



# Evaluating Flexible Work Opportunities

*A guide for exploring the decision-making process*



## Introduction

As remote work and partially remote work (also called “hybrid”) practices have become mainstream due to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work is now more fully integrated into the University’s long term workforce approach along with other flexible work arrangements. At UMKC, some roles and functions will always require physical presence and/or standard hours, but many others can use flexible work arrangement principles and practices to work together efficiently and effectively within their teams to meet the University’s academic and business objectives.

Those who are evaluating flexible work arrangement possibilities should begin by familiarizing themselves with the [UM System HR-522 Telework Arrangements Policy](#) and reviewing this comprehensive decision-making guide.

There are multiple factors to consider when exploring the possibility of flexible work arrangements. This guide is divided into several sections, each focusing on a separate aspect of consideration:

Section 1: Evaluating Business Need

Section 2: Position Suitability

Section 3: Employee Suitability

Section 4: Supervisory Approach

Section 5: Team Effectiveness

The Flexible Work Suitability Assessment can be completed in conjunction with this guide to support you in establishing a flexible work environment in your unit. The workforce planning template will assist you with reviewing your unit’s mission, objectives and services and will assess how workforce needs fit with various flexible work arrangements.

For additional information or guidance related to flexible work arrangements, please visit the Human Resources Website.

## Types of Flexible Work Arrangements

It is important to first familiarize yourself with types of flexible work arrangements. Please review each type below, so you can consider various options when working with your employees who are looking for flexible work arrangements.

### Telework Arrangements

Part or all of one or more work-days/weeks may be completed from a remote location. Due to the nature of the regulations set forth by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), supervisors must use caution if they are going to permit non-exempt employees to work remotely.

Examples:

- An employee can work at home Monday and Tuesday every week.
- An employee can work from the library on Thursdays and work from home on Friday.

### Flexible Work Schedule

Flexible times of day employees can start and stop work while maintaining awareness of what core hours need to be maintained. This arrangement must not cause or contribute to the need for additional staff or for overtime hours.

Examples:

- Some employees within the department may choose to work a 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. schedule with a half-hour lunch break while others may have an 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. schedule with an hour lunch.
- Individualized start and quit times may vary daily. However, the same number of hours are worked every day.
- Individualized start and quit times with varied daily hours but consistency in the total number of hours worked every week.
- Shortened lunch period to leave earlier than the standard workday.

## Section 1: Evaluating Business Need

Flexible work arrangements can be a dynamic tool and a vehicle to enable innovation and shape the future of work at UMKC.

Under optimal conditions, once approved and implemented, flexible work arrangements 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 the arrangement does not have an overall negative impact on the team or on individual performance.

Given the general intent of flexible work mentioned above, leaders may consider the following:

- Is a flexible work arrangement in the best interests of the university?
- Would a flexible work arrangement enhance, maintain, or diminish operational efficiencies?
- Does the addition of one or more flexible work arrangements enhance the productivity of the department and the employees?

## Section 2: Position Suitability

A position can be considered suitable for remote work or flexible work arrangement if some or most of its responsibilities can be performed away from the regular work location or perhaps outside of traditional 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. hours. Remote work should involve clearly defined tasks and have well understood outcomes and entail working independently. Jobs that require physical presence or significant interaction with stakeholders, coworkers, and/or students to perform effectively are normally not suitable for remote work but might be suitable for flexible scheduling.

Each position should be considered individually, per the responsibilities of the role, to determine if the work can be done effectively outside of the regular work environment or traditional hours. Some roles may be suited for a hybrid approach with some work completed on campus and some completed remotely.

The focus on flexible work arrangements must be on measurable results. The change in work location or hours should not impact productivity, customer service, operational efficiency, or team collaboration.

When considering a position's suitability, do key duties involve or require any of the following?

- Ongoing access to equipment, materials, and files that can only be accessed on campus or during normal business hours.
- Extensive face-to-face contact with students, supervisors, other employees, or the public.
- Extensive time in meetings or on collaborative efforts.
- Performing work on campus.
- Security considerations that require presence on campus.

## Section 3: Employee Suitability

Once it has been determined that all or some of the position responsibilities can be performed outside of the regular work environment or hours, the employee's compatibility for flexible work opportunities must be evaluated.

Suitability for flexible work arrangements should be considered on a case-by-case basis for current and potential employees. This section will help you determine if the employee can work in a self-directed manner in managing their work and time.

Factors relating to employee suitability for flexible work arrangements may include:

- The employee's most recent performance history (including disciplinary action).
- The employee's initiative, time management, and organizational skills.
- The employee has the necessary computer skills to complete their required job functions outside of the office.
- The employee understands their role and expectations and requires little supervision to complete their tasks.
- The employee can problem solve and resolve issues independently.
- The employee's performance in a flexible work arrangement can be measured and evaluated.

## Section 4: Supervisory Approach

Supervisors serve as leaders of employees, team builders, coaches, mentors, and trainers. A supervisor should consider compatibility of their own management style for flexible work arrangements. This section will help you determine if your supervisory style supports engaging in one or more flexible work arrangements with employees.

Factors relating to compatibility of supervisory approach for flexible work arrangements may include:

- Are you comfortable allowing this employee to work largely autonomously?
- How frequently do you monitor the employee's work performance?
  - Weekly
  - Monthly
  - Other Intervals
- Are you comfortable communicating virtually with your employee?
- Are you comfortable managing multiple schedules for your employees?
- Have you been successful in establishing clear objectives?
- Can you accurately measure the employee's performance, outcomes, and time worked?
- Do you trust that the employee will be productive without continuous supervision?

## Section 5: Team Effectiveness

Effective teams foster open dialogue and collaboration among others for a sense of belonging and strong team morale. Supervisors are encouraged to individualize plans that reasonably honor the needs of their employees while also supporting efficiencies to ensure work is completed effectively. This section will help you determine if the culture of your team is compatible with the establishment of one or more remote work arrangements.

Factors relating to team compatibility for flexible work arrangements may include:

- Do team members frequently work on detailed and complex projects that require collaboration and partnership?
- Does an employee's work location or hours impact teamwork processes and efficiency?
- Can the team sustain engagement in a virtual or hybrid work environment?
- Does the team possess resiliency to maintain trust and a strong team morale in the face of challenges?
- Would the team support and embrace a work environment with a combination of on-site and telework arrangements?



## Other Considerations

In addition to the considerations covered in the first five sections of this decision-making guide, there are several other miscellaneous factors that may or may not be relevant to the flexible work arrangement you are considering.

Please review the questions and statements below and evaluate whether the answers would impact the success of a flexible work arrangement.

- Is there special software or other devices that will be needed to be effective?
- Are professional development opportunities available to all employees in various modalities to support various work arrangements?
- Is the employee in their probationary period? If so, you may consider waiting to determine suitability for a flexible work arrangement until performance has been consistently established.
- Does the employee have ADA accommodations? If yes, how will these continue? If arrangements are being considered due to a possible disability accommodation, please contact your HRBP and the Equity and Title IX Office to discuss ADA accommodations.

## Next Steps

If an employee submits a flexible work arrangement request, next steps include:

1. Completing a Flexible Work Arrangement Suitability Assessment. This form is optional and documents suitability factors in each of the sections addressed in this guide.
2. Determining if a flexible work arrangement is approved or denied.
  - a. Make sure decision is in line with expectations from senior leadership related to flexible work arrangements.
  - b. If approval is granted, communicate with your employee. A sample communication template is available through your HRBP.
  - c. If request is denied, communicate with your employee. You are encouraged to share the decision along with the business reasons. A sample communication template is available through your HRBP.
3. Complete an agreement form in collaboration with the employee.
  - a. Telework Arrangement: The Telework Agreement Form is completed in Cherwell. The agreement documents details about the telework arrangement including work location, job duties, and work schedule. In addition, it specifies operating parameters and acknowledgements unique to the working arrangement.
  - b. Flexible Schedule: The Flexible Work Arrangement Form for other flexible work arrangements is a paper form that is located on the HR Website. This documents the employee's agreed upon work schedule and hours.
4. Set and review expectations with employee about work schedules and how everyone will maintain communication.
  - a. Determine what routine responsibilities require regular communication and collaboration with others and confirm how communication will continue with new flexible work arrangement.
  - b. Determine frequency and method employee and supervisor will communicate. It is encouraged to have regular check-ins, phone or video calls to help improve communication and productivity.
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of the flexible work arrangement. New flexible work arrangements should be reviewed for efficiency and effectiveness at 30-, 60-, and 90-day intervals. Following this, successful flexible work arrangements should be reviewed on an annual basis. It is recommended you set calendar reminders to review the request in the future.

## Conclusion

Flexible work arrangements have the potential to be a powerful and innovative tool for UMKC. Leaders are encouraged to carefully evaluate each request on a case-by-case basis while also considering implications for their unit overall according to the considerations outlined in this guide.

Remaining objective and consistently applying decision-making criteria is critical to ensuring equity within work units and the overall success of flexible work arrangements at UMKC.

As we look ahead, cooperation and support from all leaders will be needed to navigate the integration of flexible work arrangements into the university's long-term workforce approach. Leaders are encouraged to remain mindful as we navigate the nuances of flexible work in a future that has yet to come into focus. Patience and planning are integral to ensuring success for change of this magnitude.

Questions about the telework policy or navigating the flexible work arrangements can be directed to your HRBP or to [umkchr@umkc.edu](mailto:umkchr@umkc.edu).