

University of Akron Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Supervisors

1) Do employees have to work in a job for a certain length of time before they can apply for an FWA?

Before agreeing to any FWA, the first-level supervisor should consider whether an employee has been in their position long enough to have established themselves as a responsible and productive employee who is currently meeting all performance expectations.

2) If first-level supervisors receive multiple requests and all cannot be accommodated, how do they determine which requests to approve? Would the reason for requesting an FWA be an important factor?

Reasons for an individual employee's request should not be used as a significant factor in determining which requests to approve. The first-level supervisor should ask the employee for assistance in identifying solutions that would enable the employee to meet their job responsibilities and requirements, as well as their individual needs. Any FWA request submitted out of a need for a reasonable accommodation must be submitted through the [ADA reasonable accommodation](#) process. When employee requests for an FWA are beyond what is operationally feasible, performance and individual job responsibilities must be the primary considerations in the FWA evaluation.

3) As a first-level supervisor, how do I deal with the possibility that everyone is going to want to have Fridays or Mondays off due to a flexible time or condensed work week FWA?

Decisions for approving or denying FWAs should be based on college or departmental needs and job responsibilities. Objective criteria such as performance, demand of customers or specialized skills should be considered as part of the evaluation process. A first-level supervisor may need to get input from each of the FWA requestors to discuss alternatives to the requested FWA. A first-level supervisor should always provide direct and transparent communication to the employee. When requests exceed operational capacity, a first-level supervisor must be willing to say so.

4) How do I supervise staff members working remote?

If staff members work remote pursuant to an established FWA, first-level supervisors should establish a structured management system which focuses on task completion. Performance measures should be agreed upon and then monitored. Communication is very important for those working remote.

5) How should a first-level supervisor handle a situation where it may be appropriate to approve one person's request for flexibility and deny the request of another?

All decisions should be focused on organizational needs and objective criteria related to work performance and job demands. A consistent approach to analyzing the situation should be applied. It is important to communicate to each requestor the decision and its rationale. Human Resources Employee and Labor Relations Department can help supervisors develop objective criteria to use and a strategy for communicating their decision.

6) As a first-level supervisor, may I require an employee on an approved FWA to change their schedule to accommodate another who requests an FWA?

While first-level supervisors may change work schedules to accommodate operational need, such a change is not advisable in this situation as it may appear that the supervisor is favoring one employee over another. If such a situation arises, consult with your supervisor as well as the Human Resources Labor and Employee Relations Department to address concerns that could result in unintended consequences.

7) We have several employees with FWAs in my office and I am worried that coverage is going to be a problem during busy times of the year. Is there anything I can do?

Many units have peak times where everyone needs to be in the office during regular business hours. First-level supervisors can require that FWAs be modified or suspended during these times.

8) Once an FWA has been approved, how can it be introduced smoothly into the work group to address perceptions of fairness?

Just as was expected when employees were working remote during the pandemic, it is necessary to ensure that proper communication with all individuals impacted by an FWA occurs. If there is a concern that colleagues may find the FWA unfair, first-level supervisors should meet with affected employees in the work group or department at the planning stage to define work parameters and develop a system to manage the work group or department's work schedule. For example, it would be useful to agree to procedures for the following:

- Methods for effectively briefing employees - e.g. on new tasks, progress, continuing tasks.
- Methods for dealing with communication forwarding - e.g. calls from the office, urgent correspondence, other correspondence.
- Assessing employee and unit performance - How and when this will be done?
- Scheduling meetings - How and when will they be scheduled?
- Discussing problems arising from or related to the FWA - How and when will these be addressed?

9) If an employee would like to have a flexible schedule FWA during the summer months between graduation and the start of a new academic year, do they need to apply for an FWA?

Yes. FWAs on a temporary basis of three (3) months or less are permissible at the first-level supervisor's discretion and should be documented using the FWA Request Form. Temporary FWAs for three (3) months or less do not require approval from the second-level supervisor. Approved Temporary FWA requests that will result in remote work of twenty (20) days or more in a calendar year must be forwarded to Human Resources. Failure to follow this procedure could result in improper payroll tax withholding.

10) How often should the FWA be reviewed?

An FWA should be reviewed regularly or as circumstances dictate, but not less than once annually. If employee or department performance standards diminish as a result of an FWA, the FWA should be reviewed immediately. Employees should be notified in advance if a change in or termination of their existing FWA becomes necessary. When practical, the University will give employees a thirty (30) day notice prior to discontinuing or modifying a previously approved and documented FWA. However, FWAs can be

discontinued without notice, particularly where the discontinuation is based on documented failure to meet job expectations or misconduct. Notification of the required change shall be documented in writing.

11) What are the benefits of FWAs to my department/unit/entity?

There is a strong business case for FWAs. The benefits include:

- **Improved retention and employee commitment.** Employees may remain with an employer longer and have a higher level of commitment when an organization provides access to more FWAs.
- **Improved productivity.** FWAs can provide uninterrupted time for creative, repetitive or highly detailed work. They can also help take advantage of different work styles (early energy vs. late energy).
- **Improved service.** A flexible approach to working time can potentially be used to extend service delivery and improve customer relations.
- **Improved recruitment.** More flexibility can attract potential employees when vacancies arise; especially in a situation where applicants can make comparative evaluations of job offers. Skilled and experienced people may be attracted back into the work force and a match can be achieved between skills and current market shortages.

12) Who is eligible to request an FWA?

All staff, contract professionals and non-bargaining unit faculty are eligible to request an FWA. However, not all positions lend themselves to flexible work, and not all employees are good candidates for an FWA. (Please note that further discussions are pending with Akron-AAUP regarding bargaining unit faculty eligibility.)

13) May an employee request an FWA after the dates identified in the implementation plan?

Yes. The FWA policy is ongoing, and new FWAs or changes to existing FWAs may be requested at any time. The implementation dates serve as a guide for initial implementation to correspond with the physical return of employees to campus following the COVID-19 pandemic.