



University of Essex

# A GUIDE TO WORK LIFE BALANCE

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## FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT/SECTION

This practical guide provides an essential toolkit for Heads of Department/Section<sup>1</sup> when dealing with flexible working requests.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this guidance, 'Department' shall mean Departments, Schools, Centres and Sections. 'Head of Department' shall mean 'Head of Department or Head or Director of School or section or Director of a Centre'.

# INTRODUCTION

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The University has a strong commitment to diversity and this means actively helping staff to combine work and home life effectively. We recognise the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between work and other aspects of life.

This guidance is designed to give you the practical and essential information you need to support a member of staff who is considering their work life balance.

This guidance should be read together with the work life balance policy which can be found at: [www.essex.ac.uk/hr/policies/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/hr/policies/)

Further guidance and support is available from your link [HR Manager/Officer](#) at any time.

“ THE PEOPLE SUPPORTING STRATEGY MAKES CLEAR OUR COMMITMENT TO INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION AND TO ENSURING PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO WORK IN WAYS THAT SUIT THEM BEST WITHIN THE LIMITS LAID DOWN BY THE UNIVERSITY AND BY THEIR ROLE. WE WANT TO BE AS FLEXIBLE AS WE CAN BE.

FLEXIBILITY MAKES US RESPONSIVE, PRODUCTIVE, EFFICIENT AND HAPPY. EMBRACE IT... ”

**Susie Morgan**  
Director of Human Resources

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ALLOWING STAFF TO BALANCE THEIR WORK AND HOME LIFE?

There are a number of reasons why you should consider expanding on the traditional patterns of work, and offer flexibility in work patterns (including career breaks). These include:

- to support retention and attract a diverse range of experienced and valued staff
- to increase employment opportunities for staff with family commitments and people with disabilities who are not able to work full time
- to better suit the changing academic cycle of a working year
- to give an opportunity for staff to reduce their hours as they get older (in the absence of a mandatory retirement age)
- to reflect social change with a less rigid view of the workplace
- to help improve well-being, a reduction in absence and increased productivity, and
- to help increase the diversity in senior positions

### What arrangements are there to support work life balance?

- **Flexible working** - 'Flexibility' and 'flexible work' are terms used to describe a wide range of work styles and employment practices. Broadly speaking, they include all kinds of employment which differ from the traditional nine to five full-time job.
- **Time off in lieu** - Where you work hours in excess of those in your contract, you can take time off in lieu with prior agreement of your line manager. For Support Staff (Grades 1-6) in exceptional circumstances **overtime** may be paid.
- **Career break** - A career break is intended to provide a facility for you to request an unpaid extended period away from employment to meet your personal needs.

## FLEXIBLE WORKING & CAREER BREAK

### Who can request flexible working arrangements?

All employees, with 26 weeks continuous service with the University and providing they have not made another application during the past 12 months may make a request.

### Who can request a career break?

Staff requesting a career break must have at least 2 years continuous service before the date of commencement of the career break and hold a permanent contract (either full or part-time).

Academic employees wishing to take leave of absence for academic purposes, which are directly linked to their work, should refer to the **Research Leave** policy.



### What flexible working patterns can staff request?

Flexible working could include:

- part-time working
- compressed hours
- term-time working
- annualised hours
- job sharing, and
- homeworking

### What arrangements can be made for flexible working requests?

Three levels of arrangement are possible:

- informal arrangements that confer no rights
- formal arrangements that confer rights for a defined period of 12 months or less (e.g. ideal for when you return from a period of family leave and you wish to reduce your hours for only a short period before returning to your original contracted hours)
- changes to contractual terms that are permanent (you wish to reduce your hours of work on a permanent basis)

**IMPORTANT:** Informal arrangements (e.g. a minor, temporary change in working hours to cope with a one off event, or occasional home working) do not need to be recorded in writing using the formal procedure outlined in the policy and can be agreed by you.



**How long can a career break be for?**

The minimum duration for a career break is 3 months; the maximum is usually 1 year, but may be extended to 2 years in exceptional circumstances.

An individual will not normally be allowed more than 1 career break in any 7 year period. However, there may be the facility for a second career break to be agreed where exceptional, compassionate circumstances exist.

The individual must submit their [application for a career break](#) at least 6 months before they intend to start their leave.

The University will endeavour to facilitate the individual's return to the post which they occupied prior to the career break. However, there can be no guarantee that a return to the previously occupied post will take place. In the event of the original job no longer being available the provisions of the [University's Managing Structural Change Policy and Procedure](#) will be applied. Please contact your link [HR Manager/Officer](#) if this is the case.

**What should I do when I receive a flexible working/career break request?**

Please contact your link HR Manager/Officer as soon as you receive a request.

Once you have received a flexible working/career break request you are required to arrange a meeting with your member of staff within 28 days of the application being received. Whilst you will be asked to give your recommendation on the application, the decision whether or not to approve the flexible working request will be made by the Executive Dean or Registrar and Secretary. You should NOT, therefore, give any indication of your opinion or your view of the likely outcome of the application to your member of staff before, during or after the meeting as this may mismanage the expectations of the applicant.

Make sure the member of staff has completed all parts of their application form. If not send it back and ask for the form to be completed. Any homeworking request should have the individual's risk assessment form attached.

Allow staff to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative (if they are a member of a trade union) if they so wish. This should be made clear to them before the meeting takes place and sufficiently in advance so that they can make arrangements.

If staff cannot make the proposed meeting another date and time should be arranged.

**IMPORTANT:** If it is a request to make a reasonable adjustment for a disability it should not be treated as a flexible working request and you should seek advice from your link [HR Manager/Officer](#).

Homeworking should not be a substitute for suitable care arrangements and dependants should always be looked after by someone else.

**Before meeting with your member of staff:**

- familiarise yourself with the person's job description and role requirements
- think carefully about the request and any potential benefits/impact of the proposed way of working/career break
- make any necessary initial enquiries as to how this request might be accommodated (i.e. assess other team members working patterns, future staffing plans, forthcoming projects/workload etc)
- make any enquires with the University's [Health and Safety Advisory Service](#) if there are issues regarding homeworking and the individual's health and safety
- think creatively to try to accommodate requests
- seek advice within the department, as appropriate (for example, in line with any local reporting arrangements that may exist)
- it is important not to make any presumptions about the request without first speaking to the member of staff

**IMPORTANT:** If a member of staff wishes to reduce their working hours, or take a period of unpaid leave, whereby their salary decreases as a result, this may have implications for staff with visa restrictions. Before making an application for flexible working or a career break, all staff with a visa should contact their link [HR Manager/Officer](#).



### During the meeting

The purpose of this meeting is:

- to engage in practical dialogue about the request
- to enable further consideration of the request
- to explore options
- to make a balanced recommendation to the Executive Dean/Registrar & Secretary based on the needs of both the business and employee



### Following the meeting

After meeting with the member of staff you should make your recommendation to the Executive Dean/ Registrar & Secretary (on the employee's application form). In doing so you should:

- fully consider the impact the decision may have on the employee if you do not recommend approval of the request
- ensure that you have fully considered the individual's circumstances and their needs, as well as the needs of the business
- ensure that you have considered the case on its own merit. It is not acceptable to recommend that the request be turned down based on the outcome of a similar request made by another employee(s). It is also not necessary to recommend acceptance of a request simply because another individual is already working a similar flexible working arrangement or has recently had a career break
- ensure that, where appropriate, advice is sought from your link Financial Accountant in relation to any potential budgetary impacts

**IMPORTANT:** In an environment where a number of staff are already working flexibly, it may be helpful to consider calling for volunteers from staff with existing flexible working arrangements, who may wish to change these working arrangements, thereby creating the capacity to grant a new flexible working request.

### Turning down flexible working/career break requests

If the department is unable to accommodate the request for flexible working, the legislation states that it may only be declined on the basis of one or more of the following reasons:

- the burden of additional costs
- an inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff.
- an inability to recruit additional staff
- a detrimental impact on quality.
- a detrimental impact on performance.
- a detrimental effect on their ability to meet customer demand.
- insufficient work for the periods the employee proposes to work.
- a planned structural change to the business.

If your recommendation to the Executive Dean or Registrar and Secretary is to reject the application it should be for one of the above reasons.

**IMPORTANT:** You should be asking yourself 'why can't it work?', rather than saying 'it can't work'.

### Dealing with multiple requests

There may be some occasions, where you receive more than one request, close together, from two different members of staff. If this happens, it is important to recognise that if the first request is approved, the business context will have changed. As such, the second request should take into account this change to the workforce.

Whilst in some circumstances it may be possible to recommend approval to the Executive Dean or Registrar of both requests, before doing so you may wish to have a discussion with both members of staff. This may be helpful to explore if there is any room for adjustment or compromise in relation to their requests.

If you receive two requests for flexible working at the same time, one relating to the care of an elderly disabled relative and the other to enable staff to have more free time, you are not required to make a value judgement about the most deserving request. However, you may wish to seek advice from your link [HR Manager/Officer](#) since some staff have extra legal rights under other legislation. For example refusing a request in order to care for a disabled family member will mean that they could bring an associated discrimination claim under the Equality Act 2010.

**IMPORTANT:** If more than one request is received, the legislation does not require managers to make value judgements about which member of staff is most deserving of their request. Each case should be considered on its own merits, looking at the business case and the possible impact of refusing a request.

### What if the member of staff requesting flexible working has a performance issue?

This does not automatically mean that the request cannot be agreed. It is possible that changing the working pattern may actually increase motivation and commitment, and possibly alleviate an outside pressure. Performance measures and standards will need to be set, so that performance can continue to be monitored. The employee must be aware that they must fulfil the requirements of their job role. Each request must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

### Managing staff who work flexibly

Some key issues to be aware of when managing employees with flexible working arrangements:

Employees **are**:

- still required to meet the standards of their job
- expected to share responsibility with the rest of the team when dealing with unexpected pressures, crises and amending team rotas
- required to keep their colleagues and manager advised of their hours and activities
- entitled to participate in development opportunities

Employees **are not**:

- expected to perform a full time role in part time hours
- required to change their hours without adequate notice of consideration to their personal circumstances
- entitled to change their hours beyond the agreed arrangement without prior agreement of the manager

### Budget Implications

**IMPORTANT:** Please note that if a member of staff reduces their hours through flexible working there will be implications to your departmental budgets.

In the short term, departments will retain the budget to replace the staff hours created by the reduction and could, if they chose, use this to put towards departmental cost saving (in agreement with the Faculty Manager and Faculty Accountant). Any replacement post would need to go through the University's approval process.

In the longer term, if not utilised to replace staffing hours, this budget will be taken as a cost saving.

### What should I consider when reviewing a request for compressed hours?

For employees, compressed working weeks can provide a longer weekend and increased leisure opportunities.

Some employees, however, may find it difficult to adjust quickly to work after a long weekend and the longer daily work periods of compressed working weeks may increase fatigue.

**IMPORTANT:** When working compressed hours staff should always have at least a 30 minute break for lunch and preferably 1 hour.

### What should I consider when reviewing term-time requests?

- Will term-time working give employees the opportunity to reduce their hours or take time off during school holidays?
- Will term-time working solve the problem of childcare for parents and the structured working give the manager plenty of time to plan ahead to cover absence?
- However, will the long absences during prime holiday time make it difficult to arrange cover, particularly in specialist roles? Term-time working can also put pressure on other colleagues who feel they cannot take holidays during school holiday periods.
- Will term-time working also attract parents back to work who might otherwise take a complete break from employment, or go to work for another employer who offers this option?
- Are there peaks and troughs in the workload? Does the nature of the role support working full time or part time around University holiday times or school terms?
- If the postholder has line management responsibilities, account must be taken of whether or not the team involved can work extended periods without direct supervision.
- Is there adequate cover, by appropriately skilled staff, available to maintain service levels and to avoid over burdening team members during school holidays/ outside of time time?





### What should I consider when reviewing a home working request?

All staff working from home on a regular basis must undertake a risk assessment. This should be attached to the flexible working application form.

When assessing requests to work from home **the following should be taken into account**

- The suitability of the job/work task – clarity of requirements, deadlines and objectives.
- The suitability of the home (check attached risk assessment) – health and safety requirements will apply.
- Will it be detrimental to the speed or quality of services provided?
- Will it be detrimental to the efficient working of the team?
- Do the hours to be worked at home agree and comply with contractual hours and the University's policies on rest breaks?

### Consider the suitability and needs of the member of staff as follows

- The capability and role development needs of the member of staff.
- Can they work without close supervision?
- Can they meet work deadlines?
- Can they demonstrate self-motivation and discipline?
- Can they demonstrate initiative and flexibility?
- Can they manage their workload and set their own priorities?
- Can they work successfully in a potentially isolating environment?
- Can they manage the proximity of work and home life so that work does not become unacceptably intrusive?

### Homeworking - suitable characteristics

- A high degree of written work (rather than manual work or customer service work).
- Work performed on an individual basis with clearly defined areas of individual work e.g. project work, research and report writing, case work, administrative tasks, data inputting.
- Work which has clearly defined objectives, and is not subject to sudden changes of priorities.
- Research, teaching preparation, marking/assessment of course work/exam work.
- Customer service work where enquiries are answered by email and not face to face.

### Homeworking - unsuitable characteristics

- Front of house work e.g. receptionist, customer services where one-to-one contact is essential.
- Teaching students, giving students one-to-one feedback, advising students on individual matters.
- Providing a service where one-to-one contact is essential. e.g. advisory work, appointments with staff/students, library work, catering service.
- Work which needs constant access to central filing systems/central resources.
- Work which requires close contact with a team, constant input/exchange of information from other team members or other staff.
- Building/campus based work e.g. caretaking, maintenance work, cleaning, security duties.



**what should I consider when reviewing job sharing requests?**

- Consider the tasks and responsibilities of the role. Does the role have two distinct parts that could easily be divided? If not, how can tasks effectively be transferred between partners?
- Consider continuity issues, the timescale for delivering the service. Where will partners need full contextual understanding of the role in order to engage effectively with issues?
- Can duties be divided according to tasks, projects, students/service users/staff groups?
- Will the job share partners have line management responsibilities? How will the individual/s be managed?
- Will the job share partners have an opportunity to meet and handover each week? This can be critical to the success of the job share.
- Are there times when both partners need to attend briefings/ meetings or can one partner attend and brief the other? How will the department schedule meetings so that the sharers can both attend if necessary?

**IMPORTANT:** Successful job sharing depends to a large extent on the partnership between the sharers. Employees need to work well as a team and think about how their working styles complement each other. Employers have often found that they experience higher productivity, lower absenteeism and a reduction in staff turnover.

Consider the benefits a career break can have for your employee and the Department:

- allows the employee the flexibility to take a break, to look after a dependant, who may have long-term needs, or to pursue family or individual travel plans or an ambition for longer-term study
- represents an option to retain a valued employee who may otherwise leave
- it also gives the opportunity to enhance the skill base and experience of other employees

You should consider whether there may be problems for your employee in keeping their skills up-to-date if the Department is going through significant change (e.g. maybe a new database is being introduced). How/when will the member of staff be able to participate in relevant training?

**IMPORTANT:** The University will endeavour to facilitate an individual's return to their original post which they occupied prior to the career break. However, there can be no guarantee that a return to the previously occupied post will take place. In the event of the original job no longer being available the provisions of the University's [Managing Structural Change](#) policy and procedure will be applied. If this is the case please speak to your link [HR Manager/Officer](#).

**What should I do after a flexible working/career break request has been approved by the Executive Dean or Registrar and Secretary?**

Where a flexible working request is granted it is best practice for you, together with the direct line manager and the member of staff, to jointly monitor and review the impact of the new working pattern to ensure that it continues to meet operational needs (which may be subject to change). A trial period of 3 months is recommended.

Following the 3 months trial period, you can continue to build in a formal review point at six months or a year, when you can discuss how the new arrangements are working. If the working arrangement is not working effectively and no longer meets the departmental or University needs, then you may need to give notice to the individual for them to revert to their former working arrangement.

In the case of flexible working and career break approvals make sure you advise the other team members of the change in working hours/career break and have a plan of action for dealing with any problems that may arise from the change.





# HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**“Everyone will be coming and going when they please. How will we get the work done?”**

Getting the job done is what counts, and people who work flexibly know this well. The secret is for staff and managers to agree realistic objectives and to ensure that everyone is clear about when they are out of the workplace and when and how they can be contacted.

**“If we have flexible hours, does that mean I have to work longer to supervise everyone?”**

Clearly any flexible work programme relies on organisation within the team. Employees who work flexibly should have good self-management skills and not need extra supervision after the initial settling-in period. Flexible working should not result in extra work for someone else, and this includes the manager. Managers should try to make sure they have some flexibility too, so that they are not working long hours without lunch breaks.

**“Scheduling of team meetings will be very difficult.”**

As part of the introduction of flexible working, team members must be aware of the need to have regular communication through meetings as well as, where appropriate, via email, etc. It should be possible to arrange meeting times to suit all team members, including those working flexibly. Flexible workers may occasionally be asked to change their agreed hours to accommodate key meetings, but this should not be a regular expectation.

**“Out of sight, out of mind ... productivity is bound to go down if people are not closely supervised.”**

On the contrary, experience has shown that productivity tends to go up among employees who are able to strike a better work-life balance and who feel trusted to ‘get on with it’.

**“If I allow one person to work flexibly I shall have to let everyone.”**

All the evidence shows that only a minority of workers want to work flexibly. Working flexibly or taking a break from work depends on the circumstances within the workplace at the time the request is made and must be consistent with meeting service objectives. Necessarily, therefore, some workers will be unable to take advantage of some options simply because of the nature of their work. Someone who works on the reception desk will not be able to work from home but might be able to job share or work part-time. It is important for managers to consider each application on its merits and to give sound business reasons for their decision.

**“Favourable treatment is often given to mothers with children ... what about men and single people?”**

To avoid accusations of discrimination, focus on the feasibility of the request rather than the reason for it.

**“Isn’t part-time work only for junior staff? Surely people are not committed to the organisation or their careers if they only want to work part of the week?”**

Research shows that part-time employees, who are managing outside responsibilities as well as their jobs, are just as committed to their work as their full-time colleagues. The test of this is, once again, having measurable objectives, which should be just as demanding as for full timers. There is increasing evidence of senior roles being undertaken flexibly – and as the demographic make-up of the labour force changes, combined with the changing attitudes of men to the role work has in their whole life, this can be expected to increase.

**“Will a job share mean I have to spend more time supervising two people rather than one?”**

Managers who have not managed a job share may be anxious about managing two people instead of one. In the early stages of a job share arrangement there is a higher degree of involvement by the manager, simply in terms of making sure the parties are working together properly, that communication processes are in place and that the work is being delivered. In terms of management, there are two performance appraisals to be conducted etc. However, once the arrangement is in place, experience shows that the job sharers develop a strong self-management attitude.

**“The manager does not know how to make it work.”**

When an employee initially makes a request for flexible working, he or she should have thought about ways in which a new arrangement might work – it is not up to the manager to do this initial thinking. The key to making it work is to plan carefully, to put in review dates both for individuals and teams and not to be afraid to reassess the situation if it is not working. Even if an employee has the right to request flexible working, the planning is a vital part of making it work. Once it has been thought through by the individual, a team meeting to discuss the proposal is a good idea and detailed discussions can take place about how to make it work.

## HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONT.

### “How will we know where someone is if they are working flexibly?”

A very important part of planning for flexibility is for the flexible worker to share with colleagues details about their working times and when they can be contacted. If the employee is working from home it will be important to state when they are available for calls, etc. – one of the challenges of working from home is that there may well be a tendency for colleagues to think they can be contacted 24 hours a day! Modern technology allows us to be at the end of a line all the time – flexible workers need to be given assistance so that they are able to put barriers around their “down time”.

### “If we allow parents to work from home they will use it to manage childcare.”

Wherever work is carried out, there has to be an understanding that it becomes the workplace, i.e. it is not doubling up as a childcare facility. However, often parents who work at home may split their days so that they can, for example, go to school to collect their children, perhaps spend time with them until bedtime and then get back to work after that. As long as the work agreed is finished on time, employees can, within reason, do it when they want to. However, this only works with project type work. If an individual is part of a team that needs to be in constant contact they must negotiate contact times and regular overlaps with colleagues.

### “Will staff who don't work flexibly have to work harder to allow others to work flexibly?”

No plans for flexible working should adversely impact on others in the team and this should be discussed at the earliest opportunity when trying to agree a flexible working pattern for an individual. There may well be a re-jigging of responsibilities but there should not be a loading of extra responsibilities on to other people. If the team thinks this may be the case it is important for them to discuss alternatives that will suit them all better and still get the work done.

## CASE STUDIES

**Julia Greenwood**, HR Policy and Projects Officer reduced her working hours following a period of maternity leave so that she could spend more time with her child. She now works 18 hours per week.

*“I work hard in the office (and often start a little earlier than I need to) but once the day is done I make sure I leave on time – no excuses. As a Mum I don't want to miss out on my child's younger years. My Manager and I respect each other and we both try to do the best we can for each other. In return I am flexible (where I can be) about swapping my days to attend conferences or meetings. Accommodation goes both ways”.*

Before having her child Julia also worked compressed hours (over a nine day fortnight) to support her postgraduate academic study.

**Natalie Booroff**, Recruitment Officer, works compressed hours (a nine day fortnight, with every other Friday off) to allow her to study part time with the Open University for a Social Sciences degree.

*“A day off each fortnight allows me to study and spend less time studying at the weekend than I would otherwise need to, providing a better work/life balance. I'm currently four years into my degree (which I am doing over 6 years part time), and have been working compressed hours since October 2014 (having started at the University in November 2013)”.*

**Lisa Barrass**, Academic Section Assistant, has a daughter who has been diagnosed with severe M.E. The possibility to utilise the work-life balance policy (and in particular compressed hours) helps her to plan the week.

*“I get every other Friday off and it just means that I can say to the doctor, I need the appointment on that day and we're able to do that. I feel that I'm not letting [my colleagues] down by suddenly having to go off for tests. It's a really good balance. The team gets my full attention when I'm here and my daughter gets my full attention for getting her appointment sorted. If she hasn't got appointments, I have got that extra day to spend with her to get her out and about as well. I have a fantastic manager who's really supporting”.*

**Annette Burling**, Payroll and Pensions Administrator, works in a job share arrangement. Following retirement, Annette decided that she still wanted to work for some of the time so a job share arrangement seemed perfect for her. Whilst the arrangement works well, Annette said

*“It is sometimes harder to keep a track of things, so it is essential that you keep good notes for yourself and your job share partner. We are lucky that we get a 30 minute handover period during the week so that we can update each other on completed work and the upcoming priorities. It is definitely worth having the right job share partner'. I love the flexibility job share offers me and I now get to spend more time with my husband in our older age”.*

**Vicky Pratt**, Education Abroad Manager, started as a part-time office administrator at the University of Essex before moving into her full-time role with flexibility around working hours so that she can come in slightly earlier and leave slightly earlier. She said,

*"I need this flexibility so I can drop the children in school and nursery and then be there to pick them up". She adds, "Most people do have some kind of caring responsibility whether it is [...] children or parents with a disability or just elderly parents. The working parents or working carers I know take their responsibilities seriously and are concerned about doing a good job at home and at work."*

**Martin Price**, Information Officer, When Martin's eldest son was approaching school age, Martin and his wife were both working full time and were looking at the possibility of going part-time.

*"Luckily an ideal position came up at the University with a 50% working pattern. Having this job means that I get to take my son to and from school, and allows me to spend a lot more time with him and his 3 year-old brother. This is not something that I really envisaged, but it was definitely the right decision. I now have two distinct halves to my week, although I don't want to say which is the most demanding!"*

*The University has shown a very positive approach to flexible working, and I do feel very well supported at work. I understand that not everyone is able to go part-time, and it certainly isn't without its own set of challenges, but for those for whom it is feasible I would strongly recommend it. I personally think I have been very fortunate to be able to re-arrange my work/life balance in a way that is so beneficial to me and my family. It's a bit of a cliché to say 'You don't get those years back', but it's also true. I just hope my sons don't get "Daddy Fatigue!"*



## OTHER ISSUES

In considering requests, you must be aware of the provisions of The Equality Act 2010 and other discrimination legislation.

A woman who is unable to continue her pattern of work because of her family responsibilities may be able to claim sex discrimination if her request to work flexibly is rejected unreasonably and not for genuine business reasons.

A man who feels his application to work flexibly is treated less sympathetically than it would have been if it had been made by a female colleague may be able to claim sex discrimination.

The Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations make it unlawful to treat part-timers less favourably in their contractual terms and conditions than comparable full-timers. This means that when granting a request for flexible working that involves a reduction in hours, staff should be entitled to the same consideration in respect of training, promotion and financial issues.

The Employment Act 2002 also protects staff from suffering a detriment or dismissal for making an application under the 'right to request' legislation.

## CHECKLIST

### Before the meeting:

- Meeting to discuss the request arranged within 28 days of receiving the application?
- Meeting preparation completed? Including reading the full work life balance policy?

### After the meeting

- Advice taken from link HR Manager/Officer if required?
- Recommendation made and form sent to Executive Dean/Registrar & Secretary?

### After a decision has been made by the Executive Dean/Registrar and Secretary

- Trial period of 3 months put in place to monitor the impact of the flexible working arrangement?
- Changes to the individual's working hours/patterns/leave of absence communicated to the wider team?
- Flexible worker, or individual on a career break, remains informed and involved in the Department? (e.g. regarding any structural changes, training or job opportunities).
- Following 3 month trial period of flexible working arrangement, review undertaken to confirm whether it is sustainable for both parties?



# USEFUL CONTACTS

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## UNIVERSITY WEBPAGES

### Childcare Vouchers

[www.essex.ac.uk/hr/policies/childcare-vouchers.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/hr/policies/childcare-vouchers.aspx)

### Wivenhoe Park Day Nursery (Colchester campus)

[www.essex.ac.uk/nursery/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/nursery/)

### Equality and Diversity

[www.essex.ac.uk/equality/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/equality/)

### Family Leave

(maternity, adoption, parental and time off for dependents)

### Keeping In Touch Days (KIT) Information

[www.essex.ac.uk/hr/policies/docs/family-leave-suite.docx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/hr/policies/docs/family-leave-suite.docx)

### Special Leave

[www.essex.ac.uk/hr/policies/docs/special-leave.pdf](http://www.essex.ac.uk/hr/policies/docs/special-leave.pdf)

### Stress Management Policy

[www.essex.ac.uk/staff/ohs/health/stress.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/ohs/health/stress.aspx)

### Protection During Pregnancy

[www.essex.ac.uk/ohsas/occ\\_hlth/services/pregnancy.htm](http://www.essex.ac.uk/ohsas/occ_hlth/services/pregnancy.htm)

## EXTERNAL WEBSITES

### Benefits Calculator

[www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

**Citizens Advice** (Helping to solve legal, money and other problems through free, confidential advice)

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### Directgov

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

### Family and Childcare Trust

(Advice on finding day care for your child)

[www.familyandchildcaretrust.org.uk](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org.uk)

**Gingerbread** (a charity supporting single parents)

[www.gingerbread.org.uk](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk)

### Maternity Action

[www.maternityaction.org.uk](http://www.maternityaction.org.uk)

### National Childbirth Trust

(NCT) Organisation

[www.nct.org.uk/](http://www.nct.org.uk/)

### Working Families

[www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

