

Flexible Work

Benefits of Flexible Work

- Accommodates the needs of clientele while being in the best interest of UT Extension and its employees
- Supports work life balance
- Improves university's competitive edge: recruiting talented and diverse candidates; retaining highly skilled employees; and decreasing turnover
- Aligns UT Extension flexible work policies with those of peer universities
- Increases employee productivity, morale, and performance

Definitions

Flexible Work includes professional scheduling, overtime compensatory time and telecommuting which are further defined below.

Professional Scheduling is available for exempt employees who perform work outside core business hours. Professional scheduling is not compensatory time, so it is not designed to equitably compensate (hour for hour) for work outside normal business hours. Professional scheduling absences occur on an infrequent basis. Extended or lengthy absences should be requested as scheduled leave. A request for professional scheduling time is granted by your immediate supervisor.

Considerations:

- PS should be arranged in advance of work that occurs outside of core business hours. The employee's office staff (Supervisor and Administrative Associate) should be made aware of when employee is planning to use PS.
- An attempt to use PS should be made within one month of the work outside of core business hours
- PS is not a tool to create a leave day, it is meant to provide flexibility for working longer hours on an infrequent basis i.e. If an employee works long hours for multi-day program delivery, this is an occasion to consider PS that ranges from ½ to a full day
- Communication is key to the success of PS

Overtime Compensatory Time is available to non-exempt employees who work more than 40 hours per week ([HR0445 Overtime Compensation](#)). Overtime pay is not usually granted, however non-exempt personnel may use compensatory time to account for the extra hours worked. Compensatory time must be approved by the employee's supervisor ahead of the scheduled time and accounted for in IRIS.

Telecommuting is defined in UT Policy [HR0480 – Work Schedules](#). There are two types of telecommuting: Occasional Remote Work and Telecommuting.

1. Occasional Remote work is usually a short-term arrangement of one or more days away from the office location. A formal agreement is not needed, however, prior approval from the employee's supervisor is required.
2. Telecommuting is one or more days of regular work away from the office location. A formal [telecommuting agreement](#) is accomplished between the employee and supervisor. The telecommuting agreement must be reviewed at least annually or as needed.

Office location is defined as the primary place where an organization conducts business. The location would include county, regional, and departmental offices as well as 4-H centers across the state.

Alternative work location is a designated place where the alternate work may be accomplished. The alternate work location must be clearly identified in the Flexible Work request and agreed upon by the supervisor. Employees must be available for contact in the same manner as those in an office location, i.e., phone, email, etc.

Work Hours. A work week is defined as 40 hours per week with core hours between 7 am and 6 pm or as defined by their office location, i.e., county, region, department. While not on leave, employees are expected to be in work status during core work hours. An employee who is sick but still able to work may request to work remotely without taking sick leave. If an office is closed due to weather or other circumstances, follow the current inclement weather policy. A request for an adjustment in work hours (i.e., a shift in starting/ending time) must be submitted and approved in writing to the supervisor.

Eligibility for Occasional Remote Work and Telecommuting

Eligibility for occasional remote work and telecommuting is a collaboration between the Extension leadership, the supervisor and employee. The UTK [Flexible Work Schedule Considerations](#) guide will be used to determine which positions are eligible for flexible work.

- Must have completed probationary period
- Not currently be the subject of a formal disciplinary action
- Have satisfactory job performance
- Duties associated with job description must be able to be performed
- The employee must be available at all times during the established work schedule
- The employee must participate as needed in in-person county/departmental meetings
- The alternative work location is subject to periodic review by the supervisor during the established work schedule

General Guidelines for Supervisors

Flexible work must be in the best interest of Extension by enhancing the defining principles for the organization. While allowing flexible work, the office location must continue to be adequately staffed. County Extension offices need to be sufficiently staffed to serve the public during established office hours per local government and university expectations. As such, supervisors are responsible for coordinating schedules of all employees to ensure effective office coverage. Local needs of the county government must be taken into consideration before any type of flexible work is allowed.

Due to the visible and public nature of extension work, Flexible Work Scheduling should consider the public image impact of taking comp time at certain sensitive times such as Monday morning, Friday afternoon or days before or after holidays. Using Flexible Work Scheduling during these times is not prohibited, but consideration of office needs should be given during these time sensitive periods.

Flexible Work Scheduling is a privilege and not a right. Eligibility is determined by position not the person currently in the position. Some positions and circumstances may prohibit or limit who may be eligible for flexible work. Use the [Flexible Work Schedule Considerations](#) checklist to determine whether a position is eligible for flexible work. Flexible Work may be terminated at any time.

All employees should keep support staff apprised of their work schedules and should be reasonably responsive to phone calls, texts and emails when working away from the office during regular work hours. Professional courtesy requires that Extension personnel communicate with their office team in advance about their work schedule and when they will be taking vacation. The taking of sick leave should be communicated as timely as possible.

Equipment as to what would be reasonably available at the office location, i.e., computer, printer, webcam, etc., will be provided by the employee's department or county. The employee will be responsible for providing any other equipment such as an office desk, chair, etc. Any University owned equipment that is kept at an alternative work location will be recorded and kept with the county/department's equipment records. The employee will be subject to the [University's Acceptable Use Policy](#).

The employee will be responsible for providing communication access to the internet and phone. The internet and phone must be sufficient to allow the employee to complete all job-related activities. A communications stipend may be paid to the remote employee if funds allow.

The employee is expected to maintain their alternative work location in a safe manner, free from safety hazards. Injuries sustained by the employee in an alternate work location in conjunction with his/her regular work duties are normally covered by the University [Workers Compensation](#) policy. Meetings with clients will not take place at the alternate work location.

Employees in a telecommuting agreement will receive travel reimbursement from their alternate work location as indicated in IRIS. Travel will not be paid for routine trips to the office location.

Employees will be responsible for any tax consequences from working at an alternative work location. They should consult with their tax advisor for advice on any tax laws or regulations.

Professional courtesy requires that Extension personnel communicate with their office team in advance about their work schedule and when they will be taking vacation, sick leave, etc. A calendaring system, i.e., Outlook, will be developed to ensure all office personnel know where everyone is located at all times. A shared calendar can be used to record vacation or travel time while an individual calendar can account for individual time such as meetings, clubs, etc.

Employees are accountable for fulfilling their job responsibilities and commitments and for maintaining their professional online calendars. County Directors and support staff should have access to the online calendars, with details, for each employee in the office.

Training will be required for supervisors and employee when new guidelines are in place, this for the sake of consistency and fairness between counties and departments.