

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GUIDELINES FOR FLEXIBLE STAFF WORK ARRANGEMENTS
May 31, 2023

1. Introduction

As an international, private, comprehensive research university dedicated to generating and sharing knowledge through in-person community interactions, Boston University offers flexible work arrangements to staff members in support of the University's mission that advance Boston University as an employer of choice. While flexible work arrangements are not an entitlement or a University-wide benefit, these Guidelines recognize that they can enhance a number of institutional goals, including the recruitment and retention of staff, business continuity, enhanced support to the University's strategic plan initiatives, and environmental sustainability. While the expectation is that most staff will be on campus for the majority of their workweek, the Guidelines provide appropriate flexibility for individual schools, colleges, and departments to meet the needs of both their mission and their staff.

2. Scope of the Guidelines

The Guidelines apply to regular, US-based non-represented exempt staff (those paid a salary regardless of hours worked and not eligible for overtime pay) and non-exempt staff (paid hourly), including staff in academic research positions. The Guidelines do not apply to faculty, staff who are members of a bargaining unit (unless otherwise agreed between the applicable union and the University), temporary employees, student employees, or staff who work outside the United States.

For staff who are foreign nationals, flexible work arrangements are governed by these Guidelines and the University's [Flexible Work Procedures for Foreign Nationals](#).

3. Definitions

Flexible Work Arrangements include hybrid work, fully remote work, and modified work schedules. Flexible work arrangements may be allowed on an ongoing basis, a seasonal basis (e.g., for periods outside the fall and spring semesters), or for other specific time periods based on school, college, and department needs.

Hybrid, Seasonal Hybrid, and Fully Remote Work

Hybrid work allows a staff member to work a portion of the workweek on campus and a portion of the workweek remotely (i.e., off-campus at a remote location). Hybrid work generally involves up to two days of remote work per week. Three or four days of remote work per week is allowed in special situations.

Seasonal hybrid work allows a staff member to work a portion of the workweek on campus and a portion of the workweek remotely on a seasonal basis. Seasonal hybrid work arrangements may not exceed two days of remote work per week.

Fully remote work is when a staff member does not come to campus at all except for occasional on-campus meetings or events. It is allowed when a dean or vice president determines that there are exceptional circumstances warranting fully remote work.

Modified Work Schedules and Seasonal Modified Work Schedules

Within **regular hours of operation**, a staff member may work their **regular weekly hours** on either a **standard work schedule** or a **modified work schedule**.

Regular hours of operation are those hours of work designed to provide service coverage for the school, college, or department and are in many cases greater than the number of hours in any particular staff member's assigned workweek. Managers will determine the regular hours of operation for their units with the approval of the dean or vice president. For example, a manager may designate a unit's regular hours of operation as 8 am to 7 pm Monday through Friday.

Regular weekly hours are the number of hours in a staff member's assigned workweek. In accordance with the [Employee Handbook](#), full-time staff are assigned a workweek that is thirty-five (35) hours, thirty-seven-and-one-half (37 1/2) hours, or forty (40) hours as established by each school, college, or department and approved by the dean or vice president.

The **standard work schedule** is a staff member's assigned work schedule, as set forth in their offer letter or a subsequent assignment from their school, college, or department. A staff member's standard work schedule may be different than a school, college, or department's regular hours of operation. For example, a staff member's standard work schedule may be 9 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday, but the department's regular hours of operation may be 8 am to 7 pm Monday through Friday.

A **modified work schedule** allows a staff member to perform their regular weekly hours on a schedule other than their standard work schedule. The modified work schedule must be fully within the regular hours of operation at a school, college, or department.

For example, if a staff member has a standard work schedule of 9 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday, and the department's regular hours of operation are 8 am to 7 pm, the following are examples of potential modified work schedules:

1. 8 am – 4 pm Monday through Friday;
2. 10 am – 6 pm Monday through Friday;
3. 9 am – 7 pm Monday through Thursday, and zero hours on Friday;
4. 8 am – 5 pm Tuesday through Friday, and 8 am – 12 pm on Monday.

Modified work schedules are described further in Section 4 below.

A **seasonal modified work schedule** allows a staff member to work a modified work schedule on a seasonal basis (e.g., a change from a 5-day-per-week schedule during semesters to a 4-day-per-week compressed work schedule during the break between semesters). Seasonal modified work schedules are described further in Section 5 below.

4. Modified Work Schedules

As described above, modified work schedules adjust a staff member's work hours within their school, college, or department's regular hours of operation. A modified work schedule may not reduce or increase a staff member's regular weekly hours. All modified work schedules must comply with [Section 201 of the Employee Handbook - Hours of Work](#) and applicable law.

Per the [Employee Handbook](#), the assigned workweek represents the minimum number of hours that an exempt staff member is expected to work. Exempt staff are expected to work the hours necessary to complete their job duties, even if such hours are beyond their regular weekly hours or modified work

schedule. Likewise, per the Employee Handbook, non-exempt employees may be required to work overtime in excess of their regular weekly hours as required by the University's operational needs. Such overtime hours are in addition to any modified work schedule.

5. Seasonal Modified Work Schedules

As described above, a seasonal modified work schedule is a temporary change in a staff member's work schedule on seasonal basis. Seasonal modified work schedules do not typically change a school, college, or department's regular hours of operation for providing services to faculty, staff, students, prospective students, alumni, vendors, and other stakeholders. Deans and vice presidents may approve a seasonal change in regular hours of operation if it is clear from historical demand that the change will have no material impact on stakeholder service.

6. Eligibility

Staff members who meet the following job performance criteria are eligible to request flexible work arrangements: (1) no active corrective action; (2) an overall performance rating of 3 (successful) or above on the most recent performance evaluation, if applicable; and (3) compliance with all University health and safety policies and protocols (e.g., proof of any applicable vaccination requirements). New staff members who have not yet received a performance evaluation may request flexible work arrangements. However, it is strongly recommended that any hybrid work arrangements for newly hired employees commence after a minimum of 90 workdays of employment has been completed and an initial performance discussion has been held.

7. Request and Approval Procedures

Hybrid and Fully Remote Work Arrangements – Requests and Approvals

To request a hybrid or fully remote work arrangement, a staff member must submit an online Remote Work Request Form. Managers may also require that staff members provide additional information relevant to the staff member's position, job duties, or the needs of the department.

A hybrid or fully remote work arrangement must be approved by the staff member's manager and the appropriate dean or vice president (or a designee of the dean or vice president). If the staff member's remote work location is outside Massachusetts, the arrangement must also be approved by the vice president for human resources, as described in Section 12 below.

A hybrid or fully remote work arrangement may not begin until a Remote Work Request Form is complete, with all required approvals. The staff member will complete the form which will be automatically routed to their manager for additional information and first-level approval. The form will then be routed to the appropriate dean, vice president, or designee (and for out-of-state work, the vice president for human resources) for additional approval. The completed document will be returned to the staff member and manager.

Modified Work Schedules – Requests and Approvals

To request a modified work schedule, a staff member must submit a written request to their manager identifying the proposed schedule. Staff should discuss modified work schedules with their managers before making requests.

A modified work schedule must be approved in writing by the staff member's manager. If the staff member's regular or remote work location is outside of Massachusetts, the manager must also obtain the approval of the vice president for human resources before allowing a modified work schedule.

If a modified work schedule changes the number of hours a staff member works per day (e.g., a compressed work schedule of four ten-hour days), the manager must ensure that the work schedule is entered into SAP through an Employee Position Update by the department's payroll coordinator. Further detail on entering the modified work schedule into SAP is available in the "Updates During Employment" section on the [HR Systems website](#).

Requests for Reconsideration

A staff member whose request for a flexible work arrangement is denied may seek reconsideration of the decision using the reconsideration process described in Section 10 below.

Management Discretion

Decisions regarding flexible work arrangements, including decisions on requests for reconsideration, are at the discretion of management and not subject to the employee grievance process in the Employee Handbook.

8. Evaluating Requests for Flexible Work Arrangements

Managers should carefully evaluate all requests for flexible work arrangements using the guidance below. Flexible work arrangements must be appropriate for the specific position and job duties. Not all positions are appropriate for hybrid work or modified work schedules.

Core Principles

Flexible work arrangements must be consistent with the following core principles:

Institutional Mission: Boston University is a vibrant residential research university, and intense collaboration and in-person interactions among students, staff, and faculty are necessary to our work. Flexible work arrangements must support this mission.

Quality of Student Services: Flexible work arrangements must not impinge on the student-centered nature of our residential research university.

Quality of Research Environment: Flexible work arrangements must not impinge on the research activities that are physically based in our laboratories and offices.

Business Operations and Goals: Flexible work arrangements must support business operations' efficiency to ensure the success of each school, college, or department and the University as a whole in meeting and exceeding overall goals. Business operations may vary seasonally.

Employee Retention and Recruitment: Flexible work arrangements will support talent recruitment and retention and contribute to the University community and employee morale.

Other Key Considerations

Managers should also consider the following factors in determining whether a flexible work arrangement is appropriate:

- the nature of the role;
- job duties;

- the University’s needs;
- the presence of students, faculty, other staff, guests, or the public on campus during specific time periods or events;
- the unit’s operational requirements;
- a review of productivity over time within the unit;
- an assessment of the engagement of all employees in a unit; and
- an assessment of communications and collaboration among employees within one or more unit(s).

Nature of Position – Special Considerations for Hybrid or Fully Remote Work

Roles that lend themselves to hybrid or fully remote work are generally those that:

- involve work that can be accomplished independently with limited direct supervision (subject to the *Other Key Considerations* outlined above);
- do not require frequent and regular face-to-face contact with students, supervisors, staff, faculty, guests, or the public on the University’s campuses;
- do not require access to equipment, materials, or information that can only be accessed while on the University’s campuses; and
- do not require on-campus presence due to security, logistical, or other business-related reasons.

Staff Member Job Performance

Staff members must meet the job performance criteria set forth in Section 6 above (i.e., no active corrective action; a minimum overall performance rating of 3 (successful) on the most recent performance evaluation, if applicable; and compliance with all University health and safety policies and protocols) to be eligible to request and remain approved for a flexible work arrangement. If a staff member receives corrective action or an overall rating below 3 on a performance evaluation or fails to comply with health and safety policies and protocols, a flexible work arrangement will be withdrawn until the manager determines that the performance issue is resolved, absent an exception by the applicable dean or vice president. The job performance criteria apply to both new flexible work arrangements and the continuation of pre-existing flexible work arrangements.

Additionally, managers should consider whether a staff member has demonstrated the following:

- ability to work without close supervision;
- consistently high levels of effective work performance;
- strong problem-solving capabilities;
- strong organizational skills;
- effective communication skills;
- ability to work within timelines and meet deadlines; and
- ability to work efficiently in an informal, non-office environment.

9. Ongoing Review of Flexible Work Arrangements

Staff members with approved flexible work arrangements are expected to meet all performance standards of their school, college, or department and to be as productive as if they were working on campus or working a typical schedule.

Managers will review approved flexible work arrangements regularly, including during a staff member's annual performance evaluation, to determine whether they should be continued, considering staff member job performance, operational needs, team dynamics, and other relevant considerations. Such reviews should be conducted at least annually and more frequently for new flexible work arrangements. Managers have the discretion to revoke or modify flexible work arrangements at any time with the approval of the applicable dean or vice president (or designee). The University will provide 30 days' notice of modifications or revocations of flexible work arrangements when feasible. However, there may be occasions where 30 days' notice is not feasible given operational needs.

Managers may consider approving flexible work arrangements for a trial period to assess their success and viability.

10. Reconsideration Process

The reconsideration process allows a staff member whose request for a flexible work arrangement has been denied to request reconsideration of the decision. Requests for reconsideration must be directed to the applicable dean or vice president, except those concerning denials by Human Resources for flexible work arrangements outside of Massachusetts, which must be directed to the vice president for human resources.

To request reconsideration of a denial of a flexible work arrangement, the staff member must send an email to the appropriate dean or vice president articulating the reason for requesting reconsideration, the rationale for the flexible work arrangement, the submitted flexible work request, and any prior written correspondence to or from the manager relating to the requested flexible work arrangement. A decision will be made as soon as practical, typically within 10 business days from receipt of the request for reconsideration. Reconsideration decisions are final.

A dean or vice president may designate another administrator to decide requests for reconsideration relating to flexible work arrangements on their behalf.

11. Pre-existing Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements that were in place prior to the issuance of these Guidelines are subject to these Guidelines in all respects.

12. Flexible Work Arrangements Outside Massachusetts

Any flexible work arrangement involving work that is or will be performed at a location outside the Commonwealth of Massachusetts must be approved by the vice president of human resources in addition to the appropriate individuals in the applicable school, college, or department. Human Resources, in consultation with the appropriate individuals in the applicable school, college, or department, will consider whether to approve out-of-state flexible work arrangements based on the following factors:

- staff recruitment or retention needs;
- the needs of the school, college, or department; and
- tax, legal, and compliance considerations.

Because the University does not provide tax consultation, staff who perform work outside the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the tax implications, and the University encourages such staff to consult a qualified tax professional.

Staff must obtain approval from their manager and Human Resources before changing their flexible work location if the new location is outside of Massachusetts. A staff member's work location for a flexible work arrangement must be within the United States.

If a fully remote position outside of Massachusetts is approved, compensation may be adjusted based on the cost of living in the location where the work is performed. Additionally, for staff members performing work outside of Massachusetts, adjustments to University policies, benefits, and practices may be required to comply with applicable law.

13. Availability for On-Campus Work or Specific Work Hours

Staff with approved flexible work arrangements may from time to time be required to be on campus at times they are typically scheduled to work remotely or to work a schedule different than their usual modified work schedule. Additionally, organizational needs may require temporary suspension of a flexible work arrangement to support unusual projects or conditions in the school, college, or department.

Schools, colleges, and departments may have specific requirements that staff with flexible work arrangements be on campus or work specific hours for certain events.

Managers must give notice of the need for unanticipated on-campus presence or temporary suspensions of flexible work arrangements as soon as practicable, but no particular notice period is required. Such decisions are at the discretion of managers and are not subject to requests for reconsideration.

14. Work Hours, Dependent Care Arrangements, and Absences

Work Hours/Attendance

A hybrid or fully remote work arrangement does not modify the days of the week or the hours of the day that a staff member works. A staff member must follow their regular work schedule when working remotely unless they have an approved modified work schedule.

The University's policies regarding [hours of work](#) (including meal periods, rest periods, overtime, and time reporting) apply to work performed remotely as well as on campus. Non-exempt staff may not work more than their scheduled hours without manager pre-approval and must accurately report all hours worked.

Staff members must comply with the University's policies on [attendance](#) and [authorized absences from work](#) (including vacation leave and sick leave) while working remotely.

Dependent Care Arrangements/Other Responsibilities

Staff are expected to devote all scheduled work hours to their work responsibilities. Therefore, staff may not be the primary care provider for any dependent during work hours (including during any work performed remotely) and must make regular dependent care arrangements during work hours.

Leaves of Absence/Disability Accommodation

Flexible work arrangements are not intended to be a replacement for disability accommodations or family or medical leaves of absence. Staff can find more information about disability accommodations [here](#) and leaves of absence [here](#).

15. Safety and Health

Staff working remotely must maintain a safe and secure workspace free from hazards. Unless the University is informed otherwise, a staff member's remote workspace is understood to be a work surface (desk or table), seat, computer and accessories, telephone, and a designated location for storing hard copy records, if applicable. Work performed outside of this remote workspace is not authorized by the University.

Staff must report any work-related injuries that occur during remote or on-campus work to their manager and the Boston University Occupational Health Center at the earliest reasonable opportunity and within 24 hours.

16. Expenses

Staff who work a hybrid schedule or fully remotely at their own request will not be reimbursed for home office equipment (e.g., personal computers and furniture) or services (e.g., internet and phone service), unless otherwise required by law. The University is not responsible for the operating costs, maintenance, property or liability insurance, or other expenses for a staff member's home or other remote work location. University insurance does not cover staff members' personal property used for hybrid or fully remote work. Commuting costs to a staff member's on-campus or remote work locations are not paid by the University.

Staff who are required by the University to work remotely will be provided or reimbursed for certain equipment or expenses as agreed upon with the applicable school, college, or department.

Grant or contract funds may not be used to purchase work equipment for hybrid or fully remote work or to reimburse hybrid or fully remote work expenses unless such purchases or expenses are explicitly budgeted and approved in the award agreement.

17. Workspace, Technology/Equipment, and Data Security

Schools, colleges, and departments offering flexible work arrangements and staff with such arrangements must ensure that the physical space, technology, and data security requirements below are met. Schools, colleges, and departments may also adopt additional requirements specific to their work, including specialized requirements for ensuring confidentiality of information.

Staff must fully comply with the University's [Data Protection Standards](#) and all other policies regarding [privacy and security](#) and [information management](#) when working remotely.

Physical Space

Staff working remotely should work from a space that is appropriate for the type of work being done. The space should generally be private so that others cannot overhear confidential conversations or meetings or view computer screens that contain sensitive information. For staff who do not have a private remote workspace available, schools, colleges, and departments should consider whether alternative ways of complying with the University's [Data Protection Standards](#) are feasible.

Staff who work with physical documents must have a secure location to store those documents and a secure method to [destroy](#) papers or media that contain sensitive information. Schools, colleges, and departments must consider how physical documents or media are exchanged between the staff member and the University to ensure the security is adequate under the [Data Protection Standards](#).

Staff members may not hold in-person work meetings at their remote work location.

Technology/Equipment

Equipment: Staff in positions requiring a computer must be provided with a single set of necessary equipment from the list of [BU Standards](#) upon the start of their employment with the University. As a general rule, schools, colleges, and departments will not provide staff who work a hybrid schedule or fully remotely at their own request with any additional computers or accessories (e.g., mouse, keyboard, external monitors) for on-campus offices or remote work locations. The University will also not provide other home office equipment (e.g., furniture) to staff who work a hybrid schedule or fully remotely at their own request.

Internet Connection: Staff with hybrid or fully remote work arrangements must have a stable, non-public internet connection with sufficient bandwidth to participate in [video meetings](#) and other regular activities. The University will not pay for internet service for staff who work a hybrid schedule or fully remotely at their own request.

Technology-Related Challenges: Staff are responsible for addressing technology-related issues at the remote work location, except for issues with equipment provided by the University, which should be communicated to a staff member's manager.

Data Security

All University employees must protect University data as described in the [Data Protection Standards](#). Schools, colleges, and departments that offer hybrid or fully remote work arrangements should consider the types of University data that remote staff will access and use by referring to the University's [Data Classification Policy](#). Schools, colleges, and departments should confirm that devices to be used with University data meet [Minimum Security Standards](#), and may require staff who have access to University-owned equipment (such as laptops) for hybrid or fully remote work to use them. Schools, colleges, and departments will instruct staff with hybrid or fully remote work arrangements about use of University systems to transmit and store data, as well as specific security requirements based on the nature of the work.

Staff must ensure that the computers or other technology used to access University data meet the [Minimum Security Standards](#) for that data. Staff who use personal devices should ensure that those devices meet the requirements for Endpoint Devices set out in the [Minimum Security Standards](#). In particular, staff should follow the University's [best practices](#), including the following:

- [secure all devices](#) that will access, use, or store University data;
- ensure that devices and the software they run are [patched and updated](#);
- ensure that devices are [running software to protect them from viruses, spyware, and other malicious behavior](#);
- use the University's [VPN](#) to access University information systems that require it, or any Restricted Use data (as defined in the [Data Classification Policy](#)); and
- ensure that University data is stored in appropriate University systems, databases or repositories as required by the Department and the University's [Record Retention Policy](#), rather than on personally owned devices.

In the event that a device that is used to access or store University data is lost, infected with a virus or malware, subject to a [phishing attack](#), or otherwise compromised, [notify the University's Incident Response Team](#) immediately. In the event of a cybersecurity incident that impacts a personal device

used to access or store University data, the staff member must fully cooperate with the University's investigation, which in some cases may involve providing the device to IT for forensic investigation.

18. University Property

All equipment the University provides to a staff member, whether used on campus or remotely in connection with a flexible work arrangement, remains the property of the University and must be returned upon separation from employment or at any other time upon notice from the University.

19. Nature of Employment

Nothing in the Guidelines alters the at-will nature of employment for any staff member.