

Flexible Working Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out IMPRESS's approach to flexible working arrangements which is in accordance with the ACAS code of practice and guidance on handling requests to work flexibly in a reasonable manner.

1.2 IMPRESS recognises that flexible working can provide benefits to both members of staff and IMPRESS and aims to support staff where possible to manage the balance between work and home life. IMPRESS recognises that a better work-life balance can improve employee motivation, performance, productivity and general wellbeing.

1.3 IMPRESS is committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both the organisation and the employee can be met.

1.4 Where the needs of the organisation change and are no longer met, then IMPRESS may review the flexible working arrangements of individual employees in consultation with them.

2. Scope

2.1 All members of staff have a statutory right to request a change to their contractual terms and conditions of employment to work flexibly subject to the eligibility conditions set out below.

2.2 Requests for flexible working may be for any reason and are not restricted to staff with family or care commitments. Employees may seek flexible working in order to undertake training, reduce commuting time, reduce their working hours on the run up to retirement, take up a hobby, or for other reasons.

2.3 Requests for reasonable adjustments to working hours associated with ill health or disability may also be dealt with outside of this Flexible Working Policy in appropriate cases.

2.4 This Policy is non-contractual and may be amended at any time.

3. Eligibility

3.1 In order to make a request under this policy a member of staff must:

- Be employed by IMPRESS;
- Not normally have made another statutory request under this policy in the preceding 12-month period. Managers may use their discretion in exceptional circumstances;
- Have worked at IMPRESS continuously for 26 weeks at the date of application;
- At their discretion, managers may accept requests sooner than 26 weeks continuous service when they consider it is appropriate to do so.

4. Principles

4.1 A member of staff does not have a right to work flexibly but has a right to request to do so. IMPRESS will try to accommodate requests where possible and may also, if appropriate, explore alternative flexible arrangements with the member of staff in order to reach a mutually beneficial arrangement.

4.2 All requests will be considered as quickly as possible. This will normally be within a calendar month of the manager receiving the request. The whole process, including any possible appeal against the decision, must be conducted within a maximum period of three calendar months. This timescale may be extended if necessary, with the agreement of both parties, for example to allow for a trial period if there are some concerns as to whether any new arrangements will work.

4.3 Once approved, changes to working patterns will normally amount to a permanent change to the staff member's contract of employment, unless otherwise agreed.

4.4 Staff have the right to be accompanied by a representative or work colleague at all formal stages of this process.

5. Definitions

5.1 Flexible working is any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when an employee works. Employees are encouraged to structure flexible working requests around IMPRESS core hours which are defined as 10am to 4pm, Tuesday to Thursday. During core hours, working employees are expected to be contactable and available to attend meetings as and when required.

5.2 The following flexible working options are typical arrangements that employees may request but IMPRESS recognises that there may be alternatives or a combination of options which are suitable to both IMPRESS and the employee:

- Compressed hours
- Flexitime
- Home-working
- Job-sharing
- Part-time working

Compressed hours: an employee works their usual full-time hours in fewer days by working longer blocks meaning that there is no reduction in their pay. For example, a ten-day fortnight is compressed into nine days and the tenth day is a non-working day. IMPRESS requires all working employees to be in the office during core hours which are defined above.

Flexitime: following the core hours framework, an employee can fulfil their contractual working hours by varying their start and finish times, allowing them to work a shorter or longer day and/or to build up additional flexi-leave, subject to a maximum of 2 full days in any calendar month. Flexi-leave should be requested and agreed with the employee's line manager. An employee should keep track of their hours of attendance to make sure they meet their contracted hours. An employee can carry over an excess of up to 15 hours (2 days) or a deficit of up to 7.5 hours (1 day) from one calendar month to the next. A deficit of hours should be made up in the following month. Flexitime hours are not to be built up when working at home.

Remote-working: an employee works remotely rather than the employer's premises for up to two days a week, within the core hours framework, though managers have discretion to allow more than this for a temporary period.

Part-time working: an employee is contracted to work anything less than typical full-time hours for the type of work in question, for example an employee only works Tuesday to Thursday. IMPRESS is committed to making all posts available on a part-time basis, except where a critical examination by line management proves this to be impracticable. The suitability of posts for part-time working will be stated in any internal or external advertisements. The majority (at least 51%) of part-time hours must be worked within the core hours framework.

6. Temporary Working Arrangements

6.1 It is recognised that occasionally, staff may need to request a temporary change to their working arrangements for a short period, for example to enable them to deal with a temporary or urgent situation. As such needs may arise quickly, in these circumstances staff should approach their manager informally in the first instance, outlining their request and the likely duration. Managers should endeavour to respond to these requests as quickly as possible, applying the principles of this policy. Where temporary needs continue for longer than one month, they should be formalised through this policy. Agreed temporary changes should be confirmed by email.

6.2 At the end of any temporary changes, the member of staff will revert to their normal working pattern. The manager should inform the Business Manager of any agreed changes to ensure that any changes to salary are made.

7. Application Process

7.1 Before submitting a request to work flexibly, staff are encouraged to discuss their request informally with their manager.

7.2 Applications should be put in writing to the line manager by email.

7.3 Upon receipt of a request, the manager will consider it carefully, taking into account the potential benefits and weighing them up against any adverse impact of the proposed changes. Decisions will be based on whether a request can be granted on business grounds. IMPRESS's ability to provide an effective service will be paramount.

7.4 If the manager can approve the request straight away, there is no need to have a meeting unless the manager chooses to do so. The manager will notify the Business Manager of any changes and this will be confirmed in writing to the member of staff.

7.5 Where the manager requires further information or discussion, they should arrange to meet with the member of staff at a mutually convenient time to discuss the request in more detail. This will provide an opportunity to explore the desired work pattern in depth and to discuss how this might be accommodated. It will also provide an opportunity to consider other alternative working patterns should there be problems in accommodating the desired work pattern outlined in the application.

8. Trial Periods

8.1 Where it is not clear if a flexible working arrangement will be effective, or if both parties feel it would be beneficial, a trial period of new working arrangements may be offered to enable a full assessment of the impact of the request on the member of staff and colleagues.

8.2 The trial period will normally last between one and three months. The length of the trial period will be specified in advance.

8.3 During the trial period, the changes to the staff member's terms and conditions of employment will be regarded as temporary.

8.4 At the end of the trial period the member of staff and manager should meet to discuss and review it and consider the continuance of the arrangements. Outcomes of this meeting may include:

- the new working arrangements will be approved and become permanent and contractual;
- the arrangements are not approved and the member of staff will be required to revert to their previous working arrangements;
- the manager may propose alternative working arrangements that will ensure the business objectives are met whilst still providing flexibility.

8.5 The outcome of the trial period will be confirmed by email.

9. The Decision

9.1 Once a decision is reached the manager will inform the member of staff of the outcome in writing, which may be to:

- agree to a new work pattern and a start date;
- agree a trial period of proposed working arrangements;
- confirm a compromise agreed with the member of staff;
- provide a clear business reason as to why the application cannot be accepted. This reason must be one of those listed below.

10. Grounds for refusing a request

10.1 The manager should carefully consider the advantages, possible costs and potential logistical implications of any request.

10.2 Not all working patterns or flexible working options will be suitable for all positions. It may also be difficult to accommodate flexible working requests from several staff members working in the same area. Each case will be considered on its own merits in the order in which it was received.

10.3 An application may only be rejected for one of the following business reasons:

- the burden of any additional costs is unacceptable;
- an inability to reorganise work among existing staff;
- an inability to recruit additional staff;
- IMPRESS considers the change will have a detrimental impact on quality;
- IMPRESS considers the change would have a detrimental effect on its ability to meet service demand;
- IMPRESS considers the change would have a detrimental impact on performance of the individual, the team or IMPRESS;
- there is insufficient work during the periods that the employee proposes to work;
- where the requested changes will not fit in with planned structural changes.

11. Appeals Procedure

11.1 The member of staff may appeal a decision to refuse or review a request within 10 working days of the original decision being notified to them. The grounds for the appeal should be put in writing to the Business Manager who will appoint a suitable manager to hear the appeal, which will normally be someone more senior to the person who made the initial decision.

11.2 The Business Manager will provide guidance and support to the appeal manager. The appeal manager may, as they feel necessary, request further information and/or evidence, and may wish to meet with the employee and/or the manager. The appeal manager will make a final decision on whether the appeal should be allowed or rejected.

11.3 The appeal manager will notify the employee of the outcome of the appeal in writing within 20 working days of the appeal decision. Their decision will be final.

12. Terms and Conditions

12.1 Where a flexible working request that results in a reduction in working hours is approved, salary, holiday and other benefits will be pro-rated to reflect the new working hours. In the case of a shorter working year, the pro-rated salary will be paid over a 12-month period.

13. Monitoring

13.1 The policy will be reviewed annually and may be amended. The policy does not form part of any contract of employment.