These FAQs are related to the FWA Policy and will be updated as questions arise. Continue to check this page for updated information; new or updated questions will be noted with an updated date.

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**General Information**

**Why are we doing FWA now?**
To explore possibilities for additional flexibility for staff employees as we transition from a primarily remote environment to a more open, front-facing campus.

**What is the philosophy of the FWA?**
We would like to be able to give staff employees an opportunity to transition back into the office and the supervisors a chance to collaborate with their staff employees to ensure the ongoing and evolving needs for each department and the University are met.

**Will there be any training sessions?**
There will be a Staff Town Hall meeting for all staff employees on Monday, June 21, 2021, at 11 a.m. ([https://trinity.zoom.us/j/92894367464](https://trinity.zoom.us/j/92894367464), password: FWA2021). The session will be recorded and a link added here.

**Why are the deadlines so compressed?**
The deadlines are compressed in order to enable both staff members and supervisors to have adequate time to plan for the start of the Fall semester on Monday, August 2, 2021.

**What type of FWA are possible?**
Two basic types of flexible arrangements are possible:
- **Flex Place** - Work arrangement where the staff employee performs a portion of their job off-site (typically in a home office), on a regular, recurring basis.

- **Flex Schedule** - An alternate arrangement for a regular, recurring work schedule outside of the standard 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday and/or Monday to Friday workweek, including compressed schedules (e.g. Monday - Thursday, 10 hours per day).

It may be possible for an FWA to include both Flex Schedule and Flex Place.

**Who is eligible for an FWA?**
Eligibility for any FWA is job-dependent and a business decision. Some positions require the staff employees to be fully on campus during traditional (business) work hours, while others lend themselves to some flexibility, either in time or location. It is up to the supervisor and staff employee to determine what flexibility options may exist for any staff employees while meeting the department and University’s needs.
How do I request an FWA?

Procedures have been outlined in the FWA Policy. Generally, staff employees apply for the FWA by completing the FWA Application, and then supervisors work with them to explore feasible options. Then, supervisors and the department head develop a recommended department staff schedule plan based on these conversations and department business needs. FWA and the plans are submitted for review by HR and the final approval by the division's VP.

Is it assumed that if someone is not on the flexible working schedule, they will be in the office full-time by August 2? added 6/18/21

Yes. If they don’t complete the application and/or are not approved for FWA and will not be taking any FWA, it’s assumed they will be in the office full-time on August 2.

Will we all have a way of checking to see what schedule our colleagues are working? added 6/18/21

You may want to have conversations with others to know what their schedules will be. Within departments and/or divisions we should know each other’s schedules. Departments or divisions should have a plan to communicate their department's/division's employees’ schedules once their plan is approved.

Is this FWA policy dependent on the 80% vaccination rate that we are all working toward? added 6/18/21

The University is currently making progress towards our vaccination rate goal and it is anticipated, at this time, that we can begin full, in-person working arrangements on August 2. All safety protocols on campus will be determined based on actually reaching 80% vaccination.

If a staff member is fully remote out of state, do they need to fill out this form? added 6/25/2021

Some staff have been approved to work out of state during the pandemic. These staff members are on a telecommute agreement that is reviewed every six months. We recommend that these staff members complete the FWA application so HR has a record of that in addition to the telecommuting agreement.

Are campus leaders considering these FWA’s beyond this year considering the changes in the workforce that are happening across the nation after the pandemic? added 6/25/2021

During a recent ELT (Executive Leadership Team) retreat, one of the primary topics of conversation was changes that have happened because of the pandemic, in particular the nature of work. We are starting with the immediate needs for this year, trying to provide flexibility while meeting our mission as a front-facing, student-centered residential campus. We will be evaluating the impact of these changes during the year and will continue these discussions in leadership.
What steps are being taken to support staff as we transition back to working on a more populated campus after working remotely for such an extended period of time? added 6/25/2021

We are working to provide training and information for supervisors about mental and behavioral health concerns that many people are experiencing, and the challenges that dependent caregivers face. We recognize this is challenging for many. We are also looking for ways to reaffirm those social connections we have with our colleagues that make working at Trinity a positive experience.

What safety protocols will be in place in the fall? added 6/25/2021

We will continue to follow CDC guidelines, blending those for the workplace and congregate living. As we approach an 80% vaccination rate, we will be able to relax some of the guidelines.

All unvaccinated individuals will be asked to wear masks, participate in surveillance testing, and be subject to quarantine if exposed to the virus.

If you have questions or concerns specific to your work environment, please reach out to Environmental Health and Safety.

If I have concerns about how to navigate these discussions, how can I get help? added 6/25/2021

Both supervisors and employees can contact HR for support if you need a sounding board or mediator to help with this process.
Staff Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) FAQ Cont’d

**Staff Employees**

**What if I can’t meet the June 22 application deadline?**

Applications can be submitted after the deadline of June 22, but there could be a delay of up to a month before a decision is made and/or implemented, if approved.

**What if my FWA is not approved?**

Staff employees and supervisors should be collaborating on FWA as a department to ensure that the needs of the unit and the mission of the University are met while allowing flexibility for staff employees when possible. FWA decisions are recommended by the supervisor and department head, and the division's Vice President gives final approval. The Vice Presidents' decisions are final and not subject to appeal or grievance.

**If a FWA denial is warranted, when and how is that information communicated to the employee?**

*added 6/18/21*

Supervisors should be having conversations with employees about their FWA requests and if it will be recommended for approval or declined before the final department staff schedule plan is submitted to HR. Department heads and supervisors also should be meeting with the department/unit as a whole regarding the overall plan. Employees should not be surprised to learn they are not granted the FWA they requested.

**What if I want to change my FWA?**

If you would like to modify your FWA, you must discuss this with your supervisor. Thirty days’ advance notice is required to make the change. A staff employee or supervisor can cancel the FWA at any time and require that you return to a traditional work arrangement (on-campus, normal work hours).

**Will I keep my workspace if I have an FWA?**

Staff employees approved for FWA may have changes to their workspace. Supervisors may make such changes to best use the spaces available to them.

**How is my work evaluated if I have an FWA?**

Staff employees will continue to be evaluated annually on their performance based on stated goals, metrics, expectations, and job requirements. FWAs carry with them the same performance expectations as traditional work arrangements. Staff employees are expected to work the same number of hours and meet all the requirements, responsibilities, and expectations of their position.
What if I want a short-term FWA?

Occasional and infrequent arrangements for flexibility may be possible, both for staff employees with and without an approved FWA, by submitting a request in writing to your supervisor. More information can be found in the sections for short-term or ad-hoc FWA in the FWA Policy. You must still work your regular number of weekly work hours or apply for vacation (subject to approval) for any hours (below 40, if full time) not worked.

What if meetings or other events are scheduled on a day I am working remotely?

Employees may be required to attend on-campus meetings, training, events, or peak times. The work of the department and the university remains the priority. Discuss and plan for these situations with your supervisor. If virtual (zoom) meetings are possible and you are approved for Flex Place, you may use this form if permitted by your supervisor.

Can my supervisor change my schedule during peak periods?

Yes, a supervisor can adjust your FWA as needed for the department and/or University's needs.

If my supervisor changes my schedule, what am I supposed to do if I can't find a daycare or babysitter?

The FWA is not meant to substitute for daycare or any dependent care. Employees are expected to be ready, willing, and able to come to Trinity to work (as requested by their supervisor) with reasonable notice.

Are FWA staff employees allowed a lunch break?

Yes, lunches are to be taken daily at the time established by the department supervisor, including those who were approved for Flex Schedule or Flex Place.

Can I work outside of Texas?

Although some arrangements were made during the pandemic, it is generally expected that staff employees will live in Texas and within commuting distance.

Can I change my schedule mid-semester? added 6/25/2021

Yes. Work with your supervisor on this. If you want to make small modifications, you and your supervisor can make those without involving HR. For example, you may want to change the day working remotely or the hours you’re working. If the change is significant, a new schedule should be shared with HR.

If the change is temporary, you do not need to include HR.

If you want to return to being entirely on campus during regular hours, you can do that.
Will priority be given to those with seniority status? If we have several members in the department who all want the same schedule, how will that be handled? added 6/25/2021

Each supervisor will decide that. Departments ideally will be having conversations together to decide what will work best for each person and the department's needs.

If I get approved for a compressed workweek, but I am not approved for the day requested, can I reject the whole FWA? added 6/25/2021

Yes. This is why it's important to have conversations with your supervisors in advance. If you don't agree on the schedule, you can reject it but keep in mind the supervisor and VP have the final approval on the schedule.
Supervisors and Department Heads

What if I have an employee on leave during the staff schedule planning stage; what should I do?
Try to make every effort to work with the staff members before the deadline. If this is not feasible, an exception can be considered at a later date.

What if my staff employees request a schedule that does not meet our department's needs?
Supervisors and staff employees can work together to develop a schedule that meets the needs of the department and University, as well as providing flexibility when possible. It's best to have these discussions as soon as possible and before their department head submits the department staff schedule plan for approval (due June 28, 2021). Ultimately, it is the supervisor’s responsibility to make sure the top priority is to serve our students and the University community when creating work arrangements.

How do I ensure equity?
Planning and collaborating with the whole department is critical so that staff employees have input and understand the process. All recommendations about work arrangements should be based on consistently applied criteria related to business needs, work, and job performance. HR will also review all requests to review equity.

What if my staff employees have requested schedules that vary widely?
It is reasonable to expect that staff employees work primarily during normal working hours (M-F; 8 am - 5 pm) to not disrupt meetings and other typical work events. If the schedule that the staff employees request negatively impacts these normal work functions, you have the authority to develop a more appropriate schedule.

What is adequate office coverage?
We want to ensure that students, campus visitors, and our colleagues have a positive on-campus experience. Offices should be staffed so that phones are always answered and visitors are greeted in person. Since every department has different business needs, it is up to supervisors to arrange and approve schedules that meet the core needs of their office.

How do I evaluate my staff employees who have an FWA?
Expectations for job performance do not change with FWA. Traditional evaluation criteria such as meeting goals, teamwork, consistent communication, and customer service remain part of the staff employees’ evaluation process. If you develop concerns about a staff employee's performance while on FWA, you will need to discuss their performance with them in a timely fashion. As a supervisor, you have the right to end the FWA.
When do I need to evaluate how FWAs are working?
Supervisors and department heads should continually evaluate how well the department and employees are functioning under the approved FWA. Any issues or concerns should be addressed with the staff employee immediately. Modifications may be necessary.

In addition, supervisors and department heads should review FWA and the department staff schedule plan in December 2021 for any adjustments that should be made for Spring 2021 considerations.

If a staff employee is not meeting their performance expectations, may I ask them to return to campus and/or their standard 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule and end FWA?
Yes, as a supervisor, you have this right and responsibility. Unless business needs otherwise dictate a more immediate change, you should address any concerns as soon as possible with the employees so they have an opportunity to improve their performance before terminating their FWA.

What is the ultimate expectation of the supervisor in approving a staff employee’s FWA?
The supervisor and department head’s goal is to meet the business needs of the organization/department. This includes, but is not limited to, providing adequate office coverage during business hours, providing staff employees to greet and assist visitors to the department, answering the department’s main phone lines, and meeting core needs of the office that are best served with in-person coverage.

Are new hires eligible for FWA? added 6/18/21
For this academic year, supervisors should think about this before posting a position so they are prepared to discuss it with applicants. Specifically, some jobs must be on campus at specific times; some might allow consideration of FWA. If the supervisor is willing to consider a request for FWA for that position, then the policy and process should guide them in responding.

Will I, the supervisor, be notified when a staff member submits a form? added 6/18/21
Yes. An email will be sent directly to the supervisor’s email address that the employee puts on the application.

Is it assumed all services will be in-person in the fall? added 6/18/21
All offices must have adequate coverage to meet students’ and colleagues’ in-person University needs. Due to the pandemic, some students and other constituencies may desire more flexibility for remote options. When making decisions for your department, you should always consider the needs of the constituency you are serving before deciding.
Staff Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) FAQ Cont’d

*If an employee isn't sure if they want FWA, should they apply? added 6/18/21*
Yes. Have them complete the form and work out a possible Flex Schedule or Flex Place. Employees can always return to the office or return to their standard schedule if they choose. They should, however, notify the supervisor if they want to return to a standard work schedule or work exclusively on campus.

*If no one is going to use the FWA program in a department do program heads need to submit a plan? added 6/18/21*
Yes. Submit a plan so that HR knows your department has discussed this and that the department or all employees have opted out.

*Our department has staff who already worked hours other than 8-5 pre pandemic. Do they need to submit FWA applications? added 6/18/21*
Yes. Every department should submit a plan, even if there are no changes to the regular schedule. If your normal working hours are outside of the 8-5 business hours and employees will be keeping their regular work arrangements, please submit their typical schedules.

*Is it assumed that if someone is not on the flexible working schedule, they will be in the office full-time by August 2? added 6/18/21*
Yes. If they don’t complete the application or are not approved for FWA, it’s assumed they will be in the office full-time on August 2.

*What if a staff member is on parental leave or FMLA? Can they request a flexible schedule once they come back? added 6/18/21*
Yes. Have the staff employee complete the form and work together to find the best schedule for when they return. It is recommended they submit the FWA application at least a month before their preferred FWA start date.

*What are the risks for potential inequity (or perceived inequity) in supervisor decisions? added 6/18/21*
Prior to it being sent to VPs, HR will review for any inequities. They will be ensuring that schedules were approved fairly within the department and also across different demographic groups. It is very important that supervisors communicate to their employees what the schedule will be and what flexibility their jobs have before the schedule goes to HR.

*Is there a process in place to standardize department plans across divisions? added 6/18/21*
Department needs vary drastically, so VPs do have ultimate approval for all plans. However, HR will review department plans for equitability.
If someone has a medical reason to remain remote, should that be included in the plan?
No. Medical reasons are handled separately and should not be included in FWA. If an employee needs ADA or FMLA accommodations, please have them contact HR directly.

What if changes need to be made to the department staff plan? added 6/18/21
If there are minor changes, update your department's version of the template to maintain an up-to-date plan. If there are more extensive changes, resubmit to HR for equitability review and final VP approval.

Does this include exempt/contract staff? Students? Interns who are not Trinity students? added 6/18/21
This policy includes employees who are exempt and non exempt (classified and contract), full and part time, temporary, and interns who are not Trinity students. Student workers are not included in this policy.

How do we notate a schedule that varies from week to week, since the template shows a single week? added 6/18/21
Use the comment column on the template to make notes as needed to clarify. If you have already downloaded the schedule template and have started filling it out, feel free to create your own comment column. For non-exempt staff, all work over 40 hours in a work week counts as overtime and, therefore, should not be a component of a non-exempt staff's Flex Schedule.

How do we submit the department plan template to HR? added 6/18/21
We prefer you download the final version as an Excel sheet that can be emailed to hrforms@trinity.edu, or you can also share the Google sheet by granting at least viewer-level access to hrforms@trinity.edu. Be careful not to make edits once you have shared it with HR because HR will download a copy of that shared file and will not be able to capture any future edits you may make.

What if a staff member requested to work 100% remotely, that request was declined, and that person refuses to come back to the office? How do we handle this? added 6/25/2021
If the staff member has concerns that might be covered by ADA, they should contact HR about accommodations.

However, if this is not an ADA concern, this should be discussed before the schedule is finalized. The staff should not be surprised by these decisions. If the staff member refuses to return, then HR needs to be involved and have discussions with the staff and supervisor.

I'm a supervisor and I have received the FWA applications. I've developed a schedule that we agree on. What is the next step? added 6/25/2021
The next step would be to have the department head complete the Department Staff Schedule Plan Template, which should include all employees, not just those who have requested FWA. The
Staff Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) FAQ Cont’d

spreadsheet should be sent to HR for review and then it will go to the appropriate VP for approval.

*Can a student worker fill in during a lunch hour for an administrative assistant if another admin is working remotely?* added 6/25/2021

The goal is to make sure offices are fully staffed 8-5. In addition to answering phones and greeting visitors, the department needs to have coverage for all core functions. Some student workers may be able to meet those needs, while others may not.