

LINCOLN COLLEGE GROUP

**FLEXIBLE WAYS OF WORKING POLICY AND
ACCOMPANYING PROCEDURES**

POLICY HR/PO43

SPONSOR

**Group Director of Human Resources and
Student Support Services**

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Lincoln College strives to treat all its members and visitors fairly and aims to eliminate unjustifiable discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, political beliefs or practices, disability, marital status, family circumstances, sexual orientation, spent criminal convictions, age or any other inappropriate ground.

LINCOLN COLLEGE GROUP

FLEXIBLE WAYS OF WORKING POLICY AND ACCOMPANYING PROCEDURES

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Associated Forms and other Documents:

[Formal Flexible Working Request](#)

[Appeal against a formal flexible working request outcome](#)

[New Ways of Working Guidance – All Staff](#)

FLEXIBLE WAYS OF WORKING POLICY AND ACCOMPANYING PROCEDURES

1. INTRODUCTION

Lincoln College believes that its staff members are its most valuable asset and is therefore committed to supporting the capability, capacity and wellbeing of its people; attracting and retaining the very best. It also appreciates that the UK workforce is becoming increasingly diverse and includes a high percentage of parents and individuals with other caring responsibilities, as well as those whose interests and aspirations impact on their time. The organisation appreciates that the standard Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm working week is, in many cases, incompatible with increasing demand for a better work-life balance.

The way in which the world of work has adapted to the COVID-19 crisis including remote/hybrid working, use of digital technology and flexible hours has expanded employers and employee's views of roles that can be completed in a different and more efficient way. As an organisation, we recognise the importance of helping our employees balance their work and home life by offering flexible working arrangements that enable them to balance their working life with other priorities.

As a college there is no 'one size fits all' and therefore line managers at all levels are encouraged to be pragmatic and transparent, seeking to meet individual flexible working preferences as far as possible while ensuring that the needs of the organisation are fully met.

From time flexibility, location flexibility or a mix of both, almost all jobs have some ability to be flexible. Most jobs typically comprise of several types of activity which influence the type of flexibility that can be undertaken. The balance of these activities can help line managers to consider the flexible options available within the role.

Providing employees with flexibility, is not only an opportunity to support the employee but can also benefit the organisation strategically. This policy therefore provides guidance on:

- The different types of flexible working arrangements available
- The potential benefits of flexible working, both direct and indirect
- UK legal perspective on flexible working
- Ideas on how flexible working can be implemented (including as part of the recruitment process)
- Informal flexible and new ways of working
- Formal flexible working requests
- Employee wellbeing whilst working remotely/from home
- Training and support for managers in leading flexible teams
- Evaluation and promotion of flexible working practices

Managers Resources:

Further information regarding the implementation of flexible and new ways of working can be found in a dedicated [Flexible and New Ways of Working section](#)

[within the People Managers Toolkit](#). The toolkit contains a variety of information to support and guide line managers in relation to the implementation of this policy, including guidance on supporting employee wellbeing whilst working in a new, more flexible way. HR Officers are also available to coach any line managers on the implementation of flexible and new ways of working within their teams.

Line managers will undertake training on recruitment and selection as part of their induction process. Recruitment and Selection training includes training on flexible working as part of the recruitment process.

2. WHAT ARE FLEXIBLE WAYS OF WORKING

Flexible working relates to an organisation's working arrangements in terms of the time, location and pattern of working. With more and more people thinking differently about how, when and where they work, flexible working is increasingly helping people access the labour market and stay in work. Quality flexible working can help organisations attract talent, improve employee job satisfaction and loyalty, reduce absenteeism, and improve wellbeing; it can also make businesses more responsive to change (CIPD 2020).

Flexible working arrangements can be both formal and informal. Informal flexible working does not require a flexible working request. Informal arrangements can be agreed between individual employees and their line managers. For example, employees and their line manager may agree that an employees can work from home on a particular day, for a short period or as part of a hybrid way of working. These could include the need to focus on a specific piece of work or for specific periods. Informal arrangements are combined with working from the employee's normal workplace and is subject to the prior approval of a line manager. It may be granted as part of a phased return to work after maternity or sickness absence or be a temporary arrangement due to family commitments or, snow days or other domestic circumstances. Informal flexible working agreements do not require a flexible working request form to be completed.

Employees wishing to submit a formal flexible working request should see section 3 for further information.

Flexible working is not about never working long hours or undertaking additional duties, ultimately, it's about inclusivity and choice outside of the '9-5'. It's about giving those with caring responsibilities the ability to work and care. It's about giving those living with disabilities the ability to work and it's about people working in a way that reduces unnecessary work-related stress; something which costs the UK economy £10 billion pounds per year.

The capability, capacity and wellbeing of our people is the college's first cornerstone of success and therefore managers are encouraged to be proactive in their approach to flexible working and take account of individual work-life balance issues and respond to them in an equitable, flexible and appropriate manner. Equally though, employees should understand that flexible working arrangements must also meet the needs of the business and that flexibility is a two-way relationship.

- Activities that are undertaken with other people, at the same time and at the same place. Such roles may not permit hybrid working, or only a minority of time spent working remotely.

- Activities that are undertaken with other people at the same time, but this can be in person or remote. Such roles may be able to undertake some hybrid or remote working.
- Activities that are largely independent and can be undertaken anywhere or at any time. These roles may permit a significant amount of remote working.

2.1. Flexible working practices include:

- **Part-time working:** work is considered part-time when employers are contracted to work anything less than full-time hours.
- **Term-time working:** a worker remains on a permanent contract but can take paid/unpaid leave during school holidays.
- **Job-sharing:** a form of part-time working where two (or occasionally more) people share the responsibility for a job between them.
- **Compressed hours:** compressed working weeks (or fortnights) don't necessarily involve a reduction in total hours or any extension in individual choice over which hours are worked. The central feature is reallocation of work into fewer and longer blocks during the week
- **Annual hours:** the total number of hours to be worked over the year is fixed but there is variation over the year in the length of the working day and week. Employees may or may not have an element of choice over working patterns. Working remotely (mobile working/teleworking): this permits employees to work all or part of their working week at a location remote from the employer's workplace.
- **Commissioned outcomes:** there are no fixed hours, but only an output target that an individual is working towards.
- **Zero-hours contracts:** an individual has no guarantee of a minimum number of working hours, so they can be called upon as and when required and paid just for the hours they work.
- **Flexitime:** allows employees to choose, within certain set limits, when to begin and end work.
- **Working from home on a regular basis:** workers regularly spend time working from home.
- **Career breaks:** This provides for employees to take an extended unpaid break from employment, to undertake caring responsibilities, full time study or voluntary work.

The list above isn't exhaustive. Flexible working can include other practices, the organisation recognises that there may be alternatives, or may also involve a combination of options.

2.2. The potential benefits of flexible working, both direct and indirect

Technological advances have opened up opportunities to work from virtually anywhere and flexible working of various types has become increasingly common. Flexibility in when and where work is carried out has benefits for both employers and employees and it can help people to manage the pressures of modern life, reduce stress and improve work-life balance.

2.3. Advantages for employees include:

CIPD state that the top three benefits of flexible working most frequently cited by employees are:

- A better work-life balance
- A reduction in the amount of stress/pressure they feel under
- Enabling them to stay with their current employer

Additional advantages include:

- The ability to manage their time more effectively, for example reduction in unnecessary travel when working in a hybrid way or using technology to meet with staff etc virtually.
- Greater flexibility, to better enable individuals to blend and balance home and work demands
- Ability to work without interruption thereby improving productivity (although staff must take a break in any working day longer than six hours for their own safety and wellbeing)
- Improvements in job satisfaction/more enjoyable working life
- Improved wellbeing

Drawbacks for the employee include:

- Remote working, for example can be lonely - systems need to be in place to make sure the employee is included in their team's work and social set up as well as made to feel part of the organisation (e.g. team building events, buddy system).
- If working at home, there may be competing demands for working space from partners or from those studying at home.
- In practice achieving a good balance between home and work life can be difficult. Not 'going to work' can lead to feeling as though you haven't 'come home from work'. Many people find that they need to create a clear division between working and not working and that this can blur when working at home.

2.4. Advantages for the organisation include:

Flexible working can lead to direct and indirect business benefits. The direct business benefits include savings on office space, for example, using technological advances to allow remote working.

Indirect business benefits are achieved through improved employee job satisfaction and well-being. Research shows that flexible workers have a higher

level of job satisfaction, commitment and are more likely to increase discretionary effort compared to those who do not work flexibly. Flexible working can also reduce absence rates and allows employees to manage disability and long-term health conditions, as well as supporting their mental health and stress, as shown in the [CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work Survey 2020](#).

Flexible working options can also be attractive to employees and new recruits, especially as employee expectations change with regard to their jobs, careers and work-life balance, and demographic changes affect employees' needs to balance their job with other responsibilities such as caring.

In summary, advantages for the organisation include:

- More motivated employees - lower stress, more attractive working conditions, better morale, employee loyalty and reduced costs due to sickness and absence
- Better relationships between the organisation and its employees
- Reduced absence levels
- Increased ability to attract new talent, widen their talent pool and retain staff
- Promoting work-life balance and reducing employee stress
- Enhancing morale and commitment among employees, leading to increased productivity and improving the organisation's efficiency and competitiveness
- Increasing workforce diversity and equality of opportunity for groups such as those with disabilities or caring responsibilities who find it easier to work on a flexible basis or older workers who no longer wish to work fulltime.
- Supporting organisational objectives in relation to equality and diversity, such as reducing the gender pay gap¹ and Lincoln College Disability Confident Employer status.²

Drawbacks for the college:

- Technical problems when working in a remote/hybrid way e.g. managing remote access applications.
- Different challenges in terms of tracking progress and communicating with employees working away from the office or working flexible hours.
- Adapting work processes for flexible working.
- Danger of permanently office-based staff gradually taking on more responsibility by virtue of being around more.

Line managers can find further guidance regarding new ways of working on the People Manager Toolkit, including a [hybrid ways of working flow chart](#) which can be used for assessing roles for hybrid flexible working opportunities.

3. FORMAL FLEXIBLE WORKING

3.1. Section 80F(1)(a) of the Employment Rights Act 1996 provides that an employee can request a change to:

¹ Lincoln College Equality and Diversity objective 1 (2020 – 2024) is to reduce the gender pay gap from 14.9% to 12% by March 2024.

² Lincoln College Equality and Diversity objective 2 (2020 – 2024) is to improve the number of employed staff with a declared disability from 7% to 9% by March 2024 to better reflect the number of job applications from people with a disability.

- The hours that they are required to work
- The times that they are required to work and/or
- Where, as between their home and the employer's place of business, they are required to work.

The request could, therefore, be for shorter working hours, a shorter working week, flexitime, a system of staggered or annualised hours, job sharing, part-time work, self-rostering or permission to work from home on a formal basis.

Any change agreed will be a permanent change to the employee's terms and conditions of employment, unless a trial or temporary period is agreed. It is therefore important that before making a request, the employee gives careful consideration to which arrangement will best suit the employee and the financial implications it may have in cases where the desired arrangement will involve a reduction in salary.

A lot of work is currently being undertaken, by a variety of different campaigns, to improve legislation with regards to flexible working. As an organisation that understands the importance of flexible working and welcomes positive legislative changes in relation to this, we are ahead of potential legislative changes and already:

- Publish our family-related leave and pay policies on our website.
- Publish our flexible working policies on our website.
- Publicly report our approach to flexible working and family-related leave and pay via mediums such as the Gender Pay Gap Portal by providing a link within our Gender Pay Gap report to the policies published on our website.
- Assume flexibility by default. We have embraced the '[Happy to talk flexible working](#)' and have therefore removed the requirement (set out in the current The Employment Rights Act 1996) for staff to be employed for 26 weeks or more in order to submit a formal flexible working request. Staff are able to submit a flexible working request at any stage of their employment.
- Our hiring managers are encouraged to consider how a role can be done flexibly from the start i.e. as part of the job design when recruiting.
- Use the [happy to talk flexible working](#) tagline on our website, web recruitment system and social media advertising. We also include the happy to talk flexible working logo on our job descriptions. In doing this we hope to will potential qualified applicants the confidence to ask about alternative patterns of work; and our line managers the confidence to know how to respond. Line managers receive training on flexible working and the recruitment process as part of our recruitment and selection training for line managers.
- Remove the restriction on employees submitting more than one flexible working request in a 12-month period. The current legislation restricts employees to submitting one flexible working request in a 12-month period. As an organisation we have also removed the restriction for staff to submit one request in 12-month period. However, if an employee is submitting more than one request in a 12-month period each request

must be different. For example, if an employee submits a flexible working request which is declined, the employee can't then submit the same request in the 12-month period – the 12-month period applies from the date the application was submitted.

- 3.2. An application for flexible working is an application for a permanent variation to the employee's hours, time or place of work. It is therefore important that before making a request, the employee gives careful consideration to which arrangement will best suit the employee and the financial implications it may have in cases where the desired arrangement will involve a drop-in salary.
- 3.3. Employers should be aware that refusal to grant a request for flexible working may lead to liability under the discrimination legislation.
- 3.4. An employee may not lawfully be dismissed, selected for redundancy, victimised or subjected to any other detriment for asserting their right to apply for flexible working.
- 3.5. The law requires that all requests, including any appeals, must be considered and decided on within a period of three months from first receipt, unless the organisation agrees to extend this period with the employee.

3.6. Procedure for Formal Flexible Working Requests

- 3.6.1. Requests must be made in writing by completing the [Flexible Working Request form](#) in full. The form must be completed in full as legislation (Employment Rights Act 1996) requires all formal flexible working requests to be in writing and include the following:
 - The date of their application, the change to working conditions they are seeking and when they would like the change to come into effect
 - What effect, if any, they think the requested change would have on you as the employer and how, in their opinion, any such effect might be dealt with
 - A statement that this is a statutory request and if and when they have made a previous application for flexible working.
- 3.6.2. Once the request is received in the HR Unit the request will be sent to the relevant line manager to review. If the request requires further discussion, then a meeting will be arranged with the employee as soon as possible after receiving their written request. A HR Officer may attend this meeting and employees may be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative. If the request is to be approved, no meeting is necessary.
- 3.6.3. If a meeting takes place, the aim of that meeting is for line managers to discuss the request with their employee. Discussing the request will help line managers to get a better idea of what changes the employee is looking for and how the changes might benefit both the business and the employee. It might be that as part of the discussions, the line manager is unable to approve the flexible working request (for one of the reasons listed in 3.8.1) but that they are able to offer an alternative solution. The meeting is also an opportunity to discuss how and when the changes might best be implemented.

3.6.4. Managers should consider any flexible working request carefully, looking at the benefits of the requested changes in working conditions for the employee and the business. Managers should weigh these against any adverse business impact of implementing the changes. In considering the request, line managers must not discriminate unlawfully against the employee.

3.6.5. Once a manager has made a decision, the employee will be informed of the decision, in writing to avoid future confusion on what was decided. The decision will usually be sent to the employee within 14 days of the date of the meeting. If the request is approved, the HR Unit will:

- Write to the employee, giving the notice of the decision in writing, stating the agreed change and the date from which the change is to take effect.
- Issue documentation reflecting any temporary or permanent changes to the employee's terms and conditions of employment, for example working hours and salary.
- Adjust annual leave entitlement accordingly.

3.7. Trialling Flexible Working

Employees and their managers are very strongly advised to agree to a trial period for any flexible working requests before any permanent change is made to the contract. Employees may want to see if the reduced working time does in fact give the benefits they hope for and to allow them to try adjusting to the consequential reduction in income. Managers may also want a trial period to see whether acceptable service levels can be maintained. A trial period (usually up to three months) could be agreed as a temporary variation to the existing employment contract with an absolute right of return to the original terms by either side.

3.8. Rejecting a Flexible Working Request

If the decision is to refuse the application, the employee will be written to, usually within 14 days of the meeting taking place. The letter will set out the grounds for refusal and provide an explanation as to why those grounds apply in the circumstances. The notice will also inform the employee of the right of appeal.

3.8.1. The grounds of refusal of an application may be any of the following:

- burden of additional costs
- detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
- inability to reorganise work amongst 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 or
- planned structural changes.

3.9. Appealing against the outcome of a flexible working request

- 3.9.1.** Should the request be refused for one or more of the business reasons detailed above, the employee is entitled to appeal against the decision to refuse the application by giving notice in writing within 14 working days of the date on which the outcome was given.
- 3.9.2.** The appeal should be submitted by completing the [Flexible Working Request Appeal](#) form in full.
- 3.9.3.** The notice of appeal should be addressed to the HR Unit who will arrange for a senior manager to consider the appeal. In considering the appeal, the senior manager considering the appeal may speak to both parties to clarify any matters before making their decision.
- 3.9.4.** When arranging for the appeal to take place managers must take into account that the law requires that all requests, including any appeals, must be considered and decided on within a period of three months from first receipt, unless it is agreed with the employee to extend this period.
- 3.9.5.** The appeal may nullify, vary or confirm the decision of the line manager. The appeal decision is final.
- 3.9.6.** Lincoln College have waived the restrictions on employees only submitting one flexible working request in a 12 month period. An employee could therefore submit a further flexible working request, but it must differ to the one considered at appeal – unless it is out of the 12 month period. The 12 months is counted from the date the request was initially submitted.

3.10. Requesting a Career Break

Employees wishing to request a career break, can do so by following the process outlined in section 7 of this policy.

3.11. Formally Requesting to Work from Home

Employees wishing to request a formal working from home arrangement, can do so by following the process outlined above. Guidance for line managers in terms of how to implement working from home and things to consider as part of both formal and informal working from home arrangements can be found in section 6 of this policy.

4. FLEXIBLE WORKING WAYS OF WORKING IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

4.1. Flexible hiring can help businesses to:

- **Attract extra candidates:** Organisations that don't offer flexible working at the point of hire, are cutting themselves off from the large proportion of candidates who won't apply for traditional full-time jobs.
- **Progress their best people:** Flexible hiring will also improve mobility within businesses – enabling talented employees who work flexibly to apply for

promotion, taking their flexibility with them.

- **Utilise skills:** Flexible hiring will ultimately help organisations to build the best team, optimising performance and productivity.
- **Be more inclusive:** Flexible hiring can help an organisation be more inclusive and meet equality and diversity objectives by reducing areas such as the organisations gender pay gap.
- **Build their employer brand:** Flexible working has become a key employee benefit in recent years – second only to salary. Promoting openness to flex will help make the job and an organisation more attractive; a place where people are keen to come and work.

4.2. Finding flexibility in every job

Some element of flexibility can be found in all job roles. Line managers should consider the type of job and its activities during the job design process.

Job design is the process of establishing employees' roles and responsibilities and the systems and procedures that they should use or follow. The purpose of job design, or redesign, is to coordinate and optimise work processes to create value and improve productivity.

The Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice explores the job design in more detail, taking into account motivation theory, behaviour, employee empowerment, team working. This policy focuses on job design in relation to flexible working. One of the important outcomes of effective job design is job quality or 'good work'. Good work can be described as work that:

- Is fairly rewarded
- Gives people the means to securely make a living
- Gives opportunities to develop skills and a career and ideally gives a sense of fulfilment
- Provides a supportive environment with constructive relationships allows for work–life balance
- Is physically and mentally healthy
- Gives employees the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives.
- Is accessible to all.

Flexible working helps to improve the job quality. Employers find that there is some flexibility in most roles.

Line managers should start by assessing:

- **Time:** How many hours are needed to carry out the job: is this a full-time role, a more than full-time role or a part-time one?
- **Location:** Where do the activities need to be carried out? When – What activities have to be done when?

Then consider the role's dependencies:

- **Team jobs:** Does the job involve working as part of a team with demanding short-term service delivery constraints? If so, some flexibility will be possible, but it will need to take account of service cover requirements and be negotiated as a team so that there is always cover and everyone's needs are met.
- **Project-based:** If the work is more project-based, with long-term deadlines and less reliance on other team members, a relatively autonomous form of flexibility will be suitable. This could be occasional or regular homeworking.
- **Supervisory job:** A supervisory job may require day-to-day guidance and troubleshooting by the employee. If full-time cover is needed, then consider job-sharing or use it as an opportunity for someone else to deputise. Much supervisory work can be done remotely - Technology such as video calls, can help supervisors to continue to manage their teams when working remotely.
- **Client-facing/public relations:** Is this an outward-facing job, with a lot of time devoted to external contacts? Day-to-day flexibility could be a distinct advantage in this job, with report writing completed in transit or catching up from home. This type of flexible working could be suitable for teaching roles.
- **Process-driven work:** Is a lot of processing and analysis required? Are there peak times that require extra cover? Annual hours or flexibility tailored to the business cycle could work well. Would quiet space, free from interruptions make these tasks suited to occasional homeworking? Might there be any confidentiality issues to overcome?

Considering the above questions helps line managers understand the role or roles they're recruiting for and the types of flexible working options they are able to consider. Line managers can then go into job interviews armed with the information to confidentially discuss possible flexible working options with job applicants and alternatively, confidently know that flexible working isn't possible and therefore state this in the job advert.

Line managers can contact the [HR recruitment team](#) for advice with regards to flexible working and recruitment.

5. FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS GUIDANCE

- 5.1. The Covid-19 pandemic has drawn attention to the distinction between flexibility of location and flexibility of hours. On the location scale, some tasks can be done anywhere, while others have to be done in a specific place. On the hours scale, there are tasks that can be done at any time and tasks that need to be done at specific times. Line managers should positively and actively encourage informal flexible/new ways of working practices including flexible working hours where possible, whilst ensuring that adequate and a reasonable level of service is maintained.
- 5.2. Due to the variety of work being undertaken across the organisation, the hours in which employees are required to work to meet the needs of the business, differ

from department to department. Working flexibly can also often include an element of pre-planning and it may not always be possible for an individual's personal choice in regard to starting and finishing times to be accommodated. For that reason and to ensure that all staff are able to work as flexibly as possible, line managers of individual departments are given the freedom to manage the hours in which their team work. There is no requirement for staff to record their working hours

5.3. Line managers/supervisors should agree with their staff how best to combine a degree of flexibility with the requirements of the job. Examples of how this could work include:

- Managers setting up core hours within their own department that meet the needs of the business, whilst also enabling flexible working hours to be accessible to their staff.
- Departments could have different agreements during term time and non-term time.
- Managers could agree with their teams the parameters that flexi could be taken in but leave them to arrange cover between themselves. Putting a team in control of their own working arrangements (e.g. agreeing between each other working hours and ensuring cover in the office) is often a great motivator and enables shared responsibility for getting tasks done in ways that suit each individual. This also helps staff to feel trusted and more in control of their own work, and in turn is likely to reduce the causes of unnecessary stress.
- Encourage staff to think about the receiver when working outside of the 'normal' 8am – 5pm working times. Consider using the following e-mail signature in e-mails sent outside the hours of 8am – 5pm, Monday to Friday: *I sometimes work at irregular times, so if this email arrives in your inbox out of hours, I don't expect you to read, action, or reply to it outside of your working hours or use email scheduling.*
- Further guidance can be obtained from a HR Officer and from the [Line Managers Toolbox on SharePoint](#).

6. WORKING FROM HOME GUIDANCE

6.1. This section of the Flexible Working Policy should be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety Home Working Policy.

6.2. The many advances brought about by the internet and communications technology have increased opportunities for remote working. With just a phone line and computer, workers in certain sectors can theoretically work from anywhere. Studies regularly show that working from home is more productive than working in an office, saving workers commuting time and preventing burnout by giving them more time to relax and sleep. And, of course, having fewer staff based in an office means employers can save on office space. We recognise that homeworking can be beneficial for individuals and, to this end, will seek to accommodate it as part of our new ways of working wherever possible.

6.3. Homeworking is understood to mean working from home on an occasional, temporary or permanent basis. It could be a one-off day. It could be a new pattern of working partly from home as part of a hybrid model of working. It could be working entirely from home for a fixed period or indefinitely as part of a formal flexible working request. There are lots of options. It simply means that employees conduct their job from home with the same contractual obligations.

6.4. There are two main categories of homeworking:

- **Informal arrangements:** there are various reasons why employees might want or need to work from home on a particular day, for a short period or as part of a hybrid way of working. These could include the need to focus on a specific piece of work or for specific periods. Informal arrangements as part of our new ways of working are combined with working from the employee's normal workplace and is subject to the prior approval of a line manager. It may be granted as part of a phased return to work after maternity or sickness absence or be a temporary arrangement due to family commitments or, snow days or other domestic circumstances. Informal working from home does not require a flexible working request. Informal arrangements can be agreed between individual employees and their line managers. To avoid any confusion, all staff are able to work from home informally with the prior agreement of their line manager; working from home is not restricted to academic staff.
- **Formal arrangements:** this is an agreement between the organisation and the employee to work the working week from home, or a combination of homeworking and attendance at a Company workplace, on a regular and on-going basis. It is where your home becomes your working base for at least some of the week/month. Employees wishing to apply for regular homeworking via a formal arrangement can do so by submitting a formal flexible working request. The process for submitting a formal flexible working request is detailed in section 3 of this policy.

Employees who work from home (whether informally or formally) are subject to the same rules, procedures and expected standard of conduct and performance as all other employees. Contractual obligations, duties and responsibilities remain in place, as do workplace policies.

Employees who work from home should remain as involved as possible in the College and our activities. This includes having access to College news, events and benefits, as well as opportunities for professional development, training and promotion.

Line managers should keep in regular contact with employees during their homeworking.

Any employees feeling isolated, lacking guidance or support should discuss this with their line manager in the first instance or access any of the support services available to employees via the Employee Assistance Programme.

6.5. Where an IT or other problem prevents an employee from working effectively from home, they should contact their line manager as soon as possible. The employee may be required to come into the College until the issue has been

resolved.

6.6. If an employee is unable cannot work from home because of illness or injury, they must follow the procedure set out in the Sickness Absence Management Policy.

6.7. Things to Consider when Receiving a Formal Flexible Working Request for Home Working:

- When considering a request, line managers need to be satisfied that the role is one that is suited to homeworking (not all are).
- Line managers will also need to consider the personal attributes and skills of the employee that means they are effectively able to do their job effectively from home.

These include:

- The ability to work independently
- Self-motivation
- Self-discipline
- Good time management
- The ability, through remote technology, to access materials they will need and to be able to communicate effectively – For example participate in video calls
- Employees HR records, including recent conduct and performance levels and any unexpired warnings should be taken into account when considering requests.
- Employees home environment must be suitable for homeworking. This includes having a suitable working area and a reliable internet connection.

6.7.1. Employees should follow the steps in section 3 to submit a flexible working request to work from home.

6.7.2. Line managers may want to visit the employee's home (possibly more than once) to assess its suitability, which may include carrying out a health and safety risk assessment. Employees may be required to arrange and pay for any necessary modifications. A flexible working request may be refused if those modifications are not made within a reasonable timeframe, or if they do not rectify any health and safety risk(s) identified.

6.7.3. If an employee moves house their line manager will reassess the homeworking arrangement. If they consider that the house move would make, or has made, homeworking unsuitable, they will discuss this with the employee and may decide to bring the homeworking to an end. If that happens the employee will usually be able to return to their previous contractual place of work, although that cannot be guaranteed.

6.7.4. Line managers we also want to carry out a data protection risk assessment before deciding whether or not to agree to the homeworking.

6.8. Setting Up Home Working

Property and equipment

- The organisation is unable to loan IT equipment to staff wishing to apply for home working. Employees who wish to submit a request to work from home must ensure that they have the equipment required to do so. Employees are reminded of the provisions available via the Computer Purchase scheme and discounts available via Perkbox.
- Any personal equipment that the organisations agrees to employees using remains the responsibility of the employee, including the cost of any repairs.
- Where possible, the organisation may loan employees non-IT related equipment needed to be able to do their job properly and safely from home - for example, laptop stands and specialist chairs. Employees must take good care of anything loaned to them and return it when requested. Employees may not use the equipment or other property provided for personal/family use.
- Employees are required to cover the cost of any necessary installations, for example internet connections.

Household Bills

- Employees will be expected to cover the cost of utilities including heating and electricity necessary for their homeworking.
- Mortgage, lease and insurance
- Employees are responsible for making sure that their mortgage or lease and home insurance do not restrict or prevent their home being used for work.
- They should discuss with their home insurer any changes that may need to be made to their policy to ensure that they are fully protected while working from home. Employees are responsible for any additional premiums.

Tax

There may be tax implications to homeworking. Employees should seek specific advice on this matter.

Expenses

Employees will be reimbursed for unavoidable postage, photocopying and printing costs. Claims should be submitted via Employee Self Service.

6.9. Health and Safety

The Working from Home section of this Flexible Working Policy should be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety Home Working Policy.

- Line managers may carry out periodic health and safety risk assessments of an employee's homeworking, as well as maintenance checks and electrical testing.
- Employees have a responsibility to take reasonable care. If they have any

health and safety concerns, or if an accident or incident takes place, they must immediately report this to their line manager.

- It will not usually be appropriate for employees to hold work-related meetings in their home, or to give out personal details like their address. Employees should speak to their line manager if they are unsure about any aspect of this.

6.10. Security, Confidentiality and Data Protection

- The organisations high standards must be adhered to at all times. Employees should familiarise themselves with the Data Protection Policy in particular and have undertaken GDPR training and mandatory Phishing and Cyber Awareness training before being permitted to work from home.
- Data protection risk assessments may be carried out periodically.
- Only authorised equipment may be used for homeworking.
- Whenever prompted to install a legitimate update to their computer or other equipment, employees must do so straightaway.
- Employees must report any actual or potential breach of security, confidentiality or data protection to the Data Protection Officer immediately. Further information can be found in the Data Protection Policy.
- Employees who are unsure about any aspect of security, confidentiality or data protection must speak with their line manager.

6.11. Accessing an Employees Home

- It may be necessary to access the employees' home to set up the homeworking and to carry out risk assessments, checks, and repairs to college owned equipment.
- Access may also be required in order to retrieve college owned property, whether during the homeworking, at the end of the homeworking arrangement, or when your employment ends.
- As much notice as possible will be given in such circumstances and employees must cooperate with such reasonable requests.

6.12. Ending the Home Working Agreement

- Employees wishing to bring their homeworking to an end, should speak with their line manager in the first instance.
- The organisation may decide to end a homeworking arrangement, giving 1 months' notice if we think that it is not working as it should, or that it has become or will soon become unsuitable.
- If homeworking has become unsuitable because of an employees' conduct or performance, we may terminate the homeworking arrangement immediately. We may decide to implement our Disciplinary Policy, which could lead to them

being suspended and/or their employment being terminated.

- When a homeworking arrangement has ended, the employee will usually be able to go back into the workplace, but that cannot be guaranteed (and may not be appropriate if we take action under the above).

7. CAREER BREAK GUIDANCE

7.1. The term 'career break' is often used interchangeably with "sabbatical". Neither term is defined by statute. While the term "sabbatical" is typically used to refer to a short period of leave of absence from work of several weeks or months, the term "career break" is usually used to refer to a longer period of absence, possibly spanning several years.

7.2. Employees have no statutory right to take a career break and the terms of a break that an employer grants are a matter for agreement between the parties. Lincoln College recognise the importance of employees' work-life balance and therefore has a career break scheme in place to eligible employees.

7.3. Eligibility

Eligible employees must have successfully completed their probationary period.

The career break must be for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 5 years and the reason for the break must be for one of the following:

- To enable the employee to undertake caring responsibilities e.g. for children
- To care for a dependant during an extended period of ill health
- To undertake full time study
- To undertake voluntary work
- To travel or pursue other interests
- Any other good reason agreed by the relevant senior manager, after seeking advice from the HR Manager.

7.4. Requesting a Career Break

Employees wishing to submit a Requesting a Career Break should submit their request in writing by email or letter to their relevant HR Officer in the first instance.

The request should include:

- The preferred start date of the career break
- Duration of the career break
- Proposed objectives of the career break
- The employee should also state how the organisation might be affected by their proposed absence on a career break and how any potential problems might be overcome.

Once in request of a request for a career break, the HR Unit will send this to the relevant line manager for consideration.

The organisation will consider any request for a career break and will look at requests on a case-by-case basis, as they will need to consider the business needs such as how the employee's work and responsibilities will be covered while they're off.

The decision as to whether or not to grant the career break will be entirely at the organisation's discretion.

There is no right of appeal against the organisation's decision.

The outcome of the career break request will be communicated to the employee in writing, ideally within 28 days of the request being submitted but within a maximum of 3 months.

7.5. Resignation

Following the formal approval of their application for a break, an employee who wishes to take a career break will be required to provide the organisation with their written resignation prior to its commencement.

Once the organisation has authorised a career break, the employee should discuss the timing of the resignation with their line manager. Normally, the employee will be required to work their notice and should time their written resignation with that in mind. The employee's career break commences on the first day after the termination of their contract of employment (i.e. the day after their notice period expires).

In submitting their resignation, the employee will fully accept that the college is not providing them with a guarantee of re-employment at the end of the period of their break.

The college will confirm details of the career break in writing and both parties will be required to complete and sign an agreement.

7.6. During the Break

During the period of the break the person will be required to attend a minimum of 5 days training/work attendance per year.

Whilst undertaking the training/work attendance programme the person will have a contract of employment with the college and be paid according to their pay scale point prior to the commencement of their break.

At the discretion of the relevant ELT member, and after seeking advice from the Group Head of HR, a person may (during the period of their break and if they wish) work more than the minimum period required under the scheme. Under such circumstances the person will have a contract of employment with the college for the duration of the undertaking of that work and be paid according to their grade/spinal column point prior to the commencement of their break.

Other paid employment should not be undertaken by a person on the break scheme without the express authorisation of the Group Head of HR. In exercising their discretion in such matters, the Group Head of HR should have regard to the

financial problems that people on a break may experience and to the general spirit and intentions of the scheme.

During the break, formal contact with the college is maintained with the aim of facilitating the employees return to work at the same status and remuneration with the college at a later date, without the requirement to apply through the competitive recruitment process.

In addition to formal contact with the college through the training/work attendance programme, the relevant line manager will ensure that a person on a break receives updates and any other appropriate information.

7.7. Return to Work

- 7.7.1.** A person will be required to give at least 3 months' notice of their desire to return to work to allow time for suitable posts to be identified or, where a temporary appointment has been made, to allow as much notice as possible to be given to the temporary employee of the termination of their employment.
- 7.7.2.** At the end of the break, the college undertakes to seek to offer re-employment in a suitable post without the requirement to go through the competitive recruitment process. The undertaking does not constitute a guarantee of re-employment and is not legally enforceable.
- 7.7.3.** After receiving written notice of a person's request for re-employment the college will undertake for a period of 6 months to make all reasonable efforts to identify a suitable post for offer of re-employment.
- 7.7.4.** The HR Unit will be responsible for identifying suitable posts to offer for re-employment to people at the end of their breaks. In the event of a disagreement between the HR Officer and the relevant line manager in which the post is identified about the suitability of a person for re-employment, the matter should be referred to the HR Manager. In the event of continuing disagreement, the matter shall be determined by the Head of HR.
- 7.7.5.** The person wishing to return to employment is encouraged to check vacancies on Workplace and the college website. This is to enable the person seeking re-employment to check that posts are not being advertised which could have been offered to them under the provisions of this scheme. Where this does occur, the person seeking re-employment should contact their HR Officer immediately. The HR Officer will then consider whether to halt the recruitment process and offer the job to the returnee. Disagreements will be dealt with as described above.
- 7.7.6.** A suitable post is a post for which the person meets all the essential job requirements and which is at the same status and level of remuneration as the person occupied prior to the commencement of their break.
- 7.7.7.** A suitable post may be found in a Unit/School other than the one in which the person was employed at the commencement of their break.
- 7.7.8.** Whilst the college undertakes to make all reasonable efforts to offer re-

employment to a person at the end of their break it is emphasised that there is no guarantee of re-employment.

- 7.7.9.** If after the 6-month period no suitable post has been identified, the college will formally advise the person concerned that re-employment will thereafter only be possible through the normal competitive recruitment process.

7.8. Conditions of employment

- 7.8.1.** Salary on resuming employment will be on the same grade/spinal column point that the person was on prior to the commencement of their break.
- 7.8.2.** Returners will be required to complete a probationary period before their re-appointment is confirmed.
- 7.8.3.** Previous service will count for the purposes of entitlement to sickness payment, maternity provisions and period of notice to terminate employment, but will not count towards continuity of service for statutory purposes.
- 7.8.4.** Statutory employment rights which require two years' employment, e.g. unfair dismissal, redundancy etc. cannot be restored on appointment and will only be secured following two years' service after reappointment.

8. JOB SHARING

- 8.1.** Job sharing is a form of employment where two people voluntarily share the duties and responsibilities of one full time post. The salary and conditions of service of the post are shared between the post holders according to the hours they work but each job sharer holds an individual contract of employment.
- 8.2.** Job sharing can be distinguished from part time work which describes a situation where an employer requires a job to be carried out for a specific number of hours by one individual as a working arrangement to suit the employer's needs.
- 8.3.** All salaried posts are automatically regarded as available for job share unless it has been agreed with the HR Manager that a post can be excluded. The number of jobs excluded will be kept to a minimum with exclusions being restricted to those posts where specific requirements make job sharing impracticable. Where line managers wish to exclude a post, this must be agreed as part of the post request process.
- 8.4.** In cases of disagreement between the line manager and the HR Manager as to whether a post should be excluded from the scheme, the matter will be referred to the Head of HR for determination.
- 8.5.** If approved, the remaining proportion of the post should be advertised as soon as possible and no later than twelve weeks from the date of application to job share.

8.6. Conditions of Employment

Whilst in practice most job shares are split 50/50 this need not necessarily be the case. In determining the split, consideration should be given to both the needs of

the individuals concerned and the requirements of the work.

Job sharers need not work a proportion of each working day. Working patterns can be approved by taking into account the needs of the sharers and the requirements of the business.

An overlap period for 'contact and co-operation' can be built into the arrangements, so that sharers can exchange information or carry out some work together. The detailed arrangements in relation to hours/days of work should be agreed between the sharers and their line manager.

Normally pay will be shared pro rata. However, it is possible for sharers to be paid on different incremental points.

8.7. Position when job sharer leaves

When a job sharer leaves the job will be offered to the remaining job sharer on a full-time basis. If the remaining employee wishes to continue job sharing, the college will attempt to recruit another job share partner.

If, after a period of three months and the exhaustion of all reasonable attempts, a suitable sharer has not been found, the options available will be discussed with the employee concerned. These will include redeployment to another post within the college, subject to a suitable post being available.

As a last resort when all the options available have been explored in consultation with the HR Manager and no solution is possible, the employee's contract of employment may be terminated.

9. PUBLICITY

- 9.1.** The organisation will ensure that all managers and employees are kept aware of the flexible working options open to them via internal communication channels such as Workplace.
- 9.2.** In an effort to increase acceptance of flexibility throughout the organisation, the organisation is also committed to publicising examples of successful strategies via internal communication channels such as Workplace and on occasion, and with permission of the employee concerned, publicly on our social media channels.
- 9.3.** The Happy to Talk Flexible Working logo will also be included in all recruitment literature to demonstrate the organisations commitment to flexible working and encourage applications from the widest range of job applicants possible.
- 9.4.** The HR team will also promote the organisations commitment to flexible working on their personal LinkedIn profiles.

10. EVALUATION

- 10.1.** Progress on the implementation and success of this policy will be measured using, but not limited, to:

- The Employee Health and Wellbeing Staff Survey
- Exit Interview/questionnaires
- Sickness absence
- Turnover statistics
- Other staff and manager feedback
- Employment legislation and best practice updates
- As part of the Annual HR report