Flexible Work Policy FAQ

1. **Can you sum up the flexible work policy?**
   Our flexible work policy allows eligible employees to work remotely for up to two days per week. It's important to note that remote work is not an absolute right, and the suitability of a position for remote work is subject to evaluation, along with the performance and technology competencies of the employee. Remote work must be performed in Virginia and approved in advance by your manager and the divisional leader.

2. **Who is eligible for remote work?**
   Employees must be past their introductory period (first 90 days) to work remotely. Some exempt (salaried) and non-exempt (hourly) staff positions are suitable for remote work. There are certain positions where remote work is not available due to the student facing nature of the work or the additional strain it would place on others. Eligibility is determined based on job responsibilities, performance, and the nature of the work. Employees on a performance improvement plan are not eligible.

3. **How do I request remote work and what is the process?**
   Employees interested in remote work should discuss their request with their supervisors. The process involves a formal request using an online Remote Work Request form, assessment of job suitability, and an agreement on the terms and conditions of remote work, including communication plans and expectations.

4. **Who makes the decision about whether or not I can work remotely?**
   Upon receipt of the Remote Work Request, the supervisor receiving the request will discuss the request with the employee. They will then consult with their divisional leader, who has ultimate authority. Human Resources is available to consult, but does not make the ultimate determination of eligibility.

5. **Is there any time when a supervisor can terminate or vary the arrangement once approved?**
   Yes. They may terminate or amend the agreement based on a number of factors, such as performance, staffing changes, leadership changes, etc. The employee will be given 30 days' notice of termination of the agreement where practical.

6. **Can I request an end to my flexible work arrangement?**
   Absolutely. Talk with your supervisor.

7. **Are remote work days fixed or flexible?**
   Employees can request which days of the week they prefer to work remotely, but this should be communicated and agreed upon with their supervisors to ensure smooth collaboration and coordination within the team.

8. **Can I request additional remote work days beyond two days per week?**
   There are only a few positions eligible to be fully remote. This would likely be employees working for IPOR or for managing a region, like an admissions counselor. Positions that are fully remote require approval from the divisional leader and human resources.

9. **What happens if I have a scheduled on-campus meeting, training, or other important event on my remote work day?**
Employees must remember that the work of the College and department must not suffer as a result of flexible work. There will be meetings and events that cannot be scheduled around your flexible schedule. Employees are expected to attend these events in person. Attendance at meetings is necessary for effective communication and collaboration.

10. **Will the College provide additional technology or equipment for remote work?**
The College will provide employees with a laptop to ensure data security. Employees should ensure they have an adequate space dedicated to work and are expected to provide their own desk, lamps, chair, etc. Employees are responsible for ensuring they have the necessary tools to perform their job duties effectively. This includes a stable internet connection and any other tools required for their specific role.

11. **What if an employee experiences technical issues with their personal equipment?**
The College's IT support will focus on addressing issues related to college-provided systems and tools. In the event of technical issues with personal equipment, employees are encouraged to seek assistance through their personal support channels, such as the device manufacturer or service provider.

Employees facing connectivity or equipment challenges should promptly communicate with their supervisors to discuss potential solutions. In some cases, alternative work arrangements or temporary on-site access to College resources may be explored.

12. **Are there guidelines for the minimum technical requirements for remote work?**
While specific technical requirements may vary by role, employees should ensure their equipment meets the minimum technical specifications outlined by the College. These specifications may include operating system compatibility, internet speed recommendations, and security protocols. Check with IT if you have questions.

13. **Will there be reimbursements for internet expenses, homeowner's insurance or utility bills while working remotely?**
No. If an employee chooses to work remotely, they remain responsible for any additional costs of working remotely.

14. **How will performance be measured for remote employees?**
Productivity and performance for remote employees are measured based on the timely completion of assigned tasks, meeting project deadlines, and achieving performance goals. Supervisors will evaluate employees based on their contributions to the team and the overall success of their projects. Performance expectations for remote employees remain the same as for in-office employees. Regular check-ins, goal-setting, and performance reviews will be conducted to ensure alignment with college objectives.

15. **Will there be opportunities for team-building and social interaction for remote employees?**
Efforts will be made to ensure that remote employees are included in team-building activities and social events. Virtual meetings, collaboration tools, and periodic on-site visits may be arranged to foster a sense of connection.

16. **Can the flexible work policy be revised or updated?**
    The flexible work policy is subject to periodic review, and updates may be made based on the evolving needs of the college and workforce. Any significant changes will be communicated at least 30 days in advance.

17. **How should employees handle child or eldercare responsibilities while working remotely?**
    Employees are responsible for arranging appropriate care during their remote work hours. Distractions or disruptions due to care responsibilities should be minimized to ensure continued productivity and effective collaboration with the team.

18. **What if an employee faces unexpected child or eldercare issues during remote work hours?**
    In the event of unexpected issues, employees should communicate promptly with their supervisors to discuss potential solutions. Flexibility will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but a sustainable arrangement should be in place to avoid repeated disruptions.

19. **Can employees adjust their work hours to accommodate child or eldercare needs?**
    Adjustments to work hours may be considered on a case-by-case basis to accommodate employees' needs. Such adjustments should be communicated and agreed upon with supervisors to ensure continued productivity and team collaboration.

20. **Can employees finish their work early and engage in personal activities during designated work hours?**
    While we encourage efficiency and productivity, employees are expected to adhere to their assigned work hours and remain available for any potential work-related tasks or meetings during that time. Personal activities should be scheduled outside of designated work hours. If work is completed ahead of schedule, employees should proactively communicate with their supervisor and inquire if there are additional tasks or projects that can be taken on.

21. **What are the consequences of consistently engaging in non-work-related activities during work hours?**
    Consistently engaging in non-work-related activities during work hours will result in a revocation of remote work privileges and may be considered a violation of other College policies. Such behavior can impact an employee's performance evaluation and may result in other corrective actions, such as written reprimands.

22. **How can employees maintain a balance between work and personal activities while working remotely?**
    Employees are encouraged to establish clear boundaries between work and personal time. Creating a dedicated workspace, setting realistic work goals, and communicating openly with supervisors about workload and time management can contribute to a healthy work-life balance.

23. **What resources or guidance are available for employees struggling with time management?**
    Employees facing challenges with time management are encouraged to seek guidance from supervisors, HR or the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The College may also provide resources, training, or support to help employees enhance their time management skills and maintain a productive work routine.

24. **What happens if an employee with a flexible work arrangement transfers to another job or department?**
    The employee and the new supervisor should discuss and determine if the current agreement is appropriate for the new position. The employee would have to complete a new request form for approval by the new supervisor and divisional leader.

25. **What do I do if my arrangement isn't working out?**
    Your first step is to talk with your supervisor. It is up to the two of you to work out the details. If issues remain, contact your divisional leader and/or human resources.

26. **Do I still need to record leave on my flex days if I do not work?**
    Yes. If you take a vacation, sick or personal day, record it as usual. The same applies for any other types of paid leave, like holiday, bereavement, or inclement weather.

27. **What if a paid holiday falls on my day off – can I take another day off?**
    Generally, no. This may create issues with other flex arrangements and department coverage.

SUPERVISOR FAQ

1. **If a supervisor receives multiple requests and all cannot be accommodated, how do they rate the needs of the requesters to decide which requests to approve?**
   Reasons for the requests, as well as job responsibilities, seniority and performance may be factors in determining which request to approve. The supervisor may ask the employees for input into a solution that would enable the employees to meet their individual needs as well as the needs of the department.

2. **As a supervisor, how do I deal with the possibility that everyone is going to want to have Friday or Monday off?**
   Decisions for approving or denying flexible work arrangements should be based on organizational needs, as well as the needs of the employee. Objective criteria, such as seniority, special skills, or office needs, should be considered. You may need to get all of the requestors together to figure out how to handle it.

3. **As a supervisor, may I require someone else to change their schedule to accommodate others who want a flexible work schedule?**
   While supervisors may change work schedules and arrangements to accommodate the needs of the department, this is not advised. It may appear that you are favoring certain employees.

4. **Can employees work on a Saturday or Sunday as part of their flexible work schedule?**
   Only if the needs of the department are being met with an employee working on a weekend.

5. **We have several employees with flexible work arrangements in my office, but I am worried that coverage is going to be a problem during busy times of the year. Is there anything I can do?**
   Supervisors retain control over changes to agreements and it is acceptable to ask for modifications or temporary suspensions during busy times. Give your employees as much notice as possible.

6. **How do you supervise employees working at home?**
   Supervisors should set up a structured system for evaluation and management. Performance measures should be agreed upon and then monitored. Communication is very important for those working at home. Reminder: Non-exempt employees must report all time worked while at home.

7. **How will I know that employees working from home are productive? Can I require documentation to support an employee's performance? How do I provide feedback to someone who is not in the office?**
   This may require a shift in thinking from "how many hours are worked" to "what work is performed during work hours". In addition to email, all employees have Microsoft Teams which allows for instant messaging, phone and video calls and sharing of documents. It is easy to communicate with a little effort. Unless it is an emergency, you may wish to provide feedback once the employee is back in the office. Face to face communications of potentially emotionally charged topics are always preferred over email. All employees will be expected to meet the same performance standards working remotely as if they were in the office.

8. **Can I require that someone be here for meetings or other events?**
   Yes, you can. Attendance at meetings is necessary for effective communication and collaboration.

9. **Can someone also have flexible hours?**
   Yes, that can happen but will be rare. The flexplace agreement should clearly define the hours the employee is expected to be available to others in the office and customers.

10. **Can an employee work from a location outside of Virginia?**
    Typically, no. The College is not set up to withhold taxes, or offer unemployment or workers' compensation in other states.

11. **Once a flexible work arrangement has been approved, how can it be introduced smoothly into the work group to address perceptions of fairness or redistribution of work?**
    It is necessary to make sure everyone is consulted when new working arrangements are introduced. Part of good management is to ensure employees are treated consistently and that they are not overloaded with work as the result of a flexible work arrangement by another employee. Where there is a worry that colleagues may find the flexible work arrangements unfair, supervisors, at the planning stage, should meet with the work group/department to define work parameters and develop a system to manage the work group/department's work schedule. For example, it would be useful to agree to procedures for the following:

    - Methods of briefing staff - e.g. on new tasks, progress, continuing tasks
    - Methods of dealing with forwarding - e.g. calls from the office, urgent correspondence, other correspondence
    - Assessing performance - how and when this will be done
    - Scheduling meetings - how and when they will be scheduled and how meetings will be conducted. For example, will it be required for the flexing employee to meet in person or is a conference call acceptable
    - Discussing problems relating to the flexible working arrangement - how and when these will be dealt with

12. **How should a 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. Then, it is important to communicate to each requestor the decision and its rationale. Documenting the basis for these decisions is always a good idea in case questions arise later. Consult with your divisional leader and/or human resources for assistance if needed.

13. **Some of my employees who cannot work flexibly seem to be jealous of those who do. Any suggestions?**
All flexible work arrangements should provide a benefit to the office/department. As a supervisor, you need to be able to share those benefits with the other employees. You must also be able to show how the work being done is integral to the operations of the department. Flexible work should not be seen as a way to get out of work responsibilities. The flexed employee should be viewed as an important part of the work group and should be part of regular meetings and gatherings.

14. **What is the best way to handle an employee that wishes to take advantage of a flexible work arrangement, but it doesn't work for our office?**
Sit down with this employee and explain why it won't work. Listen to any counter arguments and give them proper consideration. You can also try to come up with an alternate solution. If a compromise can be made, try it for a fixed period of time like 2 weeks or 1 month. Your divisional leader and HR are here to help you if you should need it.

15. **What is the appropriate level supervisor who should be involved in approving an employee's flexible work arrangement request?**
This may vary by department/division/entity. If you are a supervisor who has been asked to review a flexible work arrangement request and you are not sure if you are the appropriate person to start the process, consult with your supervisor.

    Upon receipt of a flexible work arrangement proposal, the supervisor receiving the request will discuss the request with the employee. The supervisor will then consult with their divisional leader, who has ultimate authority.

16. **If an employee would like to flex during the summer months between graduation and the start of school, but not any other time, do they need to apply?**
Yes, they should apply and the same vetting process for approval should occur.