FLEXIBLE WORKING – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) relate to the Birkbeck Flexible Working Policy.

What is covered by the term “flexible working arrangements”?  
This commonly refers to changing the hours which an employee works, the times they are required to work, or where the work will be carried out between the home and the office. The Flexible Working Policy provides guidance on flexible working options, including varying working hours, part-time working, flexibility of location, and job share.

Which staff can request flexible working under the Policy?  
The right to request flexible working arrangements is a statutory entitlement for staff who a) have been continuously employed for 26 weeks prior to the point of request for flexible working and b) have not made a request for flexible working in the preceding 12 month period (unless any new request relates to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010). Birkbeck’s Flexible Working Policy mirrors the statutory eligibility criterion.

What is the process for considering requests for flexible working?  
A staff member must submit a written request to their line manager including particular details (as outlined in the policy) and making explicit that it is a request for Flexible Working. The request will then be considered by the Line Manager and a meeting will be arranged with the employee to discuss the request. The staff member will be notified, in line with statutory right and College policy, that they may be accompanied to this meeting (see the Policy for further details). The College will consider the request, and the staff member will be provided with a written response to the request within 14 days of the meeting. The staff member will be given the right of appeal if their request is refused on any one or more of the legitimate grounds as listed in the Flexible Working Policy.

How should I document flexible working arrangements that have been agreed with staff?  
Any flexible working arrangements agreed with a staff member, whether or not these are made through the Policy or through local arrangements, should be confirmed in writing so both parties have a record.

Under the Flexible Working Policy, Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that the employee has a revised statement of their terms and conditions of employment (where this applies).

If the request has been agreed through local arrangements with your line manager, both parties should keep a record of the details of the arrangements and their duration, and any review date(s).
Can a Flexible Working request be made in respect of a temporary change?

Yes. The request should be clear as to whether or not the arrangements requested are permanent or for a fixed period.

If my request for a temporary change to part-time working is accommodated is my right to return to my substantive hours of work protected?

Yes. If a request is made and accepted for a reduction in hours of work for a finite period of time your substantive hours of work are protected and will be reassumed on the date agreed.

If a member of staff has agreed flexible working arrangements with the College, can they decide to revert to their previous arrangements?

The duration of the change should be clearly agreed when a flexible working arrangement is granted. If a permanent/open-ended change is agreed, there is no automatic right to revert to existing arrangements. However, you can make a new flexible working request (under the Flexible Working Policy) if your original request was on a permanent/open-ended basis, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria.

You can, however, request to work flexibly for a limited period of time and include a proposed end date to the temporary arrangement, after which you would revert back to your substantive working pattern.

How do trial periods operate?

Requests to work flexibly may be approved subject to an initial trial period. During any such trial period the practicality of the arrangement would be under regular review by the line manager and staff member and any longer-term or permanent change to working arrangements only confirmed subject to a satisfactory outcome of the trial. Further details are contained in the College Flexible Working Policy.