



University of King's College Remote Work and Flex Hours Policy

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic placed flexible work arrangements, in particular remote work, in the limelight. With mandatory lockdowns enforced, only essential businesses were permitted to keep their physical locations open whereas, non-essential businesses were forced to implement impromptu flexible work options. A flexible work arrangement is an agreement established between an employee and their managing supervisor where the time and place of work performed is different from the traditional schedule or location.

Introduction

The results of the Human Resources staff survey conducted in the summer of 2021 revealed that 93.4% of staff expressed a strong interest in flexible work arrangements to assist with work-life balance.

Flexibility in the workplace supports a variety of King's initiatives related to employee well-being, recruitment, retention, sustainability, enhancing morale, managing employee attendance, boosting productivity, managing resources, reducing the operational costs of the College, and the effective utilization of space on campus.

Additionally, remote work is beneficial for the environment. Carbon footprints diminish with reduced office energy, business travel, paper usage and other office waste. Meanwhile, a reduction of vehicles on the road will result in less fuel and energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions not to mention a reduction in roadway construction wear and tear.

At King's, the wellbeing of employees is of utmost importance. The benefits of flexible work arrangements are numerous. Most importantly, staff will achieve a better balance as it pertains to work and home life. An additional benefit is the potential creation of much needed office space on campus - if the agreed upon flexible work arrangements result in staff members working remotely (fully or partially), it creates the potential for shared office spaces on campus freeing up space for use by others.

Policy Statement

King's is committed to fostering a workplace environment that is flexible and recognizes employees' ongoing navigation of career and life responsibilities. Flexible work arrangements under this policy include working remotely (fully or partially) and flex hours (having a schedule that differs from the traditional working day (i.e., 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. or 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.). While not all flexible work arrangements will be appropriate for all positions, King's is confident that many staff can successfully fulfill their respective individual and departmental objectives in accordance with the President's mandate via flexible work arrangements. Flexible work arrangements are a function of the responsibilities of the role, the continuation of operations and essential services.

Remote Work and Flex Hours - Guiding Principles

In developing and implementing this policy, King's has developed the following principles to guide the decision-making process:

1. Consistent Service Excellence

We believe that service excellence plays an integral role in the student, faculty, and staff experience at King's. The College features work environments that vary widely - some of which require specific staff onsite and in person to function effectively and to avoid disruption of operations and student services. Flexible work arrangements are generally position- and department- specific. Some departments may not be able to achieve required service levels with altered work schedules or locations. Flexible work arrangements may not be available for all positions at all times of the year. Additionally, there may be other factors that limit flexible work arrangements such as technology confinements, health and safety, privacy, and security.

Despite these differences and limitations, we will aim for basic consistency and equity across all departments when approving flexible work arrangements. Flexible work arrangements are at the discretion of the supervisor, who will weigh both the goals of their unit and points of intersection with other units, and requests may be denied where necessary. Flexible work arrangements should not substantially alter the duties of a position or impact the work of another department.

2. Employee Health, Safety, and Wellness

We are committed to maintaining and improving the quality of King's as a workplace that is committed to the health, safety, and wellness of faculty and staff and all members of the College community. Supporting and enabling employees to effectively balance their professional and personal lives through flexible work arrangements is a key component of the King's employee experience.

3. Shared Obligation

For flexible work arrangements to be successful, the onus is not solely on the College - it is a shared responsibility between the employee and the College. The individual circumstances of each employee, and their obligation to their own and other units, will be an important consideration when assessing the feasibility of a flexible work arrangement, inclusive of the employee's access to pertinent work tools, adequate technology, and the employee's ability to work effectively and efficiently in a flexible environment. Flexible work arrangements demand shared accountability and commitment to reap favourable outcomes.

4. Integration of Practices

Flexible work arrangements will be jointly agreed to by employees and their supervisors. The arrangements will follow the provisions of appropriate employee handbooks and other relevant policies. When designing flexible work arrangements, King's will develop approaches that align with the President's mandate including equity, diversity, accessibility, inclusion, sustainability, and the needs of students.

5. King's Operating Hours

Flexible work arrangements, either on an ongoing basis or at a particular time, are based upon the needs of the College and the ability of the individual employee to work effectively in a flexible work arrangement.

The College has defined its hours as such: campus hours are from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m.; business hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; and core operational hours are from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. It is an expectation that all offices be open during normal business hours.

All flexible work arrangements must include employees working the College's core operational hours which have been determined to be from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Any amended hours or schedules will include this selected timeframe unless in the unusual event that alternate hours are required (as approved by the managing supervisor in conjunction with Human Resources).

It is an expectation that all employees be accessible during core operational hours unless they are ill, on vacation, or on other leave from the university. Employees with a flexible work arrangement must provide a telephone number (that will be shared internally) where they can be reached when necessary.

6. Office Space

To allow for the creation of additional office space on campus, staff working remotely on a full-time basis should not expect to have a dedicated office space on campus. Similarly, staff working remotely on a part-time basis should expect to share an office space on campus.

Definitions

Flexible work arrangements offered by the University of King's College

1. Flex Hours

Flex hours is an arrangement whereby employees work a full day but can vary their working hours. These arrangements will include specific guidelines so that a "core" working day exists. Flex hours are usually arranged in advance between the employee and supervisor and a set range of start and finish times are established. The total hours of work are not affected by this arrangement. For example, the employee may choose to begin work between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m., and finish between 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. This arrangement establishes core hours between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. when all employees will be working. Lunch periods are usually required by law and for a set length (30 minutes or more). Employees may wish to maintain their start/finish times so that a routine is established, and colleagues can become accustomed to each other's schedules.

2. Remote Work Arrangement

A remote work arrangement allows employees to perform their usual job duties at an approved location other than the College. This can take the form of either partial remote work where employees split their time between working in-office and remotely, or full-time remote work where employees work remotely all the time. This arrangement is sometimes referred to as telework or telecommuting. An employee is working from home or from another remote location by using the internet or a computer linked to an employee's place of employment, as well as digital communications such as email and phone.

Right to Disconnect

King's encourages and supports our staff in prioritising their wellbeing. Employees have the right to disconnect. The right to disconnect refers to “an employee’s right to be able to disengage from work and refrain from engaging in work-related electronic communications, such as emails, telephone calls or other messages, outside of normal working hours”.

Where possible, emails should be checked and/or sent only during normal working hours while also appreciating that work patterns may differ. Some employees may send communications at a time that is inconvenient to another (for example, where one employee works during the weekend, and another does not). Where this is the case, the sender should consider the timing of their communication and understand that the recipient will not be expected to respond until their return to work. Where a supervisor sends communications outside of normal working hours, unless operational needs dictate that an immediate response is required, employees should not feel the need to respond to communications received outside of normal working hours.

Inherently there may be valid circumstances when it is deemed essential to contact colleagues outside of normal working hours, including but not limited to:

- Checking availability for scheduling
- To fill in at short notice for a colleague of ill health
- Where unforeseeable circumstances may arise
- Where an emergency may arise
- Where operational reasons require contact outside of normal working hours

While everyone should be aware of the right to disconnect, it is important that we are mindful that situations may occur where it is not be plausible to handle matters during normal working hours. For example, where essential services such as Facilities Management, inclusive of information technology needs, are concerned.

Right to Disconnect: Supervisor and Employee Obligations

To support a culture where employees feel they can disconnect from work, it is important that a joint approach from the supervisor and employee is taken. We must recognise that for flexible work arrangements, inclusive of the right to disconnect, to be successful, everyone must live up to their obligations.

Supervisor Obligations

- To provide employees with written confirmation of the employee’s agreed upon working hours
- To provide employees with details of what their normal working hours are reasonably expected to be
- To ensure employees take rest periods
- To ensure a safe workplace
- To not penalise an employee for acting in compliance with the “Right to Disconnect Policy”



Supervisors and the Senior Administrative Team have the most contact with their staff. *It is imperative that they ensure that staff within their respective teams can disconnect from work outside of normal working hours.* Should staff have issues regarding their working hours or find that they are unable to disconnect from work, it is essential that this is communicated to their supervisor to resolve any issues.

Supervisors should be wary of times emails are circulated and should they notice that a member of their team is sending emails at abnormal hours or are logging in excessively, they should speak to staff at the earliest possibility. This may indicate that staff are having difficulty managing their workload during normal working hours.

Employee Obligations

- To ensure they manage their own working time while at work, take reasonable care to protect their safety, health, and welfare and the health and safety of co-workers.
- To fully cooperate with any time recording methods that King's utilizes to record working time inclusive of when working remotely or otherwise.
- To be mindful of colleagues' right to disconnect (*e.g., by not habitually emailing or calling beyond normal working hours*).
- To notify their supervisor, in writing, of any statutory rest period or break they were unable to receive on a particular occasion and the reason for not receiving such rest period or break.
- To be conscious of their work pattern and be aware of their work-related wellbeing and taking remedial action as required.

Remote Work and Flex Hours - Wellness Obligations

1. Communication

Remaining connected with the team is vital during flexible work arrangements to avoid feeling secluded and isolated. Staff and their supervisor must maintain open lines of communication and have regular one-on-one sessions and team meetings using virtual collaboration tools that support video interactions, where the camera is normally expected to be operational and used. Openness, honesty, clear and direct feedback are essential elements of a successful virtual relationship and are key to the success of a flexible work arrangement. Additionally, it is important for the personal time of employees to be respected, and everyone has the right to disconnect from work outside of normal working hours.

2. Automatic Replies

All staff are encouraged to activate an automatic email response when on leave from the College to cover the full period of the leave being taken (vacations, maternity/parental leaves, etc.). The response should advise the sender that they are on leave, including the start and end date of the period of leave and that they will respond to the email upon their return or provide an alternative contact such as a fellow colleague or supervisor in the automatic reply.

3. Equipment and Technology

Remote work will only be approved for employees who have been provided dedicated technology from the College to support their work from home. Personal devices are not to be used for remote work.

In circumstances where remote work is at the request of the employee, King's will not supply peripheral equipment, for example, additional monitors, docking stations or printers. Those requiring printing services are expected to utilize printers on campus.

To work remotely effectively, employees must be able to supply, at their own cost, certain technology to complete their work. This would typically include:

- A stable broadband connection that can access a VPN connection to King's network and
- A dedicated working space with furnishings.

In situations where College equipment is provided, it remains the property of Kings' and should be inventoried in the same way as equipment physically on campus. Staff will be responsible for returning the equipment in good working order as required or upon termination of employment, or when returning to a position designated to be on campus.

4. Requesting and Confirming Remote Work and Flex Hours Arrangements

Although some employees can request a flexible work arrangement, a supervisor's authorization of such arrangements is based on operational requirements and the employee's specific role and responsibilities and is therefore not guaranteed. The supervisor shall determine if the arrangement is feasible, taking into consideration established policies and practices within the department as well as any formal accommodation requests.

Supervisors should conduct a review of the job, operational requirements, staff collaboration, logistical details, and coordination of work within and outside the department to determine whether the request is suitable for a flexible work arrangement. Consultation with Human Resources is available if necessary.

5. Documenting Flexible Work Arrangements

It is important that the details of all flexible work arrangements be confirmed by the employee and supervisor in writing. Documenting flexible work arrangements provides a shared understanding of the terms of the arrangement and should be reviewed on a regular basis by both parties.

6. Monitoring Flexible Work Arrangements

Both the supervisor and employee should expect ongoing adjustments to the flexible work arrangement. A periodic review and evaluation will allow issues to be identified and corrected by adjusting the details of the arrangement. Several factors could trigger the need to modify the arrangement including operational impact, work performance, and employee satisfaction.

7. Work Safety

Supervisors are responsible to ensure that their employees are equipped to work safely when at work. This includes working safely from home. Supervisors will ensure that safe work practices have been developed for working remotely.

To assist supervisors in their safety planning, the Human Resources Manager will work with the Occupational Health and Safety committee to develop an Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Protocol for working remotely which will accompany this policy. The purpose of the protocol is to create awareness among staff who will be working remotely about how to safely work remotely and the importance of doing so.

Income Tax

Staff may qualify for programs under Canada Revenue Agency guidelines. Although King's may provide a T2200 form, it does not guarantee that the employee's external office expenses will be deductible for income tax purposes. The College makes no representation in this regard. Canada Revenue Agency has established several tests which must be met and forms which must be completed in order for these expenses to be claimed. It is the responsibility of staff to ensure that these tests are met and that these forms are requested from payroll and submitted. Staff are advised to seek professional guidance with respect to all matters pertaining to income taxes.