

Royal Northern College of Music

Flexible Working Policy

Policy & Procedure

Department: Human Resources

Document owner: Head of Human Resources

Approval Committee: Human Resources Committee

Revised: April 2024

Period of Approval: 3 years

Review Date: April 2027

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1. Introduction

The College is committed to creating working arrangements that benefit both staff and the College. We recognise that having flexible working practices that allow you to vary your working hours or days can help you achieve an acceptable balance between your work and personal commitments. We also recognise that flexible working practices can help the College to organise its services to better respond to the varying needs of students and other stakeholders whilst ensuring that we provide equal and inclusive opportunity throughout the organisation.

All College employees may request to work flexibly, regardless of length of service.

Whilst flexible working is encouraged wherever possible, not all roles are suitable for all forms of flexible working. Working flexibly is not a right and is always subject to business need. The policy sets out the College's approach to flexible working arrangements which is in accordance with the ACAS code of practice and guidance on handling requests to work flexibly in a reasonable manner.

This policy identifies the different types of flexible working and the procedure eligible employees need to follow to request changes to their way of working. The policy is underpinned by the College's core values and commitment to equality and diversity.

What is flexible working?

Eligible employees can make a request to:

- change the hours they work;
- change the times when they are required to work; or

There are many different forms of flexible working. Some may be more appropriate for different job roles than others. Some of the more common forms of flexible working options include:-

- Part time working
- Term time working
- Annualised hours
- Compressed hours
- Job-sharing
- Flexitime

2. Eligible employees

An employee must meet all of the criteria below to be eligible to make a request for flexible working:

- Be an employee (this includes all academic and professional services staff and staff employed on fixed term contracts).
- Not be an agency worker.
- Not have made two applications to work flexibly under the right during the past 12 months. Each year runs from the date when the application was made.

3. **Responsibilities**

Employees	<p>Employees considering making an application to vary their working arrangements are advised to speak to their line manager informally in the first instance, or a member of the Human Resources Department before making a formal application, as this may help formulate a request more likely to be approved.</p> <p>It is the employee's responsibility to prepare a formal proposal to change their working pattern following the procedure detailed in this document.</p>
Line Managers	<p>Line managers should confirm receipt of an application and review the proposal with the employee in line with the procedure in this document.</p> <p>Where all information needed is provided, the line manager will meet with the employee to consult on the request and confirm the outcome within 2 months.</p> <p>If the employee fails to provide all the required information, they should be told what information has been omitted and asked to resubmit the application when it is complete. The College is not obliged to consider the application until it is complete and resubmitted.</p> <p>If the employee unreasonably refuses to provide information needed to assess whether the change should be agreed to, the College will treat the application as withdrawn. One further application can be made within a further 12 month period.</p>
Human Resources	<p>The Human Resources Department will provide advice and guidance to employees and managers on flexible working. A member of the Human Resources team may review requests for flexible working with managers before a formal response is given.</p> <p>Upon receipt of the outcome, the Human Resources Department will prepare any contractual paperwork necessary.</p>

4. **Applying for flexible working**

Applications must be made in writing using the 'Flexible Working Application Form' available on the College employee self-service portal [MyView](#). A summary of the main advantages and disadvantages of different forms of flexible working has been produced to assist with considering the issues/implications (Appendix 1).

Completed forms will first be submitted to the employee's line manager and a copy will be available to HR. All requests will normally be considered and decided on within a period of two months from first receipt, unless both parties agree that the period can be extended.

5. **Review meeting**

A meeting between the line manager and the employee should be arranged as soon as possible to consider the request. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that the proposed arrangement meets the needs of both the employee and the College.

At the meeting, the application should be discussed in more detail, in particular, to understand if the benefits of the proposal outweigh the disadvantages and costs, and to

review how the new arrangement may work in practice. The line manager may want to consider the proposal further and may discuss it with the Human Resources Department before responding formally.

Employees have the right to bring a companion to the meeting, this person must be an employee of the College. The role of your companion is not to act as the employee's representative and they should not answer questions on the employee's behalf, they are however able to address the meeting or confer with the employee on any points that they are unsure about. If the companion is unable to attend the meeting, a new date may be agreed, normally within 7 days of the originally proposed time, ensuring the new time is convenient to all parties, or consider an alternative companion.

If the employee is not able to attend the meeting for any reason, they should advise their line manager at the earliest opportunity and they will arrange an alternative mutually convenient time. If the employee fails to attend two meetings without reasonable explanation, the College will treat the application as having been withdrawn and notify the employee accordingly in writing.

6. Communication of the decision

The decision will be communicated in writing, normally within 14 days of the meeting. In the event that it is not possible for a decision to be made in this 14 day period, the line manager will inform the employee.

6.1 Successful Applications

If the application has been successful, the employee will be notified of the new working pattern and of the start date for the change. In some cases a trial period may be recommended so each party can evaluate whether the working option is effective. It may therefore be agreed to extend the time for the final decision until the end of the trial period. The College will confirm the period of extension and its end date in writing.

Unless otherwise agreed, any change that is agreed will be a permanent change to your terms and conditions of employment and although all requests will be considered, there is no guarantee that the employee will be able to return to their previous working pattern.

The line manager and employee should communicate any problems/issues as they arise and these should be resolved quickly. In any event, the new arrangement should be reviewed on a regular basis, normally as part of the Performance and Development Review (PDR). In some cases, a time-limited change may be agreed after which the employee reverts back to the original working pattern.

6.2 Unsuccessful Applications

If after consultation with the employee, the request must be declined due to the needs of the College the line manager should meet with the employee to explain fully the reasons for refusing the request, and this will be confirmed in writing. Alternative flexible working options may be offered for consideration and these should be discussed to agree if this would be acceptable.

An application can be refused on one of the following business grounds, but the line manager must consult with the employee before reaching a final decision:

- Burden of additional costs.
- Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer needs.
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff.
- Inability to recruit additional staff.
- Detrimental impact on quality.
- Detrimental impact on performance.
- Insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work.
- Planned structural changes.

7. Right of appeal

An appeal against the decision must be submitted within 14 days of receiving the written decision. This appeal should be addressed to the Head of Human Resources and clearly set out the grounds of the appeal. The Head of Human Resources will appoint a manager who has not previously been involved in considering the application to hear the appeal. A meeting will normally take place within 14 days of receiving the notice of appeal. The employee has the right to be accompanied by a companion. The decision will normally be communicated within 14 days of this meeting.

If the employee is unable to attend the meeting for any reason, they should advise the Head of Human Resources (or their nominated representative) and they will arrange an alternative mutually convenient time. If the employee fails to attend two meetings without reasonable explanation, the College will treat the appeal as having been withdrawn and notify the employee accordingly in writing.

The decision of the manager hearing the appeal is final. However, if the employee feels that they have been treated unfairly they may wish to refer to the College Grievance Procedure.

8. Withdrawal of applications

An application may be withdrawn for one of the following reasons:

- An employee can withdraw the request in writing to human.resources@rncm.ac.uk and the line manager. A verbal withdrawal is not sufficient.
- Should an employee fail to attend two pre-arranged meetings to discuss the request without sufficient reason, the application will be treated as withdrawn.
- If an employee refuses to provide the line manager with information relevant to the request, the College will treat the application as withdrawn.

One further application can be made within 12 months of the date of the original application.

Related Policies/frameworks:

- Parental Leave Policy
- Maternity Policy
- Paternity Policy
- Blended Working Framework

FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTIONS

A summary of some of the main business advantages and disadvantages are provided below to assist you in making your application. By focussing on positive areas and considering ways to minimise disadvantage to your work area, you will be able to draft a full proposal which will facilitate a discussion with your manager.

FORM OF FLEXIBLE WORKING	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<p>Part Time Working A reduction of an employee's hours below the normal 35 hours per week. It may involve a later start or earlier finish time, working mornings / afternoons only or fewer working days.</p>	<p>Peaks and troughs in workload can be managed more cost effectively.</p>	<p>Management time taken for direct supervision, communication and PDRs may increase where additional resources need to be employed. Training costs may also increase.</p> <p>May cause friction in departments if full time staff are asked to cover the more unpopular shifts.</p>
<p>Term Time Only Working the required number of hours per week, either over the College or School term time.</p>	<p>In some areas of the College, this may coincide with peaks and troughs in workload, thus allowing costs to be managed more effectively.</p>	<p>School term times may not coincide with those of the College, in which case consideration will have to be given to the possibility of an employee being absent from work at this time.</p> <p>Other employees may be put under pressure not to take their annual holiday during non-term time.</p> <p>May be disruptive to the service during long periods of absence, particularly where the employee has unique knowledge or skills that are needed on a consistent basis.</p>
<p>Annualised Hours Working hours are expressed as the total number of hours to be worked over the year rather than a week.</p>	<p>Greater flexibility to match staffing to the demands of work.</p> <p>Reduced overtime payments.</p> <p>Improved productivity.</p> <p>Reduction in the cost of employing temporary or casual staff.</p>	<p>Must be carefully designed to ensure that efficiency is maximised and to ensure that there is not too great a degree of uncertainty which can be stressful and impractical for both employers and employees.</p>
<p>Compressed Hours Allows individuals to work their total number of agreed hours over a shorter period. For example, employees might work their full weekly hours over four rather than five days or with a combination of longer and shorter</p>	<p>Peaks and troughs in workload can be managed more cost effectively and where appropriate, the hours of service to customers can be extended.</p>	<p>Working longer days can increase tiredness and affect productivity; and if a number of team members want to work a similar pattern there is a danger that sufficient cover may not be provided.</p>

days, which gives the flexibility to work some shorter weeks.		
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FORM OF FLEXIBLE WORKING	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<p>Job Share Two or more people share the hours, responsibilities, pay and benefits of a full time job.</p> <p>Options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one individual works 3 days and the other 2 days • both job share partners work 2.5 days • one partner works mornings and one afternoons • job share partners work on alternate weeks. 	<p>Improved continuity of work if job sharers can cover for each other e.g. during sick leave and annual leave.</p> <p>Two individuals are likely to bring increased skills and expertise to the position.</p> <p>Peak periods of demand can be covered by hours when the two individuals work simultaneously.</p> <p>Overtime savings may be made.</p>	<p>Replacing a job share partner on promotion or if they leave can be difficult.</p> <p>Management time in supervision, training and communication is likely to increase.</p> <p>Increased costs are likely to result from benefits, training, overlap time and equipment where it cannot be shared.</p> <p>Likely to be unsuccessful unless regular communication and handovers take place between individuals.</p>
<p>Flexitime Gives employees choice about their actual working hours with start, finish and break times variable outside agreed core times subject to the requirement to work an agreed amount of hours within an accounting period (typically 4 weeks).</p>	<p>Service can be extended beyond the normal hours of work.</p>	<p>Unless handled with care, additional burdens may be placed on some team members or customer service may suffer at particular times.</p> <p>Working long hours can cause fatigue and affect performance.</p>