Remote Work and Other Aspects of the Modern Work Environment: Tools for Supervisors

Academic Leadership Forum
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Pulse Check

What word would you use to describe how you feel about Flexible Work Arrangements?

Staff Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)

Leading a Culture Change

Background

Remote Work Task Force recommendations approved

(August 2021)

Announced commitment to flexible work arrangements for staff

(February 2022)

Staff arrangements documented in Workday

(December 2022)

Interim guidance for fall 2021 and spring 2022 semesters

New flexible work arrangements policy released for staff

(July 2022)

Faculty document remote arrangements in Workday
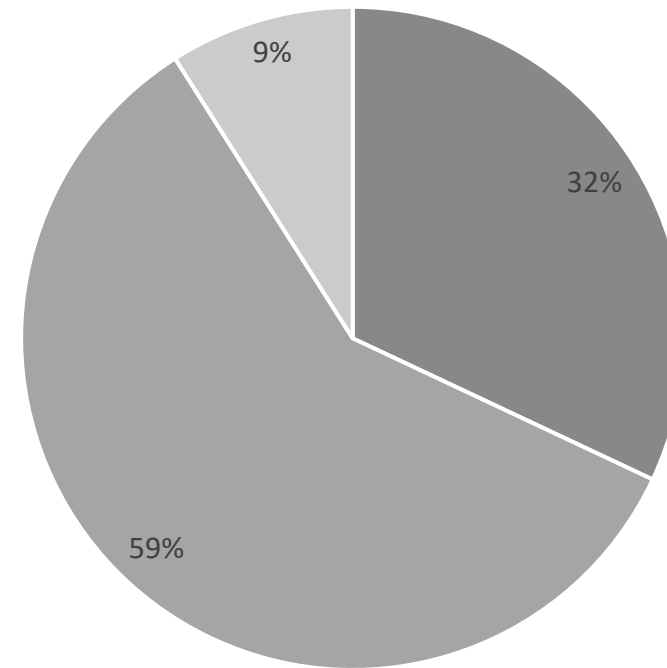
(January 2023)

FWAs – The Numbers

Employees with Flexible Work Arrangements

- Staff: 6,654
- Faculty and Post-docs: 247
    - Faculty: 210
    - Post-docs: 37

FWA Types

32%

59%

9%

■ Remote   ■ Hybrid   ■ Other

The Culture Shift

Guidance (Not a Directive)

Leaders can leverage FWA to enable their units to successfully deliver services and achieve goals.

Culture Shift (Not about a Pandemic)

This shift is intentional, not forced.

Flexible (Not just Remote or Hybrid)

Performance expectations don't change and the processes in place to address underperformance are still the same.

Customizable (Not one size fits all)

Leaders must be willing to have critical conversations and genuinely hear what others are saying.

Positive Impacts (<u>Not</u> problematic)

Flexible Work Arrangements will positively impact our sustainability mission as it relates to our talent (people), the environment, and financial stewardship.

Marathon (Not a sprint)

We are in the middle of a tremendous change and the change is going to take time. This means living with a level of the "unknown."

Flexible Work In Practice

FWA Examples

- 100% remote work.

- Hybrid Schedule - A combination of time spent working remotely, and in a university-controlled office.

- Staggered start and end times.

- Alternative shifts.

- Compressed schedules, such as four 10-hour days.

- Mid-day flex time. For example, working 8:00am-12:00pm, on break between 12:00pm-2:00pm, and then working 2:00pm-6:00pm.

FWA Examples

- Core hours with a variable schedule, where an employee must be present during specified core hours determined by the supervisor but may adjust their arrival and departure times each day (e.g., set office coverage between 10:00am-2:00pm every workday).

- Reduced schedules outlined in University policy HR105-Reduced FTE Schedules.

- Voluntary phased retirement outlined in University policy HR29-Voluntary Phased Retirement Program.

- Appropriate flexible work arrangements depend on the nature of the position and the specific needs of the unit.

Discussion

- What are the Benefits of FWA?

- What concerns you most about FWA?

- How can FWA increase productivity and efficiency?

Best Practice Focus Areas

- Managing and directing the work

- Navigating critical conversations

- Leading change

While these are foundational leadership competencies, the introduction of FWA can result in new challenges.

Managing and Directing the Work

- **Transparency:** Discuss and consider impacts to day-to-day processes/functions due to FWAs.

- **Communication:** Update communication channels to account for FWAs – use of collaboration tools, meeting arrangements, frequency of meetings.

- **Monitor Expectations:** As you would with traditional work arrangements, monitor performance.

- **Provide Timely and Relevant Feedback:** Regularly discuss work progress acknowledging successes and areas that need improvement.

This list is not exhaustive.

Critical Conversations

- **Prepare:** Prior to a conversation outline your objectives. Include open ended questions that encourage a two-way discussion
- **Listen:** Meet with the individual and hear their concerns. Be genuinely open to what they are saying.
- **Summarize:** Reflect back what you heard, summarize the concerns shared.
- **Respond:** The feedback should be specific, personal and relevant.
- **Reset or Reinforce Expectations:** Reinforce performance expectations and provide concrete examples of what success looks like.
- **Determine Next Steps:** What follow up is required by you or the employee?

Leading Change
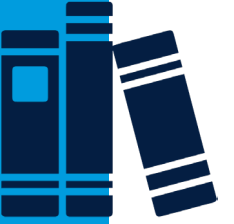
- Communicator – Share personal impact messages with direct reports about the change
- Liaison – Engage with and support the team
- Advocate – Demonstrate support for the change
- Resistance Manager – Identify and mitigate resistance to the change
- "Coach" – Help employees through the change process

Scenarios

1. An employee has requested a FWA and the manager has declined the request. The employee is frustrated, they have a role similar to a person on another team who was granted an FWA. **As a manager, how would you address this concern?**

2. Over the last few months, you have noticed an employee with an FWA can be difficult to reach during standard operating hours. Additionally, other team members have approached you about the same inconsistency – missed meetings, unreturned emails and messages. **As a manager, how would you address this concern?**

Faculty remote work

- As it currently stands, there is no faculty remote work policy
- HR 107 (Staff Flexible Work Arrangements):

Flexibility is inherent in most faculty members' work schedules and the University expects full-time faculty members to participate fully in their university workspace or on-campus intellectual and educational community and generally does not permit remote work arrangements. Faculty members seeking a temporary change in their university workspace or on-campus work expectations must make a request to their unit executive (dean/chancellor).

Faculty remote work – general principles

Full-time faculty are expected to be part of academic community

Remote work arrangements should be rare

Remote work arrangements are temporary

Documentation of faculty remote work

Why?

- Accurate taxation of employees

Who?

- Full-time only – part-time to come later

- In or outside of PA

- "Fully-remote"

Documentation timeline

Dec. 2022
- Units received a spreadsheet of fully-remote faculty
- Units reviewed spreadsheet, provided additional information/revisions as necessary, and returned to HR

Jan. 2023
- All faculty appearing on the spreadsheets were sent a notification to document their remote work arrangement in Workday
- Units review and approve

June
- Full-time, remote faculty must formally end their arrangement by 6/30 and submit a request for a new arrangement

Workday documentation process

Faculty member → Academic unit head → Dean/Chancellor → Unit HR
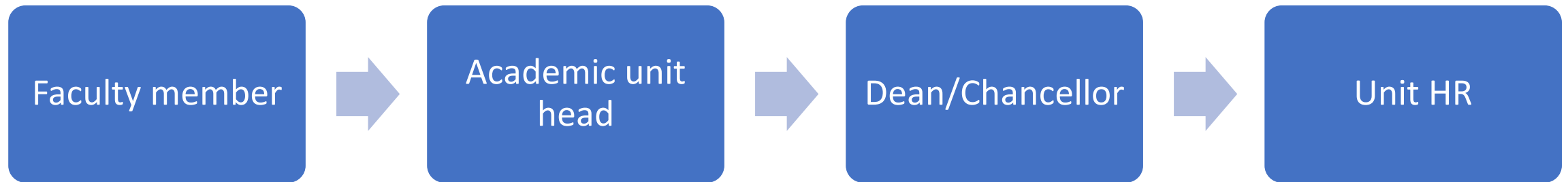
Elements of requests in Workday

Questionnaire

Acknowledgment
of terms

End date

Going forward

Office of Faculty Affairs will review lists of fully-remote faculty and follow up with units as needed

OFA will regularly monitor

All arrangements revisited annually, and by no later than June 30

Scenarios

1. A faculty member has lived in another state, while working for Penn State, for the past 10 years. Other faculty in the unit sometimes complain that they have to take on more service responsibilities than the remote faculty member. Now that the faculty remote work request process is in place, you are considering asking the faculty member to spend at least a portion of their time on campus. **As a supervisor, how would you address this concern?**

2. A faculty member in your unit is teaching an in-person class. In mid-February, you learn that they have not been coming to campus and have been teaching the course remotely since the semester began. **As a supervisor, how would you address this concern?**

Faculty remote work from outside the U.S.: two types

Short-term, mission-critical, University-affiliated travel outside the U.S.

Remote work outside the appointment period from a non-U.S. location

Faculty remote work from outside the U.S.: time period

30 days

during the appointment period

90 days

in a rolling, 1-year period

Faculty remote work from outside the U.S.: additional details

Exceeding time limits

Remote work request form

Exceptions

Sabbaticals/other study leaves

Ed Abroad programs

Activities outside the appointment period and without university funds

Summer teaching requests

Send to Office of Faculty Affairs for review

Questions and Discussion