**Event:** SBS Athena SWAN Flexible Working Event: Myths and Realities (open to all)

**Date:** Tuesday 26th November 9:30-11:00am

**Location:** Lecture Theatre 3, Stopford Building (capacity 200/185 tickets sold).

**Eventbrite Link**: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/flexible-working-myths-and-realities-tickets-76410510895>

**Q&A from audience (via Slido) during the Event with answers from Gemma Dale.**

1. *Is it possible for PS administration staff to work from home at least 1 day a week?*

This is a form of flexible working that you can request; whether it can be agreed will depend on the nature of the job role. As with any request for flexible working it could be refused on one of the legal grounds, such as increase in cost, impact on colleagues or customers. It would be possible to request a trial of this form of arrangement, if it isn’t clear whether or not it will work for both parties.

1. *Can I ask for a shift in hours if this means I'm working slightly outside the university's core working hours?*

Yes; you can make a request for any change of hours. Whether it can be agreed will depend on the nature of the job role. As with any request for flexible working it could be refused on one of the legal grounds, such as increase in cost, impact on colleagues or customers. It would be possible to request a trial of this form of arrangement, if it isn’t clear whether or not it will work for both parties.

1. *How can I challenge my manager’s default opinion that ‘working from home’ means doing less work? I get so much done but get told to book a meeting room in work*.

You can make a request to work from home on a regular basis if this would be beneficial to you – this would therefore require a more formal consideration of the request and a more appropriate reason to say no would be required. There is a range of academic research on flexible working that you can share around the benefits of flexibility – or you could suggest if you felt able to do so, that your manager comes along to one of our training sessions where we cover this in more depth.

1. *How can we challenge some of the negative attitudes here to flexible working?*

We know that some people have a more negative view of flexible working than others; this is true of not just our organisation but is consistent with research into the subject. We are working to challenge these attitudes through our ongoing initiatives, and will have more to launch next year. In the meantime, consider sharing examples of good practice, using trial periods where possible (to demonstrate how flexible working can work) and being open about your own flexible working arrangements if you have them. Please also encourage managers or colleagues to attend some of our events or training sessions where we will talk about the benefits of flexible working.

1. *Will my approved flexible working move with me if I move to a new job in the University?*

Not necessarily. Generally speaking when you apply for a new role you apply for it on the basis of the advertised terms and conditions. However, the hiring manager can consider your application based on your current hours – in these circumstances we recommend applying and setting out your current working pattern to see if it can be accommodated.

1. *How can I start the discussions with my line manager?*

We usually recommend having an informal conversation first if you feel that is possible, and let your manager know that you would like to work more flexibly / make a flexible working request.

1. *Where can I find examples of flexible working as I want to try to think outside of the box?*

We are currently collecting examples from within the University of team and individual practice; we will look to publish some of these in 2020 on StaffNet. In the meantime, please contact Gemma Dale for other examples that might be relevant to you.

1. *In a student-facing office, we have many flexible patterns in place, but concerned about more requests and managing them effectively and consistently.*

Legally you can judge future requests on the operational situation at the time they are received; if you are unable to agree to them because there is one of the reasons set out in law, you can refuse the request. If this is the case we recommend having a clear discussion with the employees in question. Please feel free to contact Gemma Dale for a more detailed discussion on this point.

1. *How flexible can you get - limit on number of days working from home/compressed hours?*

Legally employees must still take the relevant rest periods under the Working Time Regulations. There are no express limits outside of that here at the University but we must also all be mindful of the wellbeing / work life balance impact of very long days. Any request will be considered in line with the relevant legislation – flexible working and working time.

1. *I’ve heard of compressed hours (full time in 4 days) but would it be possible to have ‘expanded’ hours. I.e. work part time hours (80%) over more days (5 days)?*

Yes. You can make a request under the policy and it will be considered in line with the needs of the role.

1. *After starting flexible working can I revert back to my 'normal' pattern prior to this?*

Not necessarily, no. If you only need flexible working for a fixed period, you can make a request for that. However, if you request flexible working and have that approved, there is no automatic right (for either party) to revert to the previous working arrangements. You would need to make a request for another change and that would be considered in accordance with the operational situation at the time.

1. *Why would grades 5 and below be automatically denied any days working from home?*

Anyone can make a request for any form of flexible working. This is not limited by grade in our Policy. If someone asks to work from home on a regular basis as part of a formal flexible working request, this should be considered under our policy. The grade of the individual should not be a consideration in the decision whether or not the request can be agreed.

1. *Are there restrictions on reasons for requesting flexible working? Example - a reason to renovate a house was denied but having small children was accepted.*

No. Anyone can request flexible working for any reason. You do not have to state your reason for wanting flexible working, and this should not form any part of the decision. The decision whether to accept or request flexible working should be made on the nature of the job and any impact of the arrangements.

1. *Are there any other sectors that embrace flexible working?*

Yes. Flexible working is increasing across many sectors including councils, insurance companies, the NHS as well as other Universities. Gemma Dale has case studies that she can share with you if you want more information.

1. *Can you make more than one request to work flexibly in 12 months? Also if one request is rejected can you make another request within 12 months?*

Legally, employees can only make a request once every 12 months under all circumstances. Our Policy allows for managers to exercise their discretion if they feel there is a good reason why an individual needs to make another request.

1. *The University is open to a small amount of staff on the 23rd Dec and refused the option to work from home. My office is open for 1 person as the rest are on AL*

Again, the decision whether to accept or request flexible working should be made on the nature of the job and any impact of the arrangements. Please feel free to contact Gemma Dale for a more detailed discussion on this point.