** If several employees have submitted proposals, consider whether they work together. If they leave gaps, consider a group meeting to bring up concerns, make adjustments, and find innovative solutions among the group. For example, one employee who wants to work from 7AM to 3PM may leave the unit with an afternoon gap until another employee points out that they would be just as happy to work from 10AM to 6PM. It may not be possible to stay completely in sync during these times, but team conversations can go a long way toward heading off unintended negative consequences.

- **Approve or decline based on business reasons:** Proposals are expected to explain in detail how the proposed arrangement will support a department's business goals and objectives. Managers will assess whether a proposal will have a net-neutral or net-positive effect. A small inconvenience in one area may be outweighed by a greater benefit to the unit overall, even if only realized in the long run. Managers must keep an open mind regarding flexwork, but not agree to changes that could undermine business goals or unreasonably burden other staff.

Note: If Health-Related Issues Emerge

If issues of health or disability are stated directly or appear to emerge during conversations with an employee about flexibility, managers must contact HR to determine if the employee's proposal for flexwork should now be considered under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), or the Massachusetts Paid Family Medical Leave Law (PFML), or should be explored as a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees and managers are encouraged to learn more about reasonable accommodations from University Disability Resources (UDR).

Equity and the Role of the Reason

Previously, Harvard's Flexwork guidelines emphasized that the manager should not ask about an individual's personal circumstances or base their approval or denial of a flexwork arrangement on the employee's reason for the proposal. The principle of respecting an employee's privacy and evaluating a proposal on its business merits holds true during and after the COVID-19 crisis. To the extent that child care, schools, and elder care services continue to be altered or unavailable, some employees will continue to have challenges balancing work and dependent care responsibilities. Managers are expected to be familiar with the range of wellbeing- and family-supporting programs and policies available to employees, and point all team members to these programs, even if caregiving or other personal issues have not been specifically raised. They are also encouraged to work with their employees to find pragmatic ways to accomplish job responsibilities, along with personal responsibilities, whenever brief or more lengthy disruptions occur. Framing this as a mutual responsibility to address important demands on both sides of the employer-employee equation will encourage honest and practical conversations. Managers and employees should touch base with local HR to ensure that new arrangements make sense in the context of local policies and practices.

Depending on the nature of the relationship between a manager and employee, it may feel comfortable and desirable to discuss the circumstances that may be driving a flexwork proposal. In many other cases, employees may be quite private about making personal disclosures, or managers may feel uncomfortable knowing about personal motivations.

However receptive to discussing the personal motivations for proposals, managers must avoid asking employees to provide a reason as part of the flexwork process and avoid making judgments if an employee discloses them.

Why? Keep in mind that discussions of personal considerations inevitably call on our biases. While it may seem obvious to a manager that one reason has more validity than another (e.g., because of a belief that school is more important than training for a marathon), fostering a diverse and inclusive environment makes it critical to avoid pitting one person's values against another's.

Prior to the public health emergency, it was easier to focus only on the realm of workplace needs and work performance goals and doing so meant that managers were less likely to be put in a position to arbitrate worthiness. Now, however, conversations about personal reasons for seeking flexibility are taking on new dimensions. External forces such as the need for physical distance and social infrastructure breakdowns have led to shared "reasons" for flexibility and new motivations for cooperation and understanding. Approaching all conversations about flexibility with respect, sensitivity, and pragmatism can support the success of a single employee and the team as a whole.

When a Proposal is Not Approved

Managers must give concrete feedback about why a proposal is declined to demonstrate that the decision is a well-considered one. It may be because of a lack of sufficient detail about how, where, and when work will get done; broader considerations of the team as a whole; a history of underperformance on the job; or simply that the job itself is not suitable for the kind of arrangement proposed by the employee.

Whatever the reason, it is important to have candid conversations about flexwork. If such conversations are not easy, both employees and managers should contact their local HR office for coaching on having challenging conversations, and remember that Harvard's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can also provide consultation to managers and employees alike. HUCTW members should note that if a proposed arrangement is not approved, the proposal may be explored further in consultation with local HR and HUCTW. You may refer to Article VI of the HUCTW bargaining unit agreement for detailed information.

Flexwork Basics

After teams define their hybrid/remote work models, employees who plan to work remotely have many factors to consider.

Technology and Equipment: Technology, accessibility, and responsiveness are critical to productivity when working remotely. Some employees may be provided basic equipment by their departments to enable telework. Pending further guidance from the University, each school will continue to manage its technology and office equipment directly, and local HR can assist employees and managers should they need to discuss different approaches or equipment that may be needed to telework successfully on a long-term basis. There are several online collaboration tools for teams to stay connected, and teams should be clear about which tools they will use and for which purposes. See the Communication Tools section for more information.

Information Technology Security: Whether working from home or the office, protecting Harvard's information is the responsibility of every employee. HUIT's security website offers guides, policies, and tools to help employees work securely everywhere. All employees must follow Harvard's information security policy; to do that, the best place to start is the HUIT website.

Ergonomics: In many cases, our sudden shift to telework presented unique ergonomic challenges. Employees frequently used makeshift home workstations that didn't support the neutral postures necessary to work in a physically safe and sustainable way. As some employees settle into their remote workspaces for the long term, or as they return to campus sharing a single workstation with another employee on alternate days, now is a good time to consider how the physical environment affects their concentration, comfort, and health. See Harvard's Environmental Health and Safety ergonomics page for self-assessment tools to improve ergonomic habits and learn how to make simple, free, or low-cost adjustments. Some employees may be provided basic equipment by their departments to enable remote work. As previously noted, pending further guidance from the University, each school will continue to manage its technology and office equipment directly, and local HR can assist employees and managers with related concerns. Harvard's Strategic Procurement Office has relationships with a wide array of vendors that allow employees to get the best value possible for a range of services and products, including office furniture. Employees should explore these resources, no matter where they work, to ensure safe ergonomic practices and workspaces for long and healthy careers.

Non-Harvard Work, Including Dependent Care, when Teleworking: When teleworking, employees are expected to attend to their Harvard work only and should not anticipate handling non-Harvard projects. In general, teleworkers should attempt to replicate the working conditions of a Harvard- provided office. Therefore, the following conditions apply University-wide:

- Employees may not work on any non-Harvard project during paid work hours when teleworking or working remotely.
- Employees may not care for children and/or adults when teleworking or working remotely.

Major activities that wouldn't be a normal part of the on-campus workday (such as full-time care for an infant, or intensive work on a personal project) are not appropriate while teleworking. On the other hand, activities that might normally be interspersed throughout the day at the office, such as brief check-ins from a caregiver or dependent, are acceptable as long as they do not interfere with expected routines and deliverables.

During COVID times, when social structures have been so severely disrupted, these policies have been necessarily modified. The uncertainty of child care, schools, and eldercare services mean that some employees continue to balance work and family responsibilities in ways that bring these issues to the forefront to a new degree, and managers have been encouraged to work with their employees to find creative ways to accomplish job responsibilities, along with personal responsibilities, whenever possible.

Now, that we have transitioned back to campus under new paradigms, managers should encourage employees to understand what regular child and back-up child and adult dependent-care resources are available to them and empower them to explore pragmatic approaches to meeting goals and objectives of this new dynamic work strategy. Because the dependent care infrastructure has not uniformly come back to previous levels of service, ad hoc flexibility (such as splitting a schedule for a specified period of time), can serve as a potent business continuity tool to bridge the employee and the work flow. Employees should initiate a conversation with their managers as soon as possible when it becomes apparent that ad hoc arrangements should be considered.

At the same time, both managers and employees should know what leave options are available, should ad hoc arrangements become untenable. Framing this as a mutual responsibility to address important demands on both sides of the employer-employee equation will encourage honest and practical conversations. Questions about these issues should be directed to Human Resources.

Wellbeing: The sustainability of long-term remote and hybrid work will depend in part on employees' wellbeing. Managers are asked to consider specific ways to support employee wellbeing when establishing their work model and check in with employees regularly. Managers are expected to be familiar with a rich array of University resources that support personal and family needs around mental health, child and adult care, resilience, finances, schooling, illness, and disability. These resources are available from a range of sources, including the Office of Work/Life and Harvard's monthly faculty and staff wellbeing newsletter; they are referenced throughout this policy and can also be found via this link.

Remote Work Locations: Working out-of-state has been mostly prohibited in states where Harvard is not registered to conduct business. Harvard has implemented an interim payroll policy and has payroll tax withholding and benefits if approved to work in a Harvard-registered payroll state. You can visit the Central Payroll website for the latest information.

Communication

A strong communication plan will help managers set expectations and successfully orchestrate a diverse group of distributed employees. A thorough plan ensures that employees get what they need to stay connected with their team, customers, stakeholders, and the University. Discussions about communication tools, protocols, and the ways in which people use these to interact with one another are ideal at the onset of a team approach to flexwork; however, anytime is a good time to establish or revisit a communication plan. A successful plan requires shared understanding and commitment so it's important for all team members to participate when writing or revising a team communication plan. Please also see CWD's "Leading and Managing in a Hybrid Work Environment Toolkit" which includes more in-depth and how-to advice for building skills for a culture of fluid communication in the context of flexwork. Teams should develop a communication plan that addresses:

- **Communication Tools:** Establish a contained number of agreed-upon tools that the team will use (emails, IM, personal cell phones, video-conferencing services, etc.). The HUIT website provides an overview of tools and services for staff working remotely or on campus.

- **Staying Inclusive and in Sync:** Once you have agreed on the kinds of tools you will use, identify how and when to use them. It can be useful to operationalize and formalize expectations for scheduling and managing online meetings, calendaring and signaling availability, and participating effectively over video or conference calls. Remember that all meetings must include options for remote attendance; this supports effective collaboration and ensures inclusivity.

- **Formal and Informal Communication Methods:** Define how team meetings, one-on-one leader meetings, staff meetings, and other forms of communication will be used during this period and establish if and when it is appropriate to use personal modes of communication such as personal cell phones. Look for ways to reproduce informal, in-person communication: for example, a daily bulleted productivity report may replace stopping by a manager's office on the way out, and teams might designate pairs of colleagues to act as each other's point person while teleworking or away from work. Many online meetings can make room for brief collegial conversations to maintain the social bonds that are integral to engaged teams.

- **Expectations of Team Members:** The team should collaborate and agree on windows for responsiveness. Teams may also need to adjust their practices around timelines, deadlines, and accountability. Expectations concerning the use of communication tools will vary according to circumstances; for example, teams might agree that exempt employees working compressed work weeks should be available for time-sensitive concerns by phone – but not email – during the standard workdays when they are not scheduled to be working.

- **Evaluating the Communication Plan:** Effective and honest communication is foundational to trust, so it's a good practice for the team to check in frequently to see how well the plan is working and how well everyone is following it. If something isn't working well, it's wise to acknowledge that and change it before the plan fails – and trust is eroded.

- **The Importance of Mutual Accountability:** It is a leader's responsibility to consider the values, beliefs and core principles that guide employees' interactions with customers, stakeholders, and each other. The team (leaders, together with managers and staff) should determine and agree to basic and inclusive behavioral norms, build shared understanding for working flexibly as a team, ensure that all new hires are introduced to these expectations, and all employees should hold themselves and each other accountable to these agreements. This process of mutual accountability starts with the assumption of positive intent when working with multiple flexwork arrangements. Best practice examples of behavioral norms include:

- **Equitable process** — Managers will ensure an equitable process for those proposing new or altered flexwork arrangements; staff will understand that an equitable process does not mean an identical or even similar outcome.

- **Post schedule and contact information** — All members will place a sign in a highly visible spot at their workspace (if applicable), announcing when they are working remotely and providing contact information. Team members will also keep their online calendars up-to-date, noting periods of absence and using the "remote" designation where appropriate.

- **Email specificity** — To support email management and improve productivity, emails requesting action should include "Action Requested by (date)" in the subject line to support prioritization.

- **"Buddy" systems** — Pairing colleagues is a useful way to ensure that any employee who was unable to attend a meeting receives critical information.

- **Availability** — Exempt employees working a compressed workweek must be reachable on their non-work day for time-sensitive concerns and be willing to attend meetings that are scheduled in advance and require that person's presence.

- **Peak seasons** — Everyone must be available for seasonal and peak "all-hands-on-deck" periods, if applicable.

- **Accountability** — If a situation arises where a colleague is not honoring a flexwork principle, direct, timely, and constructive conversations with that colleague should help to resolve the issue.

- **Guarding Against Signaling an Expectation of Constant Work** — Harvard has always encouraged managers to examine their own behavior and what it signals to teams. By sending emails at late hours, managers may inadvertently be sending the message that employees should check emails regularly when they are not meant to be working. Recently, many have been forced to attend to family caregiving and work responsibilities simultaneously, which sometimes has the effect of pushing work into the late evening, early morning, and into weekends. Teams should, therefore, get clear about their expectations for response times. To avoid modeling behavior that may unintentionally shift these expectations, it is helpful to be familiar with email tools that schedule message delivery during standard business hours and use high/medium/low importance indicators. One innovative email signature addition includes: "Sent at a convenient time for me; feel free to reply when it's convenient for you."

Managing Teams

Managing hybrid/distributed teams requires additional skills that managers will need in the context of a changing workplace. At its core, managing team performance is about setting expectations and measuring performance outcomes in relation to these expectations, but empowering and managing hybrid teams does require some extra insight. Multiple tools for engaging your team can be found on the Tools and Resources pages. See in particular CWD's "Leading and Managing in a Hybrid Work Environment Toolkit" which addresses the need to manage to role and goal clarity, and to outcomes and results, rather than by line-of-sight.

Measuring Success

Flexwork is successful when teams manage productivity by setting goals and timetables and defining deliverables clearly. Managers and employees should consider whether:

- The quantity, quality, and timeliness of work has been maintained, enhanced, or diminished
- The flexwork arrangement has met the expectations laid out in the original documentation of the arrangement
- The flexwork arrangement has affected, either positively or adversely, relations with the employee's colleagues and/or stakeholders, students and/or customers
- The flexwork arrangement has had a neutral impact, or has created a need for additional resources, or caused a unit's other employees to assume more work, or it has had a positive impact (e.g., by streamlining processes, making the team more effective)
- The established goals, timetables, and flexwork arrangements are in full alignment with each other
- The flexwork arrangements have led to new opportunities (e.g., extended coverage) and helped meet the University's overarching goals (e.g., diversity, inclusion and belonging, sustainability, and wellbeing)

As before, challenges along these dimensions should signal to employees and managers the need to assess flexwork arrangements and behavioral expectations, adjust them, or provide additional tools or resources. While employees and managers are encouraged to approach these discussions open to the possibility of change, there will be some cases in which adjustments are not operationally feasible. Practical tips for providing feedback and coaching can be found in CWD's "Leading and Managing in a Hybrid Work Environment Toolkit" as well as in other CWD Toolkits. But there will likely be many more opportunities to use a growth mindset that leads to creative solutions and new rewards. Successes like these should be documented, shared with others, and celebrated.

Trial Periods and Reviews

Under stable circumstances, when new employees propose a flexwork arrangement, or when current employees propose a new flexwork plan, all arrangements should begin with a trial period and be reviewed in 30 days to ensure they are meeting business needs.

Trial periods can be extended, and adjustments made as needed. They should be revisited at regular intervals thereafter (e.g., during annual performance reviews) and modified as necessary. Especially during periods of disruption, any adjustments to on-campus status or working hours should be assessed informally at regular intervals to ensure that business needs are being met.

While we all long for more predictable circumstances, we know that the future is anything but predictable. If staff and faculty should again encounter challenges such as another sudden switch to locked-down telework, these guidelines should help managers, teams and individuals be prepared to meet the moment and pull together in the service of their shared goals and values.

Finally, these guidelines will necessarily be iterative as the University gains data and experience from local and school experimentation.

Documentation

Developing and Documenting the Plan with the Flexwork Form

The events of the past year have underscored the importance of the roles we all play in support of the University's mission of teaching and research. As we plan new approaches to work, some employees will look forward to returning to campus with little, if any, remote work, and others may believe they can be most effective if they work in a partially-remote — also known as hybrid — arrangement, or continue to work remotely as much as possible. Previous versions of Harvard's Flexwork Guidelines required employees to complete a Flexwork Proposal Form that developed a business case for flexwork and documented the where, when, and how of their job responsibilities. During the pandemic, this requirement was suspended. In this next iteration of Harvard's approach to workplace flexibility, however, documentation will continue to play a critical role in long term planning for the University. The new, two-part Flexwork Documentation Form will guide managers and employees alike in recording their evolving plans:

Capturing the Arrangement: Part A

Part A of the Flexwork Documentation Form is mandatory for approved arrangements, including those developed over the past year. The Flexwork Documentation Form is an important tool to capture the details of an approved flexwork arrangement, including specifics about how, where and when work will be performed. Gathering this data will enable quantification and analyses of current practices, which can in turn inform institutional decisions. As a general matter, this form should be filed with the relevant HR office, although local practices around documenting approved arrangements may vary. Please download this form, save it locally, complete it, and provide it to your manager. Adding basic information into PeopleSoft (when that feature becomes available) will include the information contained in this form.

Developing or Adjusting an Arrangement: Part B

Part B of the Flexwork Documentation Form is optional. Departments and/or managers may opt to require employees to complete part B to define the details of a proposed or existing flexwork arrangement, including specifics about how, where and when work will be performed. Required or not, employees may wish to use this document as a worksheet to think through and plan an effective flexwork arrangement, before and/or after a conversation with their manager.

Tools and Resources

Up-to-date tools and resources can be found on the Flexwork page in HARVie.