



GUIDANCE FOR EVALUATING STAFF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

In the Jesuit tradition, Saint Louis University places importance on the balance of the principles of cura personalis, care for the person, and cura apostolica, care for our mission and the work of the institution. These principles inform our considerations of the work we do and how we do it.

An interim flexible work policy has been developed to introduce, in a more formalized manner, flexible work arrangements at the University. The policy is based on what the institution learned during the more than 16-month period of remote work for non-essential workers caused by the pandemic. The interim policy's objective will be to strike the appropriate balance between caring for our staff as well as the critical importance of caring for our students, patients and the University community which is at the core of the work that we do. The University recognizes that the application of flexible work arrangements offers advantages for both the University and our employees where these arrangements are operationally effective and do not compromise the fundamental values and identity of the University.

Flexible work arrangements may include permanent or partial adjustments to an employee's regular work location, an employee's scheduled work hours, or both.

This document provides guidance to supervisors and leaders to assist in their evaluation of requests for flexible work arrangements. At the outset, leaders should reflect upon three important insights that have been illuminated over the last several months about flexible work arrangements:

- 1) Our faculty, staff and most students have powerfully reaffirmed our shared value of in-person interaction, relationship, and community.
- 2) There is a difference between functionally keeping the University running/getting our work done (and for a relatively short period of time, given our 200+ year history) and fully living our value of shared community and experience.
- 3) For certain staff positions, some amount of well-planned remote work or work schedule flexibility, can enhance efficiency and provide greater employee flexibility and job satisfaction – without sacrificing equity or commitment to our mission.

Leaders should also reflect upon three main priorities the flexible work policy is intended to balance:

- 1) Our shared value of in-person interaction, relationship building and community; and
- 2) Our need to attract and retain high-quality talented individuals; and
- 3) Our need to ensure equity and fairness as fundamental aspects of our approach to flexible work arrangements.

Those who are evaluating flexible work possibilities should begin by familiarizing themselves with the University's Staff Interim Flexible Work Policy, reviewing any additional guidance provided by their unit leadership (e.g., VP, Provost), and reviewing this comprehensive decision-making guidance. 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.

Initiation of a Flexible Work Arrangement

Typically, it is expected that a flexible work arrangement will be initiated by the employee to the employee's supervisor. The supervisor should initially evaluate the suitability of the role for a flexible work arrangement utilizing the criteria discussed below. In the event the supervisor believes that a flexible work arrangement may be suitable for the role and will have minimal impact to the role's unit and those other units with which it collaborates, the supervisor will take the request to their leadership.

Guiding Principles for Evaluating Flexible Work Arrangement Requests

- The approach should recognize the important balance between care for the person (*cura personalis*) and care for our mission and the work of the institution (*cura apostolica*).
- The evaluation process must be inclusive, equitable, fair, and consistent. These principles do not mean that every role will be treated the same across the institution. The individual circumstances of roles across the institution will impact the appropriateness of a flexible work arrangement. Similarly titled positions in different colleges/schools or divisions may not have the same flexible work arrangement opportunities due to differences in the roles across the institution.
- Each request should be evaluated based on whether all the responsibilities of the role can be performed effectively under the flexible work arrangement.
- The evaluation must consider the work of the entire team, department, or division. If a flexible work arrangement negatively impacts other members of the unit, or other units that regularly work with the role being evaluated for a flexible work arrangement, that must weigh into the decision whether a flexible work arrangement is appropriate.
- When evaluating requests to work remotely, the role's work should involve clearly defined tasks and have well understood outcomes. Roles that entail working independently are often suitable for remote work. Roles that require physical presence or significant interaction with coworkers, patients, students, and stakeholders to perform effectively are normally not suitable for remote work.
- When evaluating roles for flexible work arrangements, some focus must be given to how performance and productivity can be measured. The change in work location should not negatively impact productivity, customer service, operational efficiency, or team collaboration.

Questions to Consider When Determining if a Role is Suitable for a Flexible Work Arrangement

- Does this flexible work arrangement serve the best interests of the University?
- Does this flexible work arrangement negatively impact the interests of the University?
- Does the addition of the flexible work arrangement(s) enhance or inhibit the productivity of the department, the role for which the request applies, and the roles that interact with the role at issue?
- Does the proposed flexible work arrangement affect teamwork or collaboration within the unit or with colleagues outside the unit.
- Can you accurately measure the role's performance, outcomes, and time worked in a flexible work arrangement?

Questions Specific to Remote Work Requests

- Must some of the role's duties be performed on campus? If so, how frequent must those duties be performed on campus?
- Will the role have access to equipment, materials, and files in the remote work environment?
- Do privacy and security considerations require work to be performed onsite or can sufficient safeguards be implemented remotely?
- Does the role require extensive face-to-face contact with patients, students, supervisors, other employees, or the public?
- Does the role's work location impact engagement with co-workers?

Questions Specific to Flexible Work Schedule Requests

- Which job duties must be performed during standard work hours?
- Does the role include substantial responsibilities that can be performed outside of the University's normal working hours?
- What is the operational impact of establishing a flexible work schedule?
- Does the role require extensive contact with patients, students, supervisors, other employees, or the public? If so, does the flexible work schedule enhance or inhibit that support?
- Does the proposed schedule support colleague interaction with the role and is the work schedule transparent so availability is reliable?

Evaluating an Individual's Compatibility for Flexible Work

Once it has been determined that all or some of the role responsibilities can be performed in a flexible work arrangement, the specific employee's compatibility for flexible work opportunities must be evaluated. This section will help you determine if the employee should be permitted to work in a self-directed manner in an alternate location and/or on an alternate schedule.

Factors relating to employee compatibility for remote work arrangements may include:

- The employee's most recent performance history (including any disciplinary action).
- The employee's time working within the SLU environment and integration into the SLU culture.
- The employee's initiative, time management, and organizational skills.
- The employee's computer skills and the extent to which those are sufficient to complete their required job functions outside of the office.
- The employee's understanding of their role and expectations, and their ability to work in a way that requires little supervision to complete their tasks.
- The employee's performance in an alternate work location can be measured and evaluated.

Note: It is imperative that employees in the same role be evaluated consistently. If a supervisor is prepared to deny an employee's request for a remote work arrangement while approving a request from an employee in the same role, the supervisor must seek HR approval before proceeding.

Advancing a Flexible Work Arrangement Request

After the supervisor has determined that a flexible work request is appropriate, the supervisor should follow the Division or College/School process for seeking leadership approval of the request.

The respective Division Vice President or the Dean of the College/School will determine what requests for remote work are approved. If a request is approved, take the following steps:

- Complete a Flexible Work Agreement in collaboration with the employee. The agreement documents details about the flexible work arrangement.
- A copy of the Flexible Work Agreement should be maintained by the supervisor and a copy should be sent to hr@slu.edu to upload to the employee's Workday file.

Declining a Flexible Work Arrangement Request

If after thorough review, a supervisor, Division Vice President, or Dean decides not to pursue a flexible work arrangement with an employee, the supervisor should communicate the denial to the employee. The reasons for the denial should be documented and be maintained by the supervisor. If you have questions or would like guidance when communicating a denial, you can contact your assigned Human Resources Consultant.

Remaining objective and consistently applying decision-making criteria is critical to ensuring equity within work units and the overall success of remote work at Saint Louis University. We are grateful for your efforts to maintain this commitment.