



Policy PL39 - Flexibility at WEHI Policy

Date Approved:	1/02/2022	Version:	2
Effective Date:	21/02/2022	Policy Author:	Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Review Date:	2023	Policy Owner:	Chief People Officer
Status:	Approved	Approval Authority:	
Key Words:		Department:	People and Culture

Key Points

NA

1. Purpose

WEHI recognises the importance of flexibility to maintain a diverse, adaptive, and high performing workforce.

Flexibility is about being able to adapt the 'how, when and where' of work. Through reflecting the needs of WEHI and individual employees, these adaptations can assist in increasing productivity and efficiencies and improving the wellbeing of our people.

This policy outlines WEHI's flexibility principles to guide our approach to flexibility, the types of flexibility available and things to consider when setting up flexible work arrangements.

Our commitment to flexibility

WEHI knows its success is intrinsically linked to the talents and efforts of our people. We want people to be connected, empowered, supported and productive. WEHI acknowledges that employees have a range of other responsibilities and commitments they need to prioritise throughout their day.

Flexibility in the way we organise work ensures that employees are able to balance work, family commitments and personal needs. We want to design ways of working that meets the needs of the individual, teams, and organisation with a focus on outputs and outcomes.

The nature of our organisation means that some forms of flexibility may not be possible for everyone. Although flexibility looks different across our diverse teams, all employees will be able to work with their supervisor to explore adapting the way they work in a way that fits their role and meets team, stakeholder, and broader organisational requirements.

A flexible working environment includes flexibility with hours of work, work location and work pattern. Normalising flexible working creates an innovative workplace, improves the wellbeing of our people, and helps to deliver on our commitments. Embracing flexibility and fostering agile teams is also essential to managing business continuity and planning. We commit to equipping our people to be successful by providing the tools and systems that drive connectivity and collaboration.

Definitions for terms contained within this policy can be referred upon at the bottom of this document.

2. Scope

This policy applies to employees and students of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute for Medical Research.

This policy applies to employees of WEHI. It is designed to:

- inform employees and supervisors of the types of flexibility available.
- support supervisors and employees to implement flexible working arrangements aligned to the flexibility principles.

3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Employee	A person employed on a full time, part time or casual basis.

Term	Definition
Supervisor	Anyone who supervises employees including Laboratory Heads, Department Heads and Division Heads and professional services managers.

4. Policy

1. WEHI flexibility principles

1.1 WEHI's flexibility principles provide a supportive framework enabling supervisors and employees to agree on flexible work arrangements that best suit the individual, team, and WEHI.

1.2 The principles are as follows:

- a) the health and wellbeing of our people is paramount - we help people connect their work and home lives in a way that supports them to thrive;
- b) the way we work together is dynamic and agile, meeting the changing needs of our organisation and people;
- c) we will strive to deliver on our organisational, division/department and team goals by implementing new and innovative ways of working and realise the reciprocal benefits of flexibility;
- d) the culture we promote, and role model is to be adaptive, creative, open and innovative in the way we embed and normalise flexible ways of working;
- e) we embrace the diversity of our WEHI community and seek ways to amplify inclusion through an appreciation that every individual and team has their unique flexibility needs;
- f) we provide our people with a framework that supports them to set boundaries, define outcomes, manage expectations and perform in a hybrid working environment;
- g) we actively facilitate and seek out opportunities for our people to connect effectively with one another and with external stakeholders both virtually and in person;
- h) we respect the caring responsibilities of our people and are committed to designing new ways of working so they can contribute to team success that supports them and their family.

2. Types of flexibility

There are a range of different types of flexibility which can be grouped under five categories: schedule, location, role, leave and break.

2.1 Schedule

- a) Flexible hours of work: where an employee varies their start and finish times. For example: an employee starts at 7am and leaves at 3pm, instead of starting at 9am and finishing at 5pm.
- b) Compressed working week: where an employee works the same working hours, compressed into a shorter period. For example: an employee works a 35-hour week at a rate of 8.75 hours per day over four days instead of seven hours per day over five days.
- c) Informal time in lieu arrangements: where an employee works extra hours to make up for time off on an adhoc basis. For example: an employee has an upcoming personal event one Friday evening, to accommodate for this the employee works late on Wednesday and Thursday so that they can leave early on the Friday.

2.2 Location

- a) Remote and/or home-based work: where an employee works from an alternative location instead of the office. This can be done on a regular basis (for example: a hybrid model where an employee works from home two days per week and from the office for three days per week) or on an ad-hoc basis (for example: an employee works from home to allow them to complete a particular task more effectively). WEHI's Working from Home Policy outlines more detail regarding the expectations when working from home.

2.3 Role

- a) Job Sharing: where two or more employees who work on a part-time basis undertake a full-time job. The employees could be viewed as interchangeable or as roles that can be divided into discrete accountabilities.
- b) Role Agility: where one person works across different teams / roles for a development opportunity or to fill in for short term leave requirements.
- c) Part time work: where an employee works less than full time and is paid on a pro-rata basis for that work.

2.4 Leave

a) Shortened working year: where an employee purchases up to six weeks additional leave each year, increasing their annual leave entitlement from four weeks to up to ten weeks (known as purchased leave) OR accesses leave without pay to shorten their working year.

2.5 Break

a) Flexible careers: where an employee can enter, exit, and re-enter employment with WEHI or increase or decrease their work to suit different stages of life. Examples include an employee:

- taking a 'gap year' but returning to work at WEHI;
- working part-time while children are school aged; or
- reducing leadership responsibilities as they transition to retirement.

b) Studying and working: where an employee re-arranges their working hours to accommodate for any formal study they may be undertaking. For example: an employee works longer hours on one day to accommodate time spent away from work attending a class. Note: some study may be supported by WEHI as paid study leave, please refer to the Further Studies Support policy.

3. Examples of flexibility

3.1 Example One. Ruba would like to volunteer at a food bank on Wednesday mornings. She identifies Wednesday morning for this activity as she does not generally have stakeholder meetings. Ruba speaks to her supervisor about working later on Tuesday and Thursday to make up for the time which is agreed.

3.2 Example Two. After working from home during COVID-19, Jeff has come to value the flexibility remote working has given him, particularly the reduced commuting time from his home to WEHI. In discussions with his supervisor about returning to the office, they explore a hybrid approach of working from the office on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and working remotely on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This allows Jeff to complete some tasks more effectively at home, maintain connections with stakeholders when in the office and has a positive impact on his health and wellbeing.

3.3 Example Three. Ahmed works as an animal technician and although he doesn't have access to flexibility in work location, he speaks with his supervisor about utilising flexibility in his schedule to help manage his responsibilities as a parent. He starts at 9am and finishes at 4pm which means he can do the school drop off in the morning.

4. Setting up successful flexible work arrangements

4.1 WEHI supervisors are encouraged to initiate discussions with each team member and their team about how flexible working arrangements can help them to deliver on their individual, team and organisational goals whilst supporting them to balance other life responsibilities and commitments.

Supervisors should seek to:

- get advice from the People and Culture team to understand whether there are any industrial impacts on the type of arrangement that can be put in place and whether more formal arrangements are required (such as a variation to contract of employment);
- be vocal in support for flexibility and take the opportunity to role model working flexibly aligned to your own needs;
- support requests for flexibility wherever possible;
- support team members to set boundaries, manage expectations / outcomes and perform in a hybrid working environment;
- facilitate and seek out opportunities for team members to connect effectively with one another and with stakeholders both virtually and in person, developing, maintaining and growing relationships and collaborations;
- Manage space requirements aligned to team hybrid working arrangements including opportunities to share desk/lab benches where required.
- monitor and review flexible working arrangements, making the adjustments necessary to ensure effectiveness, productivity and well-being are maintained;
- ensure employees have the resources and expertise they need to ensure flexibility is successful;
- be aware of and comply with legislative provisions for flexible working arrangements;
- refer to WEHI's flexibility principles to guide their decision making; and
- For ongoing/regular arrangements, record the agreed arrangement in writing and advise People and Culture if any changes to pay/leave are required.

4.2 Employees should seek to:

- consider the type of flexibility that best suits their role, required outcomes and life circumstances and have a conversation with their supervisor about these arrangements;
- contribute to team discussions and planning about how to communicate and collaborate effectively while supporting their own, and their colleagues, flexible working arrangements;
- implement strategies to ensure effective implementation, productivity and teamwork;
- be open and transparent while working flexibly and request support if required; and,
- engage in regular review and assessment of how the arrangement is working for mutual benefit.

4.3 People and Culture will support employees and supervisors by:

- providing advice to employees and supervisors about the types of informal and formal flexible working arrangements available;
- assisting supervisors in determining whether requests for flexible working arrangements can be accommodated;
- assisting supervisors in drafting written responses in relation to requests for flexible working arrangements; and
- ensuring that any changes to pay/leave resulting from a flexible working arrangement are put in place for the employee.

5. Issues resolution

5.1 If an employee is not satisfied with the decision regarding their request for flexible working arrangements they are encouraged to first seek advice and support from their People and Culture Business Partner to try and resolve the issue.

5.2 Once the informal route is exhausted, employees should then review and follow WEHI's [Dispute Resolution Policy](#).

5. Supporting Information

5.1. References

[Equal Opportunity Act 2010 \(Vic\)](#)

[Fair Work Act 2009 \(Cth\)](#)

[Carer Recognition Act 2010 \(Cth\)](#)

5.2. Related Policies

[Working from home policy](#)

[Leave and WEHI Holidays Policy](#)

[Dispute Resolution Policy](#)

[Further studies support policy](#)

5.3. Related Procedures

[Child care support for female scientists – Craven & Shearer Award](#)

5.4. Related Guidelines

[Family Room and Lactation Room Guidelines](#)

5.5. Other

[Home Based Worksite Self-Assessment \(HSM-F39\)](#)

[Home Based Work Agreement](#)

Review Cycle

Initial Review	1 Years
Ongoing Review	2 Years

Next Review

2023

Version History

Approved By	Approval Date	Effective Date	Approval Notes	Version
Institute Records & Policy Officer	27/09/2019	27/09/2019	Placeholder policy	1
Director	1/02/2022	21/02/2022	Major update, replaces the old Flexibility in Working Arrangements for Staff with Family Responsibilities	2