

Newcastle University Flexitime Framework

1. Introduction

The University recognises that flexibility over working hours is one aspect of employment which is highly valued by staff and flexitime can offer benefits to staff and the University including:

- Improvement in the work-life balance of staff by making personal and domestic commitments easier to accommodate
- Improvement in motivation levels
- Acting as a recruitment and retention tool
- Making it easier to accommodate fluctuations in workloads
- Encouraging team working in instances where certain staffing levels have to be maintained

This flexitime framework provides a University-wide umbrella under which Schools/Sections can operate local schemes as appropriate. All such local schemes must be approved by Staff Committee.

2. Eligibility

Flexitime is open to staff on grades A to E. The University does not believe that formal flexitime is appropriate for staff in grades F to I whose hours of work are considered by the University to be undefined. Staff in these grades are expected to manage their own time to achieve the objectives of their position.

There will be no contractual right to flexi-time. Flexitime is operated by the University on an entirely discretionary basis.

The extent to which staff participate in flexitime may vary and participation is voluntary. It is also recognised that it may be impractical to operate flexitime in some parts of the University. For example, where staff are required to work shift patterns to meet specific service provision requirements. Operational need will have to be taken into account when determining whether it is practicable to operate a local scheme.

Both full time and part time staff may be included but it is recognised that some part time staff work fixed hours to meet specific business needs and in such circumstances inclusion in a flexitime scheme may not be appropriate.

3. Recording of hours

An accurate and reliable method of recording hours is vital if flexitime is to operate successfully. Typically, three recording methods are used: swipe-card/clocking in technology; paper based systems; pc-accessible forms. The University has no particular preference and it will be for local managers to determine which method is most appropriate.

Whichever system is used, as a minimum managers must check and sign off the completed records at the end of each accounting period.

An example of a spreadsheet used to record hours is attached as appendix 1.

4. Bandwidth and core time bands

The bandwidth – the period spanning the earliest time staff can start work and the latest time they can finish – is 8.00 am to 6.00 pm.

Core times are those periods when staff are required to be at work. There will be two spells of core times per day and they will run for set times before and after lunch. Core times will be determined by local managers and will reflect the business need of the organisational unit concerned. On occasion, it may be necessary for local managers to authorise extensions to core times to meet workload peaks eg during admissions.

5. Flexible time

Flexible time falls between the start of bandwidth and the commencement of morning core time, and between the end of afternoon core time and the close of bandwidth. The amount of this flexible time and the exact positioning within the working day will be determined by local managers.

6. Lunch breaks

Lunch breaks act as a third period of flexible time. The University does not prescribe the length of the period when lunch breaks can be taken other than requiring a minimum lunch break of ½ hour. Otherwise, this is a matter for determination by local managers.

An example of the structure of a working day is given in appendix 2.

7. Accounting period

It is normal for flexitime schemes to have a defined accounting period at the end of which staff are expected to have more or less reconciled actual hours worked (subject to allowance for a small number of carry over credit and debit hours) with their contractual requirement. For staff on grades A to E this contractual requirement is currently 36 hours per week (7 hours 12 minutes per day) and will change to 37 hours per week (7 hours and 24 minutes per day) with effect from 1 January 2007.

The accounting period under this scheme is 4 weeks.

8. Credit and debit hours

An employee's flexitime account is said to be in credit when they have worked in excess of their contracted hours over the accounting period. In other words, the University owes hours to the employee. Conversely, hours are owed to the University when the contractual requirement has not been met. Such an account is said to be in debit.

9. Carry over of credit hours

Whilst in principle, accounts should be settled at the end of each accounting period, there will be some flexibility. The maximum credit carry-over is 1 day (7 hours 24 minutes based upon a 37 hour week).

10. Carry over of debit hours

The maximum debit carry-over is ½ day (3 hours 42 minutes based upon a 37 hour week).

11. Exceeding credit limits

Any excess hours above the credit limit will normally be forfeited. The University recognises that there may be occasions when, for operational reasons (eg workload peaks) it is difficult to balance accounts at the end of an accounting period. In these exceptional circumstances, managers will be able to exercise some discretion and authorise credit carry over in excess of the limit.

12. Exceeding debit limits

Exceeding debit limits will not normally be permitted. Where a member of staff marginally exceeds the limit on a single isolated occasion, then they will be asked to make up the time. There may also be circumstances when managers have discretion to allow some excess carry over in exceptional circumstances (eg where a period of extended leave has prevented someone from reducing debit hours). Where problems persists then a number of options will be available to managers to deal with the matter. The member of staff can have excess debit carry-over deducted from annual leave; they can have their participation in the flexitime scheme suspended; excess carry-over can be deducted from salary.

13. Converting credit into holidays

From the point of view of employees, one of the major benefits of flexitime is the ability to exchange accumulated credit for extra holidays or flexi-leave.

Under this framework, the maximum flexi-leave that can be taken in an accounting period is 1 day. This leave can be taken as either a full day or half days. All flexi-leave must be approved in advance by the manager. Business requirements will be taken into account

before granting flexi-leave and the University will have the option of considering payment for credit hours where workload makes flexi-leave impractical.

14. Credit adjustments

Throughout the University there will be occasions when staff are legitimately absent from work. Without the necessary account adjustments the flexitime balances of legitimately absent staff would be in debit. Consequently, any flexitime scheme must be able to take into account such absences and this is done in the most common instances (i.e. sickness and holidays) by applying credit at the rate of the standard contractual hours to the account, thereby cancelling the debit accrued. Other credit adjustments at standard contractual hours will be made for the following:

- Ante-natal clinics
- Training (including day release)
- Special leave
- Trade union duties and activities
- University business meetings
- Hospital appointments

Generally, staff will be encouraged to book medical, dental and optician appointments outside core times wherever possible and time away will not normally be credited.

In the case of travel delays, time lost as a result of standard delays – such as problems with public transport or minor traffic hold-ups will not be credited. In instances of exceptional weather conditions, credit may be granted on a case- by-case basis at the discretion of line managers.

15. Leavers

Staff leaving the University must balance their flexitime account before they leave. Any remaining credit at the time of departure will be lost. Any remaining debit will be deducted from salary. In exceptional circumstances, payment can be made for excess credit hours at the normal rate.

Term-time staff will be expected to balance their account by the end of each term that they work.

16. Overtime working

Overtime is entirely separate from flexitime, must be agreed in advance by the manager and will be recorded separately from the flexitime scheme. To be eligible for overtime, staff must be within the debit limit specified under paragraph 10 above.

17. Dealing with abuses

The operation of flexitime is to some extent dependent upon trust between staff and managers. Whilst the University does not anticipate problems with abuse of flexitime,

there is always the possibility that a few individuals might try to manipulate the system dishonestly, such as by:

- Building up hours not required by workload
- Getting others to register attendance on their behalf
- Falsifying time recording records

Managers will use a range of sanctions to discourage and/or penalise abuses. These will include:

- Informal discussion and monitoring for minor one-off offences
- More serious or repeated abuses could result in withdrawal from the scheme and/or disciplinary action.
- In particular, falsification of records or registering attendance for others is viewed as a serious offence and will result in disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

18. Review of the scheme

This flexitime framework will be reviewed on an annual basis and a report will be submitted to Staff Committee and the trade unions.

Effective Date	October 2006
Approval	Staff Committee – 29 October 2006
Policy/Procedure Owner	Garry Coupland
Last Reviewed	