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Introduction

One of the main challenges facing employees today is balancing the demands of work with personal responsibilities and interests. Where appropriate, flexible work arrangements can offer viable solutions in achieving work/life harmony for employees and have also been shown to be important to employee engagement and retention.

There have been many studies that suggest there is increased productivity and quality of work when employers offer flexible work arrangements to employees, and they are implemented well and managed properly. Common findings include:

- Increased ability to attract, retain and motivate high-performing and experienced employees.
- Reduced absenteeism.
- Increased job satisfaction, energy, creativity, and ability to handle stress.

Ryerson University is an employer that puts its people first. As part of this commitment, we recognize that our employees have lives and commitments outside of the workplace. As an employer, we believe in facilitating a flexible working environment when reasonable and possible given the operational requirements of an employee’s positions and work unit.

There are a number of existing policies and collective agreement clauses already in place at the university that provide for such arrangements. This guide provides leaders and employees with practical information, resources and documentation when considering and/or managing flexible work arrangements.

It is important for leaders and employees to fully consider the implications of flexible work arrangements before they are put in place and to have mechanisms to monitor and evaluate such arrangements. Considerations must include:

- supporting employee work/life balance;
- unit operational requirements;
- health and safety;
- costs involved;
- impact on client and student service; and,
- impact on the work unit and co-workers.

Flexible work arrangements are not suitable for all positions and situations. While all employees have the right to request a flexible work arrangement, a leader’s approval of these arrangements is based on operational requirements and the employee’s specific role and responsibilities, and is therefore not guaranteed.
This guide is applicable to staff positions only. Additionally, due to the nature of work and the ways in which work arrangements may be altered, this guide is most applicable to employees in MAC and OPSEU positions.

This guide will discuss various types of flexible working arrangements, including:

- Flextime
- Compressed work week
- Reduced work week
- Job sharing
- Telework (i.e. working from home)

**Flexible work arrangements vs. accommodation?**

It is important to note that flexible work arrangements as outlined in this guide are not substitutions for, or part of, the accommodation for employees with disabilities. In cases where an employee requests a flexible work arrangement for medical reasons or to accommodate a disability, the University has a duty to accommodate (to the point of undue hardship). There is a separate process in place to arrange for accommodation related to illness or disability. Please contact your Human Resources Consultant or Workplace Wellbeing Services who will assist in assessing the request and exploring possible ways to accommodate. More information regarding accommodation at the university can be found by visiting ryerson.ca/hr/equity/accommodation or contacting Myra Lefkowitz, manager, Workplace Wellbeing Services at myra.lefkowitz@ryerson.ca or 416-979-5000, ext. 4724.

**Can flexible work arrangements work for any type of job?**

Although flexible arrangements can work in many situations, this does not mean that it is appropriate for every type of job. These types of arrangements must be discussed and agreed upon by supervisors and employees. Ultimately, it is up to the supervisor to determine if the arrangement is feasible.

Some operational and job considerations include:

- Operating hours may restrict flexibility of work schedules. For example, many staff have to be available to oversee operations and provide services to staff and students during the established operating hours.
- Volume of work may prevent a leader from being able to approve reduced hours for an employee.
- Peak or critical periods when staff are required may mean that compressed work week, reduced workload arrangements, or earlier or later start times are not suitable to the work or for specific times of the year.
- Jobs that require all or most of the work to be done on campus, such as those providing food services, lab monitoring, security services, facilities maintenance, front line client services and custodial services, are not suitable for working at home arrangements.
• Jobs that require access to equipment or to information that is only available on campus, such as may be the case for some research work, technical support services, etc. would also not be suitable for working at home arrangements.

In addition, flexible work arrangements are not always suitable for all employees.

• Many employees like the in-person, social and team interaction in the workplace and would not want to work at home.
• Some employees require more coaching or direct support to effectively fulfill their responsibilities.
• Reduced working hours also means reduced income and not all employees would be able or willing to make that trade off.
• Compressed work weeks mean working longer hours on most work days in order to get one day off in return, and this may not always work for everyone, e.g., parents with young children.

What collective agreement provisions and policies apply?
There are a number of existing policies and collective agreement clauses in place at the university today that speak to the opportunities employees and leaders have to find suitable work arrangements.

These provisions include:

• MAC – Hours of Work policy
• OPSEU – Hours of work provisions, including compressed work schedules and part-time work
• Change of Work Schedules Due to Family/Parental Obligations Policy
• Accommodation Policy for Persons with Disabilities,
• Accommodation of Religious Observances policy
• Discrimination and Harassment Prevention policy.
• Religious Observances Policy
• Environmental Health & Safety System policy
• Workplace Violence Prevention program

For assistance with collective agreement and policy considerations, please contact your HR Consultant.
Flexible work options

The following information outlines various flexible work arrangements, their benefits and some key considerations specifically related to that option.

Leaders and employees should be open to discussion of the issues, and decisions should be based on full consideration of all of the reasons, facts and options. All flexible work arrangements require a written agreement between the employee(s) and the leader and defined period for review and duration.

Please note that a normal work day for MAC and OPSEU employees is 7.25 hours, as it includes a 45 minute unpaid lunch break, and therefore a normal work week is 36.25 hours. For example, a typical MAC and OPSEU work day would begin at 9:00a.m. and end at 5:00p.m., with an unpaid lunch break from 12:00p.m. 12:45p.m.

Flexible work hours

Flextime

Flextime is an arrangement that allows employees, on an individual or collective basis, to have some flexibility in the start and end times of their working day, and usually takes the form of a pre-arranged alternative schedule.

Sample flextime work schedule:

| Days worked per work week: Monday to Friday |
| Hours worked per work day: 7.25 |
| Start and end times for each work day: 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (includes a 45 minute unpaid lunch break) |

Benefits of flextime

- Reduced commuting time by starting and ending work before or after rush hour.
- Employees can take advantage of quieter office time to allow better focus on uninterrupted work while most co-workers are not at the office, either earlier or later in the day.
- May improve customer service by staggering employees’ working hours and extending the hours of operation accordingly.
- Can reduce lateness and absenteeism, increase employee morale, and is an incentive for recruitment and retention.

Considerations for flextime

- May not be feasible in certain contexts; for example, for positions in departments that require employees to be available to provide services during specific operating hours, e.g., Library, Food Services, Bookstore, etc.
- May raise concerns about health and safety in the workplace as employees are working alone outside of normal working hours.
Leaders need to structure schedules while keeping in mind operational needs and core office hours, where applicable.

**Compressed work week**

A compressed work week is an arrangement where employees work longer days or shifts in exchange for a reduction in the number of working days in their work cycle, on a weekly or biweekly basis.

Sample compressed work week schedule:

| Employee weekly work schedule as follows: |
| Days worked per work week: Monday to Thursday |
| Hours worked per day: 9 |
| Start and end times for each work day: 7:30am – 5:15pm (includes a 45 minute unpaid lunch) |
| Total working hours per week: 36.25 |

**Benefits of a compressed work week**

- Provides additional days off work and reduced commuting.
- Leaders may be able to extend their daily operating hours on busier week days (e.g., Monday to Thursday), with less need to resort to overtime.
- Particularly useful for employees who wish to reduce the number of days per week spent at work, but cannot financially afford to decrease their working hours.

**Considerations for a compressed work week**

- Longer daily hours can cause greater physical and mental exertion, including the increased risk of musculoskeletal disorders associated with repetitive strain.
- Not all employees are likely to be able to manage compressed schedules and the related long hours, due to family responsibilities or availability of transportation for example.
- May raise concerns about health and safety in the workplace, for example for employees who might be working alone outside of normal working hours.
- May not be appropriate for jobs where available work is tied to operating hours, e.g., there may be no work to be done related to food service outside of operating hours.
- Schedules may only work during part of the year, e.g., during the summer.

**Reduced workload**

Reduced workloads include temporary or permanent arrangements where an employee works less than the standard number of hours per day and/or days per week, and receives reduced compensation. Please note that hours reduced below 24 hours per week will result in an employee’s status being changed from full time, to part time, which will have additional implications.
Sample 1: Reduced workload schedule (reduced days per work week):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days worked per work week: Monday to Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours worked per work day: 7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per week: 29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample 2: Reduced workload schedule (reduced hours per work day)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days to be worked per work week: Monday to Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours to be worked per work day: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start and end times for each work day: 8 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. (includes 45 minute unpaid lunch break)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per week: 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Benefits of a reduced workload**

- Can ease the transition to or from a leave, e.g., before or after a maternity or parental leave.
- Can ease the transition to retirement, for both the individual and the university.
- Can provide flexibility for departments to meet their operational requirements where there isn’t a need for additional full time resources.
- Can help retain employees during periods where their personal responsibilities temporarily demand additional time.

**Considerations for a reduced workload**

- Requires a trade-off of reduced compensation for increased personal time.
- Employees must consider the impact on their employment status, pension, and benefits when determining the hours or days to request to work per week. For example, employees who work 24 hours per week or less do not get group benefits.
- Arrangements may be set up on a short or long term basis.
- Involves a detailed review of full time job duties and responsibilities and their adjustment to the amount of time available, including the redistribution or deletion of some duties or responsibilities, as appropriate.
- The feasibility needs to be considered related to the unit workload, e.g., may not be appropriate if it results in insufficient staffing and the department cannot afford to hire additional staff.

**Job sharing**

Job sharing is an arrangement that allows two (or sometimes more) employees to jointly fill one job, with responsibilities shared or divided between them. As with any work arrangement, it requires the approval of both the leader and the employee. In addition, if a union position is involved in the job sharing arrangement, the union’s agreement is also required.
Sample job sharing schedule (Employee 1):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days to be worked per work week: Monday to Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours to be worked per work day: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start and end times for each work day: 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per week: 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample job sharing schedule (Employee 2):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days to be worked per work week: Monday to Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours to be worked per work day: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start and end times for each work day: 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per week: 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Benefits of job sharing**
- Facilitates collaboration and skill development, as job sharers learn from each other and provide mutual support and combines a wider range of skills and experience for a job.
- Leaders may have more flexibility to be able to extend their daily operating hours.
- Provides an opportunity for continuity of coverage when one employee in the job sharing arrangement is on leave or vacation.
- May make it easier for employees to revert to a full-time schedule on a temporary or permanent basis, e.g., asking two employees sharing a full time job on a part time basis to both work full time for a week or two to deal with an unusually busy period.

**Considerations for job sharing**
- Requires a tradeoff for employees if converting from full time work to a reduced workload, i.e., reduced compensation for more personal time.
- May be appropriate where a job needs to be filled on a full-time basis, but more than one employee would prefer to work part time or reduced hours.
- Employees must consider the impact on their employment status, pension and benefits when determining the hours or days to request to work per week. For example, employees who work 24 hours per week or less do not get group benefits.
- Leaders need to consider the impact on budget, including potential increased benefits costs for 2 employees instead of one.
- Can be complicated to set up and ensure appropriate communication and coordination of work.

**Working from home (Telework)**

Working from home, also referred to as telecommuting or telework, is an arrangement where an employee fulfills their job responsibilities at an office in their residence. Please note that telecommuting can be approved for a partial work week, 1 or 2 days per week, on a regular basis; or as ad hoc or temporary arrangements.
Sample telework schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of the Week</th>
<th>Hours of Work</th>
<th>Work Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>7.25 (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)</td>
<td>Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>7.25 (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>7.25 (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)</td>
<td>Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>7.25 (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>7.25 (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)</td>
<td>Office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benefits of telework

- May be a strategic tool to retain highly valued employees who want to work from home some or all of the time.
- With a suitable home office environment, can provide the ability to work with minimal distractions, resulting in improved productivity and efficiency.
- May allow employees to organize their work day around their personal peak productivity periods, peak work demand periods, as well as accommodating personal and family needs, e.g., children coming home for lunch.
- Decrease in work-related expenses for employee, e.g., reduced commuting.

Considerations for telework

- Often changes the fundamental way work is performed and requires a review of unit operations and job duties and responsibilities before determining if such an arrangement is appropriate.
- Employees need to consider whether they have suitable space in their home to do the work, including whether they can do the work free from distractions and whether the workspace meets health and safety requirements. A home office safety checklist is provided as a resource for leaders and employees, and must be incorporated into a telework agreement.
- Costs of setting up the home office (e.g. equipment, internet and phone connection, utilities) are paid by the employee.
- For safety reasons, employees cannot meet with work clients or coworkers at their home, or provide their home phone number or address for contact to conduct work from home. Communications must be through a Ryerson email and phone number (that may be forwarded to their home) or office address.
- Leaders and employees must consider how communications, teamwork and collaboration will be accomplished. Arrangements to work from home involve considerable discussion, usually involving the entire work team.
- Positions with a high level of autonomy and minimal requirements for face-to-face interaction are most appropriate for telework arrangements.
- Management based on clear objectives and results is required for supervisors of telework employees. Leaders need to consider and establish means and methods for supervision and monitoring of workload and results. They should determine the frequency and method of communication with teleworkers to ensure that they can monitor their progress and maintain regular contact. Leaders should also ensure that they, and the work team, are available to
teleworking employees, such as through weekly update conference calls, so that they can provide appropriate feedback, recognition, and answer questions. This will help to motivate the teleworking employee and connected the rest of the team.

- Consider whether working from home can be done on a short or long term basis, at a variety of frequencies, e.g., one day a week or on a full-time basis.
- When employees work with confidential information, leaders are encouraged to seek recommendations from the university’s Information and Privacy Officer, the Information Systems Security Officer or CCS for secure communication methods. Protocols must be established and agreed to for securing confidential materials that are transferred between the home and Ryerson locations and/or maintained at the employee’s home.
- In addition to considering privacy and confidentiality of work materials, leaders and employees need to consider and establish protocols for protecting work materials to reduce the risk of loss to the university, in accordance with the Information Protection policy.
- Employees must review, and if necessary may need to enhance, their home insurance policies and ensure that equipment, furniture and other work materials are covered for loss.
- Consider the issue of isolation of the employee, which may result in feeling less engaged with the work of the unit, department or university.
- Telework may not be appropriate for employees who would benefit from additional coaching and/or support to fulfill their duties in the workplace.

Steps to take to establish, maintain and end a flexible work arrangement

What does it take to introduce flexible work options?
It requires thorough planning, great management and open communication between the employee and supervisor. It takes some preparation and a little negotiation, but flexible workplace options can benefit both leaders and employees. The following are steps in setting up a flexible work arrangement:

1. Consider and discuss the eligibility of the position and the employee
   - Conduct a comprehensive review of the job, operational requirements, interdependencies and coordination of work within the unit/department and with other departments.
   - Review and consider the items in the previous section for specific types of flexible work arrangements, including the specific considerations for the employee to self-assess about the suitability of the arrangement for them.
   - Employees should also consider the following depending on the type of flexible work arrangement:
     - Will a different schedule allow you to improve the harmony between work and personal responsibilities or interests?
     - Do your family members support your plans and have you considered their input, for example, a reduction in salary or longer work days.
Is my home conducive to work? Not too noisy, not too many distractions? Is there a place at home I can set up as a dedicated work area?

Leaders should consider the following in assessing employee suitability:
- Eligible employees usually have a minimum level of job experience (recommendation is at least a year) and consistently meet or exceed expectations for job performance.
- Consider the employee’s independence, initiative, reliability, organizational ability, and collaboration and communication skills.
- For work at home arrangements, determine whether their home environment is a healthy and safe place to work, including assessing of risk of violence (see Health and Safety in Telework Arrangements provided in the tools and templates for more information on these considerations).

2. For leaders: Try to find alternatives and seek advice from HR
   - Welcome and be open to discussing proposals for flex work options.
   - Consult with your HR Consultant about strategies, options and collective agreement implications.
   - Unionized employees may also consult with their union representative.
   - When approval of a request for a flexible work arrangement is not possible, be clear about reasons for denying a request and outline if any other options are possible. This decision should be communicated to the employee verbally first, and then in writing. It is recommended that you seek advice from HR before you communicate this decision to the employee.

3. For Leaders: Negotiate and write agreements
   - Establish a written agreement. Human Resources provides template agreement forms.
   - Include clear provisions for how duties will be performed, how communication will be maintained, and the specifics of the work schedule being established.
   - Specify review dates for the arrangement and include a termination date, subject to renewal. Initial agreements should be on a trial basis for six months or one year.
   - Include the health and safety provisions in the agreement for work at home agreements; the checklist must be completed prior to an agreement being finalized and becomes part of the agreement.
   - Include provisions for cancellation of the agreement with appropriate notice.
   - For compressed work week arrangements, include scheduling provisions related to public holidays.
   - Write a revised job description if necessary (e.g., in cases of reduced workload, where duties may need to be modified). Consult your Total Compensation Specialist.

4. Monitor
   - Expect ongoing adjustments. Periodic review and evaluation will allow issues to be identified and corrected by adjusting details of the arrangement.
• If through feedback from clients, colleagues, etc., operational issues, changes to work requirements, changes in employee circumstances, etc. it is determined that the arrangement must be cancelled, communicate the rationale for ending the agreement clearly, first in person and then in writing.

5. Evaluation

• Complete the template evaluation form.
• All arrangements should be set up for a trial period of six months or a year with a three month interim review.
• Conduct regular annual reviews, preferably incorporated into regular performance review processes.
• Reviews conducted at the end of trial periods and on an annual basis should include the following:

  a) Work performance
     • Productivity
     • Accuracy
     • Quality of work
     • Ability to meet deadlines
     • Quality of communication with co-workers and leaders
     • Customer service

  b) Attitudes
     • Employee satisfaction (with duties and responsibilities, autonomy, relationships with co-workers and leaders, job security, opportunities for career advancement)
     • Client and co-worker feedback on the arrangement

  c) Organizational impact
     • Absenteeism
     • Injuries
     • Availability for meetings
     • Developmental Opportunities
     • Overtime
     • Impact on work of unit and ability to achieve goals and objectives

  d) Achieving the goals of the arrangement
     • Work/life harmony (stress, personal time, commuting time, educational opportunities)
Resources and forms

Visit ryerson.ca/hr/work-life/flexible-work-arrangements for additional resources to help leaders and employees determine whether flexible work arrangements are appropriate in a given circumstance, and templates to use in setting up such arrangements.

For assistance in understanding how to report time and absences in eHR for flexible work arrangements, visit ryerson.ca/hr/learning-workshops/how-to-eHR for eHR guides on time reporting.

Anyone participating in a flexible work arrangement should consult with their HR Consultant to discuss the issues related to the eHR system to ensure that employee absences and vacation accruals are being inputted correctly.