

Flexplace Arrangements Suitability Guide



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* This *Flexplace Arrangements Suitability Guide* is designed for determining how to use the university's approved flexible work arrangement to support employee flexibility and department goals.

Purpose

NKU supports the use of appropriate flexible work options for Northern Kentucky University (NKU) employees while still ensuring student success, creating a vibrant campus, and a sense of community where our students and employees thrive. In compliance with NKU's Flexible Work Arrangements procedure, this document outlines the requirements for supporting flexplace arrangements for university staff and faculty members.

This *Flexible Work Arrangements Suitability Guide* is designed to help university leadership and managers determine which positions and employees are well-suited for regular or occasional flexplace arrangements and to how to use the university's approved flexible work arrangement to support employee flexibility and department goals.

Two critical steps must be followed to determine flexplace work suitability:

- Step 1: Determine the suitability of **positions** based on job duties and responsibilities.
- Step 2: Determine the suitability of **employees** based on past work performance.

Flexplace Work Arrangements for NKU Employees

During the COVID-19 pandemic, NKU moved to essential operations, transitioning the majority of its workforce to remote work. As the university moves to in-person operations in preparation for the fall 2021 semester, university leaders, managers, and employees recognize the need for a level of flexibility to support our employees in the transition to post-COVID operations. Recognizing that some work

can only be done on-site, NKU supports the use of flexible work arrangements based on the requirements of individual roles and the population they serve. Supervisors are asked to be flexible with employees while maintaining clear performance expectations. Conversations between supervisors and employees should include:

- **Childcare/eldercare needs:** While performing job duties, flexplace employees are expected to arrange for dependent care just as they would if they were working in the office. If an employee is actively caring for a child or family member, that time is not considered work time; appropriate leave should be used during those times.
- **Balance of presence in virtual and on-site meetings:** Supervisors should set clear expectations on how employees should participate in meetings. Zoom should continue to be used when possible to provide all meeting attendees the opportunity to participate.
- **Expectations for focused, uninterrupted time for completing job responsibilities and attending meetings:** If an employee is unable to set boundaries for work time then the employee is expected to use leave.
- **Performance management expectations** and metrics of monitoring work performance.
- All other recommendations in Step 5, Tips for entering into a flex place agreement, of this guide.

Benefits of Flexible and Remote Work¹

- ✓ **Cost savings.** According to [Global Workplace Analytics](#), if those with compatible jobs and a desire to work from home did so just half the time, the typical employer would save on average \$11,000 per person per year. These cost savings come in the form of reduced real-estate costs, reduced absenteeism, reduced turnover and increased productivity.
- ✓ **Increased productivity.** [SurePayroll](#) reports that more than two-thirds of employers in a recent study reported increased productivity among their telecommuters. There are many reasons for this — among them, fewer workplace interruptions; happier, healthier employees; and time savings from not having to commute. Remote work also forces people to be more independent and self-directed.
- ✓ **Improved employee satisfaction.** [Data from Global Workplace Analytics](#) show that 80 percent of employees surveyed consider telework a job perk — and employees who receive job perks are generally more satisfied with their jobs. Data also show that the majority of teleworkers report they have more time with family, friends and leisure, and a quarter of telework employers report improvements in their employees' health and well-being.
- ✓ **Improved retention rates.** According to [HuffPost](#), the flexibility of telecommuting helps employers retain key employees who may otherwise leave because of personal reasons, such as moving further from the office. In fact, employees who eliminate extensive work commutes often experience less stress and can better sustain a positive work/life balance, thus increasing the likelihood that they'll be more engaged in and committed to their work.

Examples of Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements do not have to look the same for every employee and department. There are a variety of different types of flexible work arrangements including:



Flexplace

Employee works from a site other than their assigned NKU campus location.

Example: Employee works from home for all or a portion of the work week.

Example: Employee works from home on an occasional or situational basis.



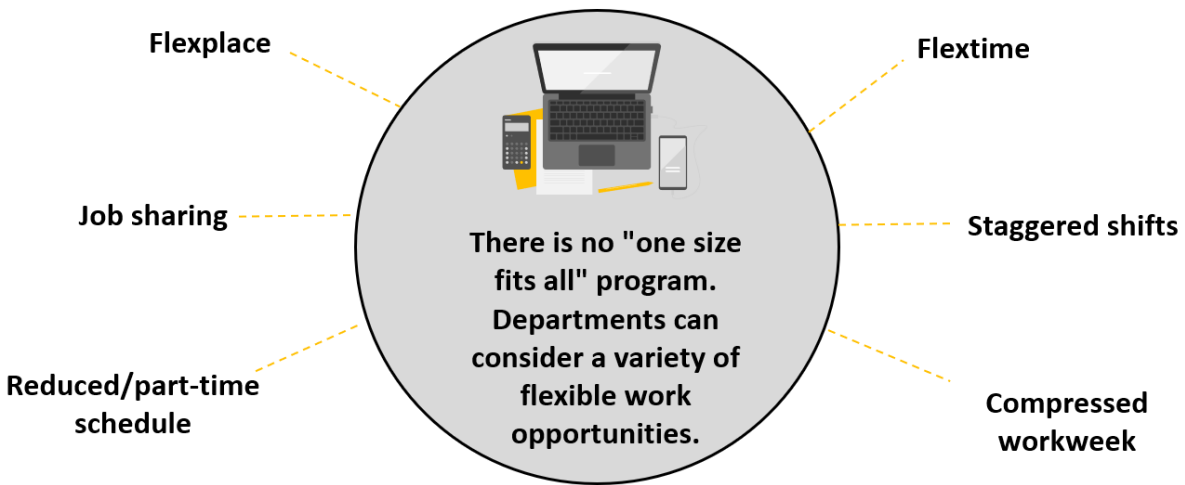
Flextime

Employee changes start and end times and/or days of the week they work.

Example: Employee changes start time from 8:15am to 6:30am and end time from 4:30pm to 2:45pm with a 45-minute lunch period.

Example: Employee changes work week from Monday – Friday to Wednesday – Sunday.

¹ Source, CUPA-HR



Source: Segal

Step 1: Determine which positions are conducive to a flexplace arrangement

A position can be considered suitable for flexplace arrangements if some or most of its responsibilities can be performed away from the primary work location. The change in work location should not impact productivity, customer service, operational efficiency, or team collaboration. The determination should be first based on the type of work, not just on employee performance. The below list is merely a suggestion and is certainly not an exhaustive list.

May not be possible:
Work that requires in-person support of direct customer facing roles
Public Health and Safety
Work that requires on-site work or materials

Possible:
Auditing
Analyzing Data
Budgeting
Calculating
Computer Programming
Managing Emails
Data Entry

Each position should be considered individually, per the responsibilities of the role, to determine if the work can be done outside of the primary work location.

Hybrid Roles:

In addition, some roles may be suited for a certain amount of flexplace work even if many of the responsibilities must be done at the primary work location. These roles could be considered for a limited amount of flexplace work. This is considered a hybrid flexplace work role and is likely to be the model for most teams.

Equipment and Information Security:

Supervisor Considerations

- ✓ Is the employee able to have access to the needed equipment to perform their job function?
- ✓ Do they have access to Wi-Fi to be able to complete their tasks, and communicate with their supervisor and team?
- ✓ Do the employee's core responsibilities require access to equipment, materials, and files that can only be accessed on site?
- ✓ Is the employee required to be on-site for face-to-face meetings with supervisors, other employees, students, or customers? Or can this contact be done electronically?

IT ability and access to Wi-Fi networks also plays a large part in determining flexplace work ability.

- Flexible Work Arrangement employees must abide by the university's policies covering information security, software licensing and data privacy.
- Maintenance on university-owned equipment will be performed only by a university authorized technician.
- Maintenance and repair of employee-owned equipment is the responsibility of the employee. The university is not liable for such equipment even if the employee is engaged in university work at the time of malfunction.



Step 2: Determine the suitability of employees who are interested in a flexplace arrangement

Once it has been determined that all or some of the role responsibilities can be performed outside of the primary work location, it must be identified if the employee in this role is compatible for flexplace work arrangements.

This must be considered on a case-by-case basis for current employees and must be considered when interviewing candidates for a flexplace work position.

TIP

The [Manager Flexplace Suitability Worksheet Checklist](#) can be used as a tool to determine the position and employee suitability for flexplace work arrangements.

The flexplace work approval or denial determination is made by the employee's manager and department head in conjunction with Human Resources. This determination should be made from an employee's individualized request based on the assessment of their suitability for flexplace work.

If the employee feels they need a workplace or at-home accommodation for flexplace work, please have them contact Human Resources at hr@nku.edu for a possible ADA accommodation.

Factors for this determination should include but are not limited to:

- Employees most recent performance history (including corrective action).
- Employees time management and organizational skills.
- Does the employee have the necessary computer skills to complete their required job functions outside of the office?
- Does the employee understand their role and expectations, and require little supervision to complete their tasks?
- Is the employee a self-starter and consistently meets deadlines?

A few things to keep in mind:

- Employees in their probationary period should not be approved for flexplace work unless deemed necessary by the manager or university official.
 - This may be waived for employees who are hired with a flexplace work arrangement already established.
- If the employee is not well suited for flexplace work or is denied based on a previously documented performance issue, it is best practice to communicate that reasoning with the employee.
 - In this instance, a discussion about job performance and growth opportunities should be had between the employee and their supervisor before the option for flexplace can be re-assessed in the future.
 - Supervisors should keep documentation of flexplace agreement approvals and denials for each employee.
 - As a supervisor, if you are unsure of how to approach this conversation with your employee, please contact Human Resources or Employee Relations for guidance.
- The employee is in charge of setting up their workspace in a flexplace environment. This includes adequate access to the internet and a quiet place for calls or video meetings.
 - Employees must work with managers to establish work hours. These work hours should be added to the employee's email signature for transparency across the university.
 - Employees need to designate "office" space and get IT support for their setup.
 - Employees must try to minimize distractions in this area.
 - Employees must be cognizant of how their environment appears during video meetings.
- A flexplace work arrangement is not intended to be used as a substitute for childcare/eldercare.
 - While performing job duties, flexplace employees are expected to arrange for dependent care just as they would if they were working in the office. In the event that a flexplace employee is faced with caring for a dependent, and the level of care needed for a dependent prevents or significantly disrupts work accomplishment, the flexplace employee should notify their supervisor, only record actual hours worked on the timesheet and use leave or other flexible work arrangements to account for the other hours.
- Employees may not work from outside of the United States. However, in some cases employees can be permitted to work outside of the tristate area (Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana). Prior approval is needed by the employee's supervisor, department head and Human Resources.

Step 3: Ensure Flexplace Work Success - Employee and Manager Training and Learning

Once you have determined that both the role and the employee are suitable for a flexplace work arrangement, the next step is to complete the appropriate training for the employee and manager recommended by NKU's Human Resources Training & Development.

We strongly encourage supervisors and employees use the recommend trainings listed below. These trainings provide helpful information to ensure a successful flexplace work arrangement.

Manager Training

[3.20.20 Remote Work for Supervisors.pdf \(nku.edu\)](#)

[Supervisor Resources: Northern Kentucky University, Greater Cincinnati Region \(nku.edu\)](#)

[Keeping your virtual team productive | LinkedIn Talent Solutions](#)

[9 Tips for Managing Remote Employees \(gartner.com\)](#)

[Best Practices for Managing Remote Employees | BambooHR Blog](#)

[10 Mistakes to Avoid When Managing a Virtual Team | Remote-how](#)

[Helping Remote Workers Avoid Loneliness and Burnout \(hbr.org\)](#)

[3 Phases of Effective Remote Meetings | Remote-how](#)

[Remote Work News | Remote-how Blog](#)

Faculty/Staff

[Employee Resources: Northern Kentucky University, Greater Cincinnati Region \(nku.edu\)](#)

[Getting Started](#)

[Information Technology](#)

[LinkedIn Working Remotely Courses](#)

[Staying Connected While Working Remotely](#)

[Sustainability Tips for Working at Home](#)

[How to Work From Home: 20 Tips From People Who Do It Successfully \(hubspot.com\)](#)

[How To Work From Home: Life Kit : NPR](#)

[5 Tips for Staying Productive While You're Working From Home | Time](#)

[20 Tips for Working From Home | PCMag](#)

[Remote Work News | Remote-how Blog](#)

Remote Work Well-being Resources

[Arianna Huffington: Why Taking Breaks Is Key to Performing at Our Best \(thriveglobal.com\)](https://www.thriveglobal.com/articles/arianna-huffington-why-taking-breaks-is-key-to-performing-at-our-best)

[How to Combat Digital Fatigue and Digital Burnout \(thriveglobal.com\)](https://www.thriveglobal.com/articles/how-to-combat-digital-fatigue-and-digital-burnout)

[9 Small Rituals That Help Us Mark the End of the Workday \(thriveglobal.com\)](https://www.thriveglobal.com/articles/9-small-rituals-that-help-us-mark-the-end-of-the-workday)

[How to Take Real Breaks While Working From Home \(thriveglobal.com\)](https://www.thriveglobal.com/articles/how-to-take-real-breaks-while-working-from-home)

[Working From Home: How to Optimize Your Workspace \(thriveglobal.com\)](https://www.thriveglobal.com/articles/working-from-home-how-to-optimize-your-workspace)

Step 4: Tips for Creating Flexplace Work Arrangements

Be Specific: After determining that both the role and employee are suitable for flexplace work arrangements and both the manager and employee have completed their training and professional development courses, it is time to create a framework for flexplace work arrangements that establish the specifics.

Items to be considered:

- Days of the week the employee can utilize the flexplace arrangement.
- Expectations of the level of communication and responsiveness while working from a flexplace. This should be from both the employee and the manager.
- Expectations of attendance for meetings and other interactions across the university and with customers and students.
- Any other expectations of work to be done and metrics on how this work will be recorded.

Additionally, expectations for communication between both the employee and manager should be identified and discussed ahead of time. These topics should include:



- Balance of presence in virtual and on-site meetings.
- Performance management expectations and metrics of monitoring work performance.
- Physical space arrangement and accommodations including what technology is necessary to perform work functions outside of the office.
- Balance of employee childcare or eldercare needs.
- Managing various work styles including communication expectations from both manager and employee.
- Maintaining communication including Zoom, email, phone, Microsoft Teams, etc.
- Managing other distractions at home and setting expectations for professionalism, including dress code.

After discussing the Flexible Work Arrangement with the employee and the department head/dean, send the completed [Flexible Work Arrangement Form](#) to Human Resources (hr@nku.edu) for final approval.

If a flexible work arrangement is agreed upon, and the employee will be based out of state (i.e. their residence will be outside of the tristate area), the manager should contact the Payroll Department at payroll@nku.edu to confirm that NKU is registered with that state for tax purposes.

Additional Resources:

- [NKU Flexible Work Arrangement Form](#)
- [Procedure for Flexible Work Arrangements](#)
- [Manager Flexplace Suitability Worksheet](#)
- [Flexible Work Arrangements FAQs](#)