

Staff Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) FAQ

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These FAQs are related to the [Flexible Work Arrangement 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.

Table of Contents

General Information	3
What type of FWA are possible?	3
Who is eligible for an FWA?	3
How do staff request an FWA?	3
How will everyone know what schedules staff are working?	3
Do staff with an existing telecommuting agreement need to fill out the FWA application?	4
Are FWA agreements permanent?	4
How can I get help navigating FWA discussions?	4
Staff Employees	4
What if my FWA is not approved?	4
When and how is it communicated if my FWA application is denied?	4
How do I change my FWA?	4
Will I keep my workspace if I have an FWA?	5
How is my work evaluated if I have an FWA?	5
What if I want a short-term or one-time adjustment to my schedule or work location?	5
What if meetings or other events are scheduled on a day I am working remotely?	5
Can my supervisor change my Flex Schedule during peak periods?	5
If my supervisor changes my schedule, what do I do if I can't find dependent care?	5
Are FWA staff employees allowed a lunch break?	5
If I have approved FWA with remote work, do I need to transfer my office phone to my personal phone?	5
Can I work outside of Texas or outside of a commuting distance to Trinity?	6
How will conflicting FWA requests from multiple staff be handled? Does seniority impact decisions?	6
Can I reject FWA if the approved FWA is different from my original request?	6
Can the number of hours scheduled to work vary by week?	6
Supervisors and Department Heads	6
What if a staff member requests a schedule that does not meet our department's needs?	6

How do I ensure equity?	6
What if my staff employees have requested schedules that vary widely?	7
What is adequate office coverage?	7
How do I evaluate my staff employees who have an FWA?	7
When do I need to evaluate how FWAs are working?	7
Can I cancel a staff's FWA if they aren't meeting performance expectations?	7
What is the ultimate expectation of the supervisor in approving a staff employee's FWA?	7
Are new hires eligible for FWA?	8
Can a staff member request an FWA upon return from parental leave or FMLA?	8
What are the risks for potential inequity (or perceived inequity) in supervisor decisions or across University departments?	8
Is the University standardizing staffing plans across divisions?	8
Should I consider medical reasons for an FWA application?	8
Which employees does the FWA policy apply to?	8
What do I do if a staff member refuses to follow the final approved FWA?	8
I've received staffs' FWA applications and developed a staffing plan. What's next?	9
Can a student worker cover the main phone lines or front desk for a staff member?	9
Glossary	9
Business Hours	9
Flex Place	9
Flex Schedule	9
Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA)	9
Flexible Work Arrangement Application (FWA)	9
Standard Work Schedule	10
Supervisor	10

General Information

Trinity University values close interpersonal relationships and a robust learning environment for our students in order to deliver an exceptional liberal arts and sciences education. Departments are expected to maintain superior customer service, appropriate coverage during business hours, a student-centered approach for the functions they perform, and, if possible, incorporate work flexibility. The Flexible Work Agreement (FWA) gives staff an opportunity to collaborate with their supervisor which can in return assist the employees in supporting various needs and to make a suitable work and home life balance.

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?

Trinity staff employees, full-time, part-time, and temporary, may apply for FWA after they have worked at Trinity for six months; however, eligibility is job-dependent and a business decision. Some positions require staff employees to be fully on campus during traditional (business) work hours, while others lend themselves to some flexibility, either in time or location. Although supervisors and employees should collaborate on options for flexibility, the supervisor will make the final decision regarding eligibility for an FWA.

How do staff request an FWA?

Procedures have been outlined in the [Flexible Work Arrangement Policy](#). Generally, staff employees apply for the FWA by completing the [FWA Application](#), and then supervisors work with the employee to explore feasible options. Supervisors develop a recommended department staff schedule plan based on these conversations and the department business needs and then either approve, deny, or make adjustments to a staff member's requested FWA.

How will everyone know what schedules staff are working?

Departments or divisions should communicate their employees' schedules throughout their department/division once their staffing plan is finalized or updated. In addition, individual staff approved for FWA should ensure that key internal and external constituencies are informed of their adjusted work schedule or location.

Do staff with an existing telecommuting agreement need to fill out the FWA application?

These staff do not need to complete the [FWA application](#) if they are working their Standard Work Schedule; however, they should submit the [FWA application](#) if they are interested in applying for a Flex Schedule.

Are FWA agreements permanent?

No, these are not permanent agreements and can be changed at any time due to the department, supervisor, and/or employee needs. All changes should be made in collaboration with the supervisor/department head and the employee and documented using the [FWA application](#).

How can I get help navigating FWA discussions?

Both supervisors and employees can contact HR for support if you need a sounding board or mediator to help with this process.

Staff Employees

What if my FWA is not approved?

Staff members should contact their direct supervisor to learn more about the reasoning behind the decision. Supervisors and staff should collaborate to determine if there is a compromise that addresses the supervisors concerns while adding increased flexibility for the staff member. If a staff member and supervisor are unable to come to a reasonable compromise, the staff member may submit a request for Human Resources to mediate by emailing humanresources@trinity.edu. The final option for a staff member regarding a dispute on the decision regarding their [FWA application](#) is to file a grievance according to the [Trinity University Grievance Policy and Process](#).

When and how is it communicated if my FWA application is denied?

Supervisors should have conversations with employees about their FWA requests and if it will be approved, declined, or adjusted before their final decision is updated on the [FWA application](#). Department heads and supervisors also should meet with the entire department/unit regarding the overall staffing plan. Staff members should not be surprised to learn they are not granted the FWA they requested or that an adjustment was made to it.

How do I change my FWA?

Discuss modifications with your supervisor and resubmit the [FWA application](#). Proper and reasonable advance notice is required to make a change.

Will I keep my workspace if I have an FWA?

Staff employees approved for FWA may have changes made to their workspace. Supervisors may make such changes to best utilize 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. FWA staff 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. During the annual performance evaluation, your FWA will be reviewed for the upcoming year.

What if I want a short-term or one-time adjustment to my schedule or work location?

Occasional and infrequent arrangements for flexibility may be possible, both for staff employees with and without an approved FWA. You should work with your supervisor on any ad hoc or short term FWA.

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 participate virtually if permitted by your supervisor.

Can my supervisor change my Flex Schedule during peak periods?

Yes, a supervisor can adjust your schedule as needed for the department and/or University's needs. Please keep in mind that advance notice will be given but there could be times when very little or immediate notice is given.

If my supervisor changes my schedule, what do I do if I can't find dependent care?

The FWA is not meant to substitute for daycare or any dependent/elder 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.

If I have approved FWA with remote work, do I need to transfer my office phone to my personal phone?

Yes, you must transfer your office phone to your cell phone. You should also have your

signature block on your email with your direct campus line phone listed.

Can I work outside of Texas or outside of a commuting distance to Trinity?

All FWA staff employees must live in Texas and within commuting distance. A small number of staff are approved for a telecommuting arrangement (fully remote), which is not the same as Flex Place.

How will conflicting FWA requests from multiple staff be handled? Does seniority impact decisions?

Supervisors will determine the staffing plan and the approved FWA for each staff member. Supervisors/department heads should review FWA requests within the context of a larger staffing plan and determine what will work best for the department and what is equitable and fair to each staff member.

Can I reject FWA if the approved FWA is different from my original request?

Yes. This is why it's important to have conversations with your supervisors in advance and see if you can come to an agreement prior to the supervisor's decision. If you don't agree on the final FWA, you may reject it; however, you will be required to work the Standard Work Schedule (if rejecting Flex Schedule) or on campus (if rejecting Flex Place).

Can the number of hours scheduled to work vary by week? (e.g. Work 35 hours one week and 45 hours the next week)

Non-exempt (classified) staff cannot do this and must be scheduled for 40 hours of work per week. Any hours worked over 40 hours per week must have the approval of their supervisor and will be paid as overtime.

Exempt (contract) staff may have adjustments to their schedule as long as they work an average of 40 hours per week during each pay period/month.

Supervisors and Department Heads

What if a staff member requests 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. 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.

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. Please note all offices must be covered during the normal business hours.

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. During the employee's annual performance evaluation, you as a supervisor, will evaluate each FWA for each employee if a change is required. If the FWA is working for the employee and the department, no further action is needed.

Can I cancel a staff's FWA if they aren't meeting performance expectations?

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?

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 and/or work a standard work schedule, and some might allow for 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. FWA eligibility will be included in each job description and posting, as needed. All new hires must wait at least six months before they may apply for an FWA. After that, the exact time frame may still vary by department, position, training requirements, performance expectations, etc.

Can a staff member request an FWA upon return from parental leave or FMLA?

Yes. Have the staff employee complete the application and work together to find the best schedule for when they return. It is recommended they submit the [FWA application](#) as soon as feasible.

What are the risks for potential inequity (or perceived inequity) in supervisor decisions or across University departments?

Supervisors and Department Heads should ensure that FWA is administered fairly across different demographic groups within their department. Each department has different needs and, therefore, their staff have different options for Flex Place and Flex Schedules. Please contact HR if you have any questions or concerns regarding fairly administering FWA requests or if you learn about any perceived inequities.

Is the University standardizing staffing plans across divisions?

No, department needs vary drastically, so VPs have ultimate approval for all staffing plans within their division. HR may provide guidance as needed.

Should I consider medical reasons for an FWA application?

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.

Which employees does the FWA policy apply to?

This policy applies to exempt and non exempt (contract and classified), full-time and part-time, and temporary staff, as well as interns who are not Trinity students. Faculty and student workers are not included in this policy.

What do I do if a staff member refuses to follow the final approved FWA?

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, the FWA decision should have been discussed with the staff member before the FWA decision was finalized. The staff should not be surprised by the decision. If the staff member refuses to adhere to the final FWA decision, HR needs to be involved and have discussions with the staff member and supervisor.

I've received staffs' FWA applications and developed a staffing plan. What's next?

Make sure that you have had conversations with all of the staff who applied for FWA regarding your decisions, follow the procedures listed in the policy for confirming the decision on each [FWA application](#), confirm that each staff has also agreed to the FWA on the application, and then communicate the entire staffing plan to your department/division.

Can a student worker cover the main phone lines or front desk for a staff member?

This practice should be used sparingly and cautiously. Supervisors and department heads must determine if a student worker can appropriately cover the duties and provide the level of customer service required for that individual department or division. In addition, it must be assessed if the student worker will have adequate supervision when covering for a staff member. Based on this, there may be instances where a student worker can cover for staff, and other instances where a staff member should be present and the student worker cannot cover the responsibilities alone.

Glossary

Business Hours

Trinity's standard business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding [Trinity holidays](#). Some departments may have business hours outside of these times, including those with shift work and positions that must be on-call, such as, Counseling Services, Residential Life, and University Police.

Flex Place

Work arrangement where the staff performs a portion of their job off campus (typically in a home office) on a regular, recurring basis.

Flex Schedule

An alternate arrangement for a regular, recurring work schedule that is outside of the standard 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday and/or Monday to Friday workweek.

Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA)

A regular, recurring adjustment to a staff member's standard work schedule (Flex Schedule) or location (Flex Place).

Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) Application

[Application](#) that a staff member can submit to be considered for Flex Schedule and/or Flex Place.

Standard Work Schedule

A work schedule and location that is standard for a staff member's position typically 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Trinity's campus.

Supervisor

The person to whom the staff member reports directly.