



Flex@X Implementation Guide for Managers

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Flex@X materials were adapted from various sources but primarily draw on resources available from Ontario Tech University, McGill University, Toronto Metropolitan University, University of Toronto and University of Victoria. This Flex@X Implementation Guide is primarily adapted from the Future of Work Guide at TMU.



Introduction

Reimagining and Redefining Work

The last few years have taught us that it is possible for us to operate beyond the traditional model of work while still meeting the expectations of our community.

In 2025, StFX will embrace new ways of working through the Flex@X Program (Flex@X or the Program) and our new Flexible Work Policy (the Policy). The Policy is a framework for managers to frame our approach to flexible work.

Flex@X is **not one-size-fits-all model**. It will be a set of principles that guide our leadership in adapting the ways that we work together. The focus will be on developing a stronger, more robust and more flexible approach to serving our community.

Implementing Flex@X won't happen with the flip of a switch. This transition will be phased and gradual. Departments will be able to set their own pace over the next year. Some departments will be early adopters, and others will need time to determine how it impacts their operations.

The Opportunity

People and Culture has, over the past two years, been tasked with envisioning what a flexible work experience would look like at StFX. There are some key drivers behind the decision to enable flexible work:

<p>Challenging the Status Quo</p> <p>The past few years have shown that work doesn't always need to be done on campus to be effective.</p>	<p>Talent</p> <p>Recruiting talent is increasingly difficult. Providing flexible ways of working helps to attract, engage and retain top employees.</p>	<p>Student Experience</p> <p>As students shift to expect more virtual options, we can respond more nimbly to provide support and services.</p>
<p>EDIA</p> <p>Flexibility attracts a more diverse talent pool with increased participation in historically underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>Sustainability</p> <p>Flexible work allows us to reduce our carbon footprint and support sustainability goals.</p>	<p>Space</p> <p>Space is at a premium in any institution. We can utilize space more optimally to support the student experience.</p>

Flex@X and the Flexible Work Policy can improve talent acquisition and retention, enhance our efforts related to EDIA, improve physical and mental health and provide additional work-life balance. Employees are consistently more happy, healthy and productive when provided with opportunities such as Flex@X. Some advantages include:

- **Inclusion** – video conferencing technology promotes collaboration across geographical locations (even on a small campus) and makes individuals feel more included when all on the same platform.
- **Work-Life Balance** – workers with greater work-life balance are healthier, more productive and less likely to seek other opportunities.



- **Sustainability** – reducing travel and energy costs would decrease StFX’s environmental footprint.
- **Retention and Engagement** – flexibility enhances our attractiveness as an employer which leads to improved recruitment, retention and diversity.

Guiding Principles

The University is, first and foremost, committed to providing an exceptional in-person, residential learning environment for students. Beyond this, Flex@X is governed by the following principles:

<p>Operational and Service Needs</p> <p>Arrangements are dependent on the needs of the department and must not compromise operational effectiveness or service delivery. Impact on other departments and University-wide operational effectiveness is also considered.</p>	<p>Productivity and Effectiveness</p> <p>Arrangements are dependent on the nature of the work and the ability for the work to be performed productively and effectively to the same level that would be expected if there was no Flexible Work arrangement.</p>	<p>On-Campus Presence</p> <p>Key to a vibrant campus community, on-campus presence is a requirement for most roles.</p>
<p>Transparency</p> <p>Decisions must be made in a transparent manner.</p>	<p>Employee Preference</p> <p>Employee preferences are considered when developing and approving any Flex@X arrangement.</p>	<p>Regular Review</p> <p>Arrangements are reviewed regularly to ensure effectiveness.</p>

In addition to the Guiding Principles, we are also guided by the following:

<p>Not One-Size-Fits-All</p> <p>Departments will be able to determine the level of flexibility for their teams (with approval from People and Culture and their senior leaders).</p>	<p>Phased Approach</p> <p>The implementation will be phased. Departments will set their own pace in transitioning.</p>	<p>Operational Needs > Flexibility</p> <p>Operational needs and the work some employees do will be the primary drivers to determine the level of flexibility.</p>
<p>Leaders are Role Models</p> <p>Our leaders are encouraged to actively model and champion Flex@X to support the cultural shift.</p>	<p>Space Optimization</p> <p>Flex@X will present opportunities for space optimization.</p>	<p>Employee Proximity</p> <p>Employees must reside in Nova Scotia and be able to attend campus when needed.</p>

What are the challenges?

The challenges will vary based on the type of Flex@X arrangement is in place. In general, employees working modified schedules but working full-time on campus will face less challenges than those with Hybrid arrangements. Some of the challenges include:



- Being out of the flow of day-to-day information.
- Being away from the hub of activity.
- A misperception that employees working remotely are not as available as those working on campus.
- Distractions by the employee’s spouse, children, pets and others in the workspace.
- A tendency to be available outside of “normal” business hours and work longer hours.

From an administrative standpoint, there may be additional work needed to:

- Establish expectations, trust and unique methods of performance evaluation and leading from a distance.
- Adapt strategies and procedures to manage hybrid workers.
- Help employees who are disappointed if their roles do not allow them to participate in Flex@X.

Flex@X Arrangement Options

Hybrid and Remote Work Arrangements

Hybrid and Remote Work Arrangements give employees the flexibility to work off-campus for a portion of their time. Later in this Guide, we will go into more detail about the rules governing these arrangements. The University will only approve Hybrid Work Arrangements in exceptional circumstances.

There are two “work-from-home” options under Flex@X:

- **Hybrid Work Arrangements:** an employee works up to 60% of their time from home.
- **Remote Work Arrangements:** an employee works 61% - 100% of their time from home.

Example Hybrid Work Arrangement

Day	Schedule
Monday	Remote
Tuesday	On Campus
Wednesday	On Campus
Thursday	Remote
Friday	On Campus

Flex Time Arrangements

Flex Time Arrangements provide employees the opportunity to adjust their working hours in a variety of ways. These can be combined with Hybrid Work Arrangements as part of a Flex@X plan.

There are two Flex Time options under Flex@X:

- **Earned Time Off:** An employee works longer days in exchange for time off later using a pre-defined schedule. For example, an employee working 35 hours per week from 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM on an Earned Time Off plan might work an extra 30 minutes each day and have a day off every three weeks.



- **Modified Schedule:** An employee works the same number of hours each week, but actual work hours vary. There are two variations:
 - **Alternate Work Hours:** employees maintain work hours outside of the normal typical work day for their department.
 - **Compressed Work Week:** This allows employees to work their normal number of hours over a shortened work week. Generally, this will be working four days instead of five.

Example Flex Time (Earned Time Off) Schedule

Day	Start Time	Lunch Break	End Time
Monday	8:30 AM	12 – 1 PM	6:00 PM
Tuesday	8:30 AM	12 – 1 PM	6:00 PM
Wednesday	8:00 AM	12 – 1 PM	4:30 PM
Thursday	8:30 AM	12 – 1 PM	4:30 PM
Friday (Weeks 1 and 2, Week 3 they are off)	8:30 AM	12 – 1 PM	4:30 PM

Example Flex Time (Modified Schedule) with Alternate Work Hours

Day	Start Time	Lunch Break	End Time
Monday	8:30 AM	12 – 1 PM	4:30 PM
Tuesday	8:30 AM	12 – 1 PM	4:30 PM
Wednesday	10:30 AM	1 – 2 PM	7:30 PM
Thursday	11:30 AM	2 – 3 PM	6:30 PM
Friday	8:30 AM	12 – 1 PM	4:30 PM

Example Flex Time (Modified Schedule) with Varied Start/End Times

35 Hours Per Week

Day	Start Time	End Time
Monday	8:00 AM	5:45 PM
Tuesday	8:00 AM	5:45 PM
Wednesday	8:00 AM	5:45 PM
Thursday	8:00 AM	5:45 PM



37.5 Hours Per Week

Day	Start Time	End Time
Monday	8:00 AM	6:30 PM
Tuesday	8:00 AM	6:30 PM
Wednesday	8:00 AM	6:30 PM
Thursday	8:00 AM	6:00 PM

40 Hours Per Week

Day	Start Time	End Time
Monday	8:00 AM	7:00 PM
Tuesday	8:00 AM	7:00 PM
Wednesday	8:00 AM	7:00 PM
Thursday	8:00 AM	7:00 PM

Getting Started with Flex@X

There are a few things leadership should do as we move towards implementing Flex@X.

- **Step 1:** Evaluate Department Services
- **Step 2:** Assess the Work Employees Do
- **Step 3:** Engage Employees
- **Step 4:** Develop Norms
- **Step 5:** Make and Communicate Decisions
- **Step 6:** Check In, Assess and Adjust

The rest of this guide provides an outline of how to proceed through each step. Before starting, consider the following:

- How might your own attitudes and preferences regarding flexible work bias your approach with your team?
- Are you a leader who can manage by outcomes and trust individuals to do the work?

Flex@X is an institution-wide policy and must be applied consistently and objectively. If you feel you might struggle with these, contact your People and Culture Advisor.

Step 1: Evaluate Department Services

We've learned a lot about new ways of working and delivering services. In some cases, access can be improved by offering services through a combination of in-person and virtual. For example, candidates and hiring managers have expressed appreciation for virtual interviews during the hiring process.



This is an opportunity to assess how you will work in the future and deliver services going forward. Before making individual decisions, you need to critically review your departmental services. This will become foundational and inform transparent decision making for your team.

Service delivery types include:

- **On-campus:** Service is on campus due to operational requirements.
- **Hybrid:** Service can be delivered in a combination of in-person and online.
- **Virtual:** Service is available online.

You can use the Step 1 template in the Flex@X Manager Workbook to help you evaluate your service delivery.

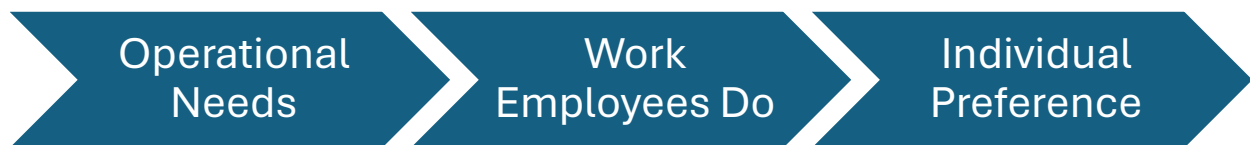
Considerations

When evaluating your department’s services consider:

- What services work well when delivered virtually, in-person or hybrid?
 - What should we offer virtually and why?
 - **Remember, just because something can be offered virtually doesn’t mean that it is the best approach** if it impacts student or client experience.
 - What should we consider offering in a hybrid approach and why?
 - What needs to happen on campus and why?
 - **Remember, just because a service is only offered on-campus doesn’t mean that is the best approach.**
- What worked well during the pandemic that we want to keep doing or improve upon?
- What impact do our decisions have on internal processes and technology requirements?
- How do we ensure EDIA remains central to our decision making on service delivery?
- Who do we need to communicate our future service delivery approach to and through what channels?

Step 2: Assess the Work Employees Do

When assessing the level of potential flexibility, the decision will be driven by operational needs, the work and individual preferences **in that order**.



Operational needs were identified in Step 1 when you assessed your department’s services and operational needs moving forward. In this step, you’ll do an assessment of the Work Employees Do in relation to the operational need. This allows you to look at how much flexibility there is in how the work gets done. We’ll look at Individual Preference in the next step.

In this section, you’ll be thinking about things like:

- Can access or service quality be improved by offering services in a different way?
- What type of work must be performed on campus (maintenance, client service, labs)?
- What work requires access to equipment or materials only available on campus (lab equipment, specialized computers, confidential records)?



- What meetings or collaborative activities must be on-site and which could be done online?
Does the work require prescribed on-site days?
- Are there aspects of the work that require focused concentration? Which environment is most suited to supporting this expectation?

You can use the Step 2 template in the Flex@X Manager Workbook to help you evaluate your service delivery.

Considerations

Overall Considerations

- **Decisions are leader-driven.**
- Be transparent in your decision making and be prepared to discuss and explain your decisions.
- Consider how decisions will be communicated. Ensure your team understands these decisions are not permanent and may change over time.
- Remember that the ways of working diagrams are a continuum. Some people may not fit neatly into one category only and there may be opportunities for additional flexibility. This is an opportunity to incorporate Flex Time arrangements.
- Document your decisions. This will help provide a holistic view of the department and document any additional considerations about decision making.
- Challenge yourself and your team to be progressive in thinking about how to maximize flexibility, while still meeting operational requirements and client needs.
- Apply an EDIA lens. When you look at the flexibility offered to your team is it equitable and inclusive? Have you focused on the work to be performed?

Hybrid Work Arrangement Considerations

- What work do your employees do that requires them to be on campus to complete effectively?
- What work could they do effectively from anywhere?
 - **Just because a service can be offered virtually, doesn't mean it should be.**
- Consider the lessons learned during the pandemic and what worked well and what didn't.
- Is there a minimum number of people that must be on-site to meet service, coverage and safety needs?

Flex Time Arrangement Considerations

- What work do your employees do that requires them to be working certain hours?
- Are there core hours that are required for the department?
- Is there an opportunity for improved client service by introducing flexible hours?



Ways of Working: Hybrid Work

Depending on the work, employees will have varying ability to apply for a Hybrid Work Arrangement. These are some descriptions that can be useful in identifying each employee's potential level of flexibility. Think of this as a continuum with varying options in each.

On Campus

- Physically on campus, in-person interactions.
- Requires access to campus facilities.
- Using shared tools or equipment.

Defined Flexibility

- Some in-person, on-campus interaction or facilities, tools or equipment on campus.
- Some tasks that can be completed remotely.
- Activities are required to be completed on campus at set times.

Increased Flexibility

- Some in-person, on-campus interaction or facilities, tools or equipment on campus.
- Some tasks that can be completed remotely.
- The timing and schedule for in-person or on-campus activities is variable.

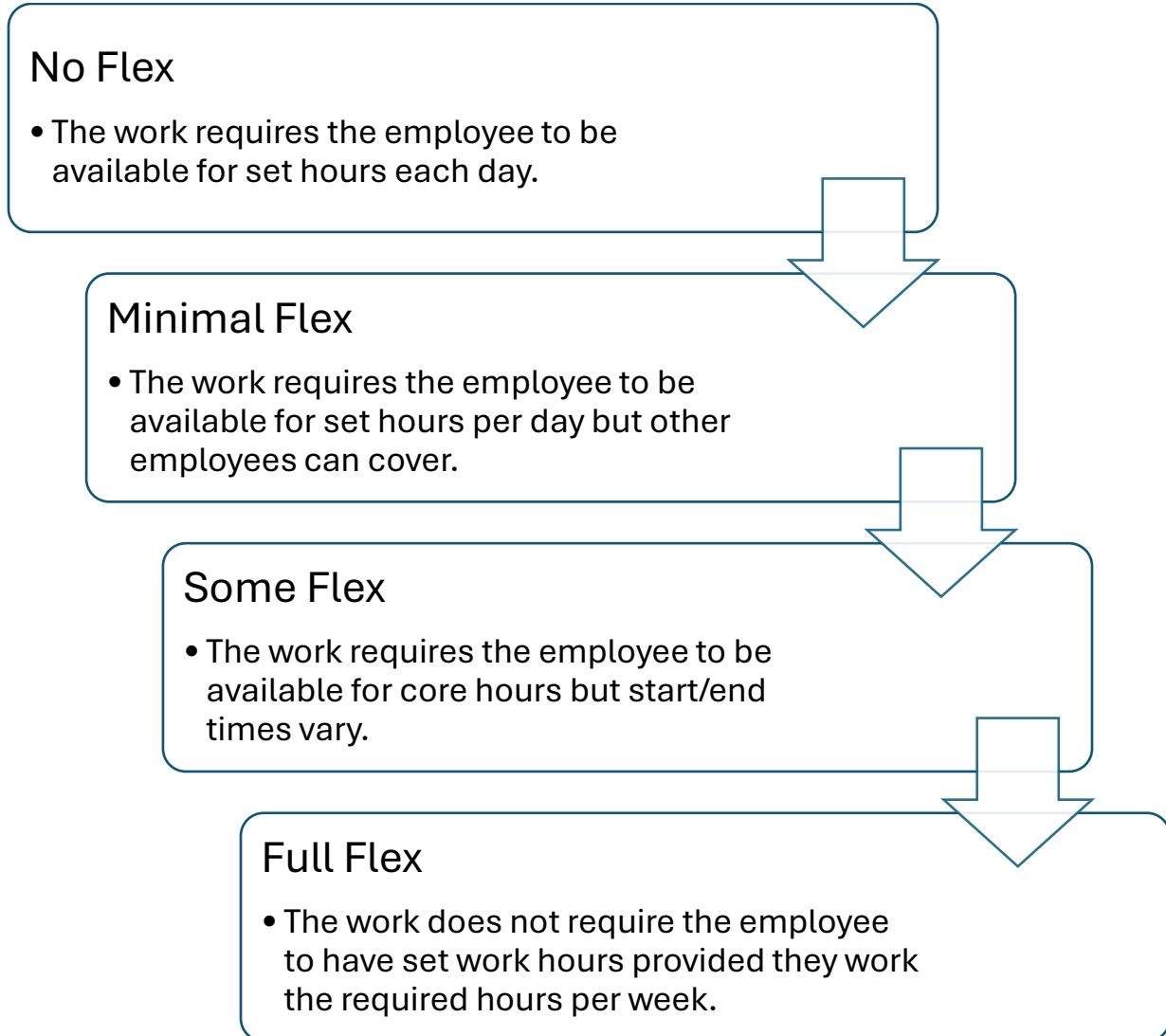
Virtual

- Activities that can be completed primarily remotely.
- Minimal in-person interaction on campus.



Ways of Working: Flex Time

Flex Time can be used either on its own or part of a Hybrid arrangement. These arrangements are also context dependent. These are some descriptions that can be useful in identifying each employee's potential level of flexibility. Think of this as a continuum with varying options in each.





Step 3: Engage Employees

In previous steps, you analyzed the department's services and flexibility potential for individuals. It's now time to talk to your team about what Flex@X might look like for them.

We recommend that you meet with your whole team and individual one-on-one meetings. The order of these meetings is up to you. Be sure to review and share the Flexible Work Policy with your employees.

Meeting with Your Team

Introduce your team to Flex@X so they understand the program, guiding principles and what this means for your department. Talk to them about how you assessed your services, how work was assessed for potential flexibility and what they can expect next.

An introductory slide deck will be available to assist you. Customize the presentation to describe how your services will be delivered going forward.

Meeting with Individual Team Members

When meeting with individual team members focus on:

- What the delivery of services means to their individual level of flexibility.
- Providing the rationale behind the decisions.
- Listening and responding to employee concerns.
- Seeking input and assessing if changes are required.

Be clear that the level of flexibility may change in future as we implement, evaluate and continue to improve. Flexibility requires accountability from managers and employees.

Engaging Employees: Key Messages

Keep the following key messages in mind when preparing for meetings:

- The level of flexibility will be based on how services will be delivered and the work employees perform. Employees' personal preference will be a consideration but only after operational requirements.
- With flexibility comes accountability. Employees and managers are both responsible to make sure work gets done.
- Flex@X plans may change over time. Employees' level of flexibility should be viewed and presented as flexible and not fixed. Levels of flexibility may shift and change to ensure operational needs and service levels are met. Leaders may adjust an employee's level of flexibility as required.
- Flex@X will be an adjustment and may be rocky as we work through the details and learn.

Moving towards Flex@X will be an iterative process as teams, departments and the University embrace change.

Many departments will be early adopters and will be ready to implement Flex@X immediately. Other units may need to take more time to develop their plans. **This is expected but should be clearly communicated to employees.**



Step 4: Develop Norms

Now that you've thought through the impact of Flex@X and talked to your team, you need to think about what new norms and processes you'll establish.

Norms are the written and unwritten rules of work. They might include how we function in meetings, how we communicate in times of difficulty, or how we agree to manage shared workspace. It is important for a team to reach agreement on their norms. Otherwise, individuals will behave and expect others to behave in a way that is preferential to them or was learned in previous work environments, rather than what would be most useful to the current team context. Holding conversations about norms allows each person to clarify understanding and demonstrate their responsibility and commitment to upholding them.

It is a good idea to review some or all of your norms regularly but especially after a significant change to your team.

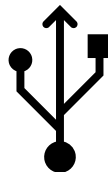
When developing your norms, think about and discuss:

- What is the existing practice or default behaviour? Is that serving our needs?
- Is there any team behaviour or expectations you are confused about?
- What team behaviours have developed organically that we should articulate and maintain?
- What team behaviours do we no longer need?
- How can we be intentional about communicating our team norms?
- How will we ensure new team members understand our team norms?
- If deeper conversation on our norms is required, how will we schedule this and ensure the conversation moves forward?

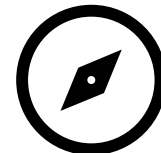
In this step, you'll look at norms across three categories:



People



Technology



Workspace

At the end of the section, we discuss the steps to take to implement them.

People

In this section, you'll be looking at your norms and processes as they relate to:

- Scheduling
- Communication
- Meetings
- Culture and Wellbeing
- Performance and Development

Some of these will be easy to resolve, some will take ongoing work. There will also be other considerations and norms for you to establish that are not on this list. Use these questions to get



you started and gather ideas from your team about other norms and considerations that would promote effective work habits.

Appendix A provides a list of questions to help guide your thinking as you work with your team to develop People norms.

Technology

Effective use of technology is critical in managing our teams. Think about whether the tools you currently use can be adapted to support Flex@X or if new technology solutions need to be explored.

In general, Flex@X arrangements are not permitted where they would require a significant investment in new technology. Departments are expected to align their arrangements within existing resources.

IT Services is available to support you with planning your technology needs for Flex@X. Please contact them at itservices@stfx.ca.

Collaborative Technologies

There are currently several collaborative software options provided by the University including:

- Office and OneDrive (for document collaboration)
- Teams (for virtual meetings, calls and instant messaging)

Consider the ways in which technology can support your operations and keep teams connected. Ensure your employees are competent in these technologies.

Inclusive Meetings

In person meetings with remote participants can put remote participants at a disadvantage. Consider the following challenges:

- Difficulty understanding what is being said in the meeting
 - If someone needs to lip read, is video set up for them to see everyone's face clearly?
 - Is audio being captured with good quality from everyone in the room?
 - Are people speaking clearly without rushing and facing the microphone/camera?
- Difficulty understanding what is being shown in the meeting
 - Are handouts also available as online documents?
 - Are whiteboards or flip boards visible? Consider using an online whiteboard via Teams.

When conducting a meeting with both on campus and virtual participants, consider having all participants on the same technology. For example, all participants log in to Teams whether they're on campus or at home.

Only a few meeting rooms on campus are equipped to host both in person and remote participants. These rooms are in high demand and should not be relied upon to be available.

Hardware

Individual Workstations

For greater flexibility and movement for employees with a Hybrid Work Arrangement, it is recommended where possible for employees to be assigned laptops instead of desktop computers. A large external monitor can be a useful addition for better visibility.



Laptops purchased via the Evergreen program are already Flex@X ready.

Any new technology purchases resulting from Flex@X arrangements require approval by the VP Finance and Administration.

Shared Workspaces

Some units may establish shared workspaces for employees with Hybrid arrangements. Options for these spaces include docking stations or shared desktop computers.

IT Services can assist departments interested in setting up shared workspaces.

Phones

All employees have now been transitioned to Microsoft Teams for their desk phone. Teams allows you to make and receive calls on your StFX extension from a mobile phone or computer.

Workspace

A key consideration as you implement your plans is the type of space you will require. The first year will be an opportunity to assess how space can be used differently and what will be needed in the future.

We are not expecting departments to make significant changes to space allocations for the first year of the program. At the end of the first year, the University will conduct a review of space usage.

Be empathetic when discussing changes to space and remember that many have strong feelings about personal space and a sense of home at the office. Encourage employees to approach this with an openness to new ways of working and trying new things.

Facilities Management is available to support your space planning. Please contact them at fmadmin@stfx.ca.

Structuring Workspace

Use the first year to consider the variety of space types needed to support activities that take place in the office.

- Quiet space – activities requiring the ability to concentrate without interruption.
- Private space – face to face but requires privacy
- Collaborative Space – brainstorming, team meetings that require in-person activities
- Social/Informal Space – to foster social interaction and spontaneous collaboration

The Policy anticipates that employees who work more than 50% of their time off campus may not have a dedicated workspace on campus. This is a guideline and may not work for all groups.

Considerations

As you think about your workspaces, consider the following:

- Will your Hybrid staff need more collaborative space?
- How can the workspace be optimized to promote communication, collaboration and social interaction?
- Can you pilot quiet/social zones with signage to signal behavioural expectations?
- Will there be any limitations/restrictions on the space Hybrid staff can book?
- Will on campus staff require dedicated space? If so, what kind?



- Can scheduling peaks (e.g. favouring of Tuesday-Thursday) be moderated to ensure consistent level of space utilization and staffing?
- How will you encourage staff feedback throughout the trial of space changes to assess what is working well and to understand what changes are required?

Additional considerations include:

- **Accommodations:** Identify ergonomic and accommodation needs for staff and prioritize access for those employees. Contact People and Culture for assistance.
- **Furniture Reconfiguration:** Furniture and equipment reconfiguration could enhance the onsite experience for staff. New furniture purchases are to be avoided.
- **Scheduling and Space Tracking:** Consider implementing an interim scheduling strategy for workspaces to track utilization rate and understand what spaces are used most often.
- **Develop Norms:** Develop norms for the use of bookable spaces (e.g. clean desk guidelines) and shared spaces. Create practices that foster interaction.
- **Communicate with Employees:** Communicate and ask for feedback from employees around space utilization. Ensure employees understand the decision-making and that this is a trial period.

Renovations

As we work through considerations for Flex@X, we will need time to pilot and identify space needs. **Renovations should not be considered.** Longer term plans will be assessed within the context of the University's planning and financial resources.

Consider how space can be reassigned and small furniture rearranged during the trial period.

The goal over the first year is to collect data on how we use space. This information is useful for individual teams but also to help the University think about optimizing space across buildings.

Step 5: Make and Communicate Decisions

Applications for Flex@X arrangements will be submitted by employees through a fillable PDF form. The Flex@X application will be available in November 2024.

Employees will be encouraged to discuss their interest in Flex@X prior to submitting the form. Open communication with employees throughout the process is critical.

Flex@X and Recruitment

During the recruitment process, candidates may request a Flex@X arrangement. StFX will not normally approve Flex@X arrangements during an employee's probationary period. Contact your People and Culture Advisor for assistance.

Application Process

The application process for Flex@X is as follows:

1. The employee fills out the Flex@X Application.
2. The manager/supervisor and department head receive the form and evaluate the request against the Flex@X criteria. The decision is recorded on the form and sent to People and Culture.



Contact your People and Culture Advisor prior to informing the employee if you intend to deny a request.

3. If the request is approved, the Flex@X Application will form the Flex@X Agreement. It will be kept on file in People and Culture and a copy provided to the employee and their manager.

Decision Criteria

Managers/supervisors and department heads will need to evaluate each application for a Flex@X arrangement on its own merits. The criteria for evaluating an application are included in the Flexible Work Policy:

1. Operational and service needs and safety requirements can be effectively and efficiently maintained (student service needs will be prioritized in assessing and approving regular Arrangements).
2. Job requirements can be productively and effectively performed remotely to the needed quality standards.
3. If Hybrid or Remote, the work does not require close supervision and the duties can be performed with a degree of independence from the Employee's supervisor/manager and co-workers.
4. The Arrangement will unduly hinder or delay the work of other Employees or negatively impact the delivery of services and supports to students and community members.
5. If Hybrid or Remote, the Employee has a suitable remote workspace (e.g. privacy, free from distractions, ergonomic workstation set-up) and reliable internet access to allow for needed connectivity.
6. The Employee does not have any performance concerns¹ or unresolved workplace issues that would inhibit the success of a Flexible Work Arrangement.

Decisions to deny an application must be based on the above criteria. However, in thinking about an employee's application, consider the following:

- Is the request from an individual in a hard to fill or succession-risk role? How will you address recruitment and retention issues in a fair and equitable way?
- What is the individual's ability to be self-organized and motivated? For Hybrid arrangements, the Flex@X Self Assessment can be a good conversation starter?
- Does the individual require coaching, support or a structured environment to effectively fulfill their responsibilities? How will this be provided?

These questions should inform your planning around Flex@X arrangements.

Discussing Flex@X Decisions

Approving a Flex@X Application

Employees eligible for a Flex@X plan will either have a Flex Time arrangement, a Hybrid Work arrangement, or both. Discuss why the Flex@X options selected work for the employee's position but other options do not.

¹ Only *previously documented* performance concerns can be used in this consideration.



Employees should be aware that while they are afforded flexibility, the requirement to be on campus at specific times and can be exercised by their manager.

Questions to Anticipate

- Why can't I work from home all the time? Or at all?
- Can I set my own schedule?
- Can I pick what days and times I work?
- Will my workspace be impacted?
- What will my technology set up be?
- Will this impact my development and career progression?

Denying a Flex@X Application

The nature of some employee's work will mean that Hybrid or Flex Time arrangements won't work for them. Some employees will work on campus exclusively, have set hours, or both.

When speaking with these employees be sensitive to the fact that many of their colleagues are being given the option to work remotely when they can't. Make sure you're transparent about the decision making and the reasons.

While these employees may not have flexibility in location, consider whether there are alternative Flex Time options.

Questions to Anticipate

- Why can't I work from home?
- Can I pick the days and times that I work?
- Why can't I have flexible start/end times?

Step 6: Check In, Assess and Adjust

Flex@X will require significant change management for individuals, departments and the university. Culture shift takes time. Clear communication, expectation setting, providing support and regular check-ins are critical to managing change. Adopting new ways of working will be an iterative process and the change may be rocky.

Communicating with Employees

As we move forward communication with your employees will be important. Here are some tips:

- Set clear expectations around Flex@X plans with everyone in the department.
- Meet with individuals and teams and ensure that all employees understand how decisions were made and the rationale behind the level of flexibility you have determined most appropriate (service delivery, the work, then preference).
- Throughout the process, check in with employees. Be open to their feedback. They know the work best and will provide valuable insights into how to improve service delivery and processes.
- Set milestones to check in. Assess feedback and adjust if required. Communicate any changes that are made to everyone.
- Hold all team members accountable, including yourself as an important role model.
 - Check in with empathy with employees if norms are not being followed.
 - Revisit norms regularly in team meetings and be open to adjustments.



- Provide training to employees where required (i.e. new technology).

Feedback Methods

Actively check in with your employees and seek feedback throughout all stages of the project. Include feedback mechanisms in your plan to assess how you are doing and adjust accordingly. Additional opportunities to receive feedback can be achieved through:

- Town halls and pulse surveys.
- Virtual suggestion boxes (i.e. Microsoft Forms)
- One-on-one meetings with employees.
- Leadership team meetings.
- A departmental change lead.

What is a departmental change lead? Change lead is one or more individuals from across the department. The role of the lead is to support the transition by acting as a liaison between leaders and employees, helping leaders to get real time feedback and opportunities for improvement. Having more than one can offer a variety of perspectives.

Sample Check-In Questions

- How are employees adapting to new ways of working?
- What's working well and what's not?
- How effective are processes for communication and team connection?
- How productive and effective do employees feel?
- Are new tools needed to support our service or process change?
- Do employees need to be trained on new skills?
- How are employees balancing their personal and professional needs?
- Are employees clear on objectives and getting regular feedback?
- Are shared space norms being respected?
- Are there further opportunities to make better use of space?

Communicating with Stakeholders

As you deliver your services in new ways and adjust to significant change, actively seek feedback from stakeholders and clients. This includes:

- Communicating any changes that impact stakeholders with as much advance notice as possible.
- Creating feedback mechanisms in your plan to assess how you are doing and adjust accordingly such as stakeholder surveys and planned check-in meetings.
- Checking in with stakeholders on how you're delivering services to assess how plans are working, identify roadblocks or gaps and address challenges.

Sample Check-In Questions

- What's working well, what can we improve?
- Are services that are being offered in new format working effectively?
- What are opportunities for further change?
- What needs to change over the next year?



Changing, Terminating or Delaying a Flex@X Arrangement

All Flex@X arrangements will have a start date, end date and mandatory review dates.

The University may, at its discretion, delay, suspend, change or terminate a Flex@X arrangement if it no longer meets the department's needs. Reasons for changing or terminating an agreement could include performance issues, productivity concerns, connectivity issues from home, reluctance to communicate or collaborate with the team or other operational challenges.

Delaying or Suspending Flex@X Arrangements

There may be circumstances where you might need to postpone a flexibility arrangement. This could include new employee orientation or training or where there is a large project or initiative. If so, discuss this with your People and Culture Advisor.

Changing or Terminating Flex@X Arrangements

Minor changes, such as a change to start/end times, can be agreed to by the Manager and communicated to People and Culture.

Significant changes, such as increasing or decreasing the number of remote work days, or termination of an agreement needs to be done with your People and Culture Advisor. Minimum notice periods apply.

Flex@X Program Supports

The steps provided in this guide and associated resources will help you formalize your plans for Flex@X.

Your primary point of contact will be your People and Culture Advisor. They will provide support during this transition or direct you to other resources in the University.

The volume of work anticipated as part of the implementation of Flex@X will be high. We will do our best to assist in a timely manner but it may take time.

For IT issues, please contact IT Services directly (itservices@stfx.ca).

For space issues, please contact Facilities Management directly (fmadmin@stfx.ca).



Appendix A: Developing People Norms

The following questions will help you to have conversations with your team to create team norms that are short, clear and meaningful. Team norms should be reviewed regularly and adapted as needed.

Scheduling

- Are there specific days some roles are expected to be in the office?
 - *Example: Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.*
- Are there a specific number of days per week people are in the office?
 - *Example: Staff are expected to be in the office 3 days per week.*
- Do we have any presence requirements?
 - *Example: At least one person is needed in the office during business hours?*
- Will we have core working hours when all team members are expected to be working at the same time?
 - *Example: Under a Flex Time arrangement, all team members have flexibility on start and end times but all team members must be working between 10 and 2 to enable collaboration.*
 - *Example: Client service operating hours are 8:00 – 4:30. Due to the nature of work, there is no flexibility with scheduling.*

Communications

- How will we let each other know if we are in the office/remote?
 - *Example: Announce in team chat every morning, no need to announce, calendar updates, shared document.*
- How will we let each other know if we're available/unavailable?
 - *Example: Teams status, not online means unavailable, email out-of-office.*
- What channels will we use for urgent communication?
 - *Example: Phone call, text message.*
- What is the expected response time?
 - *Example: Respond to emails within 24 hours, respond to IM and phone calls in core hours.*
- Do we have boundaries on when we can call or message about non-urgent issues?
 - *Example: Do not send messages outside of core hours if not urgent.*
- What channel do we use to communicate with each other one on one?
 - *Example: Teams chat or calls, email.*
- What channels do we use to chat in groups?
 - *Example: Teams chat, email.*
- What channels do we use to communicate as a department?
 - *Example: Regular emails, department Teams meetings.*
- What acronyms/shorthand language do we use internally that might need explanation?
 - *Example: department names, research centres, government agencies.*
- Where are shared documents located and updated?
 - *Example: Team OneDrive.*



Meetings

- Which meetings should be in-person vs. hybrid?
 - *Example: Status meetings done virtually, meeting with certain stakeholders done in person.*
- What meeting etiquette should be put in place?
 - *Example: Being on camera, use of mute, meeting agenda, ensure everyone has a voice and opportunity to speak.*
- How do we ensure everyone is included and has comparable experience in meetings regardless of location?
 - *Example: All on Teams calls regardless of location.*
- When should we not book meetings?
 - *Example: When an email will suffice, outside of core working hours, Friday afternoons.*
- How do we make decisions and what is the fallback?
 - *Example: Building consensus into decisions where possible, and trust our leaders to make good decisions when we can't.*

Culture and Wellbeing

- How do we create a sense of community, inclusion and team cohesion?
 - *Example: Virtual open door practices, specific days where people try to be in the office, socials, Teams chat.*
- How do we plan time to socialize with one another?
 - *Example: In-person socials, virtual get-togethers.*
- How do we create opportunities for in-person or virtual interactions with each other?
 - *Example: Specific days where groups will be in the office, virtual coffee sessions*
- How does our culture need to evolve? What should we keep doing and what should we let go of?
 - *Example: Look for ways to collaborate across teams, consider what interactions are best in person and be intentional about time together.*
- What engagement measures should we pay attention to?
 - *Example: Employee feedback sessions, one-on-one meetings.*
- How can we support each other's wellbeing?
 - *Example: Honouring an employee's dedicated time related to personal health.*
- How can we support all employees feeling included despite location?
 - *Example: Rigour around regular check-ins and updates, ensuring people have the information they need to do their jobs.*
- How will we reflect on and improve our working norms?
 - *Example: Monthly townhalls/meetings, communicate frequently to debrief what is working and what needs to be improved.*
- How do we manage shared space?
 - *Example: opening/closing, locking/unlocking, cleaning/organizing/restocking, temperature control, noise control.*



Performance and Development

- Have we set clear performance objectives for our employees? How will we hold them accountable?
 - *Example: Being clear about the department's priorities and objectives and setting clear, attainable objectives for each individual and team.*
- How will we ensure our employees are getting regular feedback and coaching on their performance?
 - *Example: Schedule regular check-in meetings as well as specific time to provide performance and coaching feedback, don't just wait until something has gone wrong*
- How will we recognize individual and team achievements?
 - *Example: Choose specific times for virtual celebrations, be clear about what is being celebrated and how achievements are reached. Allow for time on meeting agendas to celebrate successes.*
- What engagement and productivity metrics should we pay attention to?
 - *Example: Work turn around time, stakeholder satisfaction, employee wellbeing*
- How will we support our employee's growth and development?
 - *Example: Provide opportunity during performance objective setting to define development goals for the year ahead and identify ways to support their growth.*
- How are we supporting team development?
 - *Example: Opportunities for team learning, developing core competencies.*
- How are we ensuring that all team members have opportunities?
 - *Example: Ensure opportunities are provided to all, be conscious of presenteeism. Be transparent and allow team feedback.*
- How will we support our employee's growth and development?
 - *Example: Provide opportunity during performance objective setting to define development goals for the year ahead and identify ways to support their growth.*
- How are we supporting team development?
 - *Example: Opportunities for team learning, developing core competencies.*
- How are we ensuring that all team members have opportunities?
 - *Example: Ensure opportunities are provided to all, be conscious of presenteeism. Be transparent and allow team feedback.*



Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions for Managers

Why can't we go back to the old way? It worked perfectly fine.

Flex@X and the Flexible Work Policy can improve talent acquisition and retention, enhance our efforts related to EDIA, improve physical and mental health and provide additional work-life balance. Employees are consistently more happy, healthy and productive when provided with opportunities such as Flex@X. Some advantages include:

- **Inclusion** – video conferencing technology promotes collaboration across geographical locations (even on a small campus) and makes individuals feel more included when all on the same platform.
- **Work-Life Balance** – workers with greater work-life balance are healthier, more productive and less likely to seek other opportunities.
- **Sustainability** – reducing travel and energy costs would decrease StFX's environmental footprint.
- **Retention and Engagement** – flexibility enhances our attractiveness as an employer which leads to improved recruitment, retention and diversity.

What are the challenges?

The challenges will vary based on the type of Flex@X arrangement is in place. In general, employees working modified schedules but working full-time on campus will face less challenges than those with Hybrid arrangements. Some of the challenges include:

- Being out of the flow of day-to-day information.
- Being away from the hub of activity.
- A misperception that employees working remotely are not as available as those working on campus.
- Distractions by the employee's spouse, children, pets and others in the workspace.
- A tendency to be available outside of "normal" business hours and work longer hours.

From an administrative standpoint, there may be additional work needed to:

- Establish expectations, trust and unique methods of performance evaluation and leading from a distance.
- Adapt strategies and procedures to manage hybrid workers.
- Help employees who are disappointed if their roles do not allow them to participate in Flex@X.

What are my obligations under the Flex@X program?

Managers/supervisors and department heads have several obligations under Flex@X:

- Evaluating departmental services and operations to determine the suitability of Flex@X arrangements.
- Reviewing and approving Flex@X applications.



- Monitoring Flex@X working arrangements to ensure ongoing suitability and effectiveness.
- Promoting employee engagement and providing frequent feedback to employees, particularly those with Hybrid arrangements.

What are the criteria for evaluating Flex@X requests?

In making the decision to approve a Flexible Work Arrangement, the following must be considered:

1. Operational and service needs and safety requirements can be effectively and efficiently maintained (student service needs will be prioritized in assessing and approving regular Arrangements).
2. Job requirements can be productively and effectively performed remotely to the needed quality standards.
3. If Hybrid or Remote, the work does not require close supervision and the duties can be performed with a degree of independence from the Employee's supervisor/manager and co-workers.
4. The Arrangement will not have a negative impact on the work of other Employees or on the delivery of services and supports to students and community members.
5. If Hybrid or Remote, the Employee has a suitable remote workspace (e.g. privacy, free from distractions, ergonomic workstation set-up) and reliable internet access to allow for needed connectivity.
6. The Employee does not have any performance concerns or unresolved workplace issues that would inhibit the success of a Flexible Work Arrangement.

If Flex@X arrangements are available to many employees, how will supervisors manage all the requests and ensure adequate coverage?

Traditional schedules meet the demands of many employees. Employees who do request Flex@X arrangements most often ask for slight changes in their daily arrival and departure times, changes that pose the least challenge for an employee's supervisor and co-workers. If there are multiple competing requests, contact your People and Culture Advisor for assistance.

If a supervisor receives multiple requests that cannot all be accommodated, how do they rate the needs of the requesters to decide which requests to approve?

Reasons for the requests should not be used as the only factor in making the decision. If the employee's requests are similar in terms of their ability to continue to meet job requirements, seniority and performance may be factors in determining which request to approve. The manager/supervisor may ask the employees for input into a solution that would enable them to meet their needs and the needs of the unit. For assistance, contact your People and Culture Advisor.

How do you supervise employees with a Hybrid arrangement?

For those employees, then supervisors should set up a structured system for management. The emphasis will focus on the completion of tasks. Performance measures should be agreed and then



monitored. Agreement on performance goals and communication expectations is especially important for those working remotely. These discussions on expectations should happen before an Hybrid work arrangement is put into place.

People and Culture will be providing workshops on how to manage teams working in a Flex@X arrangement.

Can I allow my employees to work from home or change their hours occasionally without a Flex@X agreement?

Yes. The Flex@X program is designed to address longer term changes to employee work locations or schedules. You still have the flexibility to allow your employees to work from home or flex their hours on a short-term basis (generally, less than three months).



Appendix C: Flex@X Terms and Conditions

All employees participating in Flex@X will be required to agree to the following Terms and Conditions:

By signing below, you agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of the Flex@X Program including but not limited to the Flex@X Program Guide and these Terms and Conditions (collectively, the “Program”) as well as the Flexible Work Policy (the “Policy”). Any future amendments to Program or the Policy will automatically apply to you. You agree that the information provided is accurate and truthful for the purposes of assessing your participation in the Program.

Your participation in the Program is subject to approval by your manager, department head and People and Culture. If approved, your manager will meet with you to review the details and specific conditions of the Flex@X arrangement.

Terms and Conditions

1. Flexible Work Arrangements do not change or otherwise amend your terms and conditions of employment with the University, including compensation and benefits, employment status, work responsibilities, and required training. A Flexible Work Arrangement is not a right of employment and the University retains its contractual rights, including the right to assign work, to reorganize the workplace and the work pursuant to the applicable collective agreement, employment contract, policies, and laws. Individuals participating in a Flexible Work Arrangement are subject to University policies and procedures, and applicable legislation and regulatory requirements.
2. Flexible Work Arrangements are not a replacement for formal medical and family status accommodations. If you require an accommodation, you should contact Human Rights and Equity (family status accommodations) or People and Culture (medical and all other accommodations).

Schedules, Workload and Performance

3. Flexible Work Arrangements do not alter the assigned workload, and you are accountable for fulfilling your normal hours of work per week (except for Flex Time (Earned Time Off) Arrangements which will be averaged over each three-week period). Flex Time Arrangements may include non-standard work schedules, but such schedules must meet operational needs of the department.
4. A Flexible Work Arrangement must not impede your ability to meet performance expectations and complete regular work functions and duties, including communicating with colleagues, providing client/student service and remaining current on departmental and operational issues and updates.



Provisions for Hybrid and Remote Work Arrangements (if applicable)

5. You are required to establish an appropriate, professional workspace free from personal distractions and interruptions. Working remotely is not a substitute for dependent care or other personal obligations.
6. Your alternative work location must be in the Province of Nova Scotia within a reasonable commuting distance of the University, unless otherwise approved by People and Culture and President or Vice-President responsible for your department.
7. You are responsible for ensuring your alternative work location complies with the Flex@X Hybrid Work Health and Safety Guidelines. The workspace should be ergonomically optimized with adequate space that supports working efficiently and safely. In the event of an injury or near miss while at the remote work location, you are required to report the incident to your manager/supervisor as soon as possible. Note that you are not eligible for Injury on Duty leave if injured while working remotely.
8. Computer equipment used in remote locations must be issued by StFX and comply all Flex@X Information Technology requirements as well as the Acceptable Use of Information Technology Policy. You must take reasonable steps to protect any University property from theft, damage or misuse. You must provide internet connectivity that functions with sufficient bandwidth so that you can work effectively and meet the expectations of your role. If your internet connection becomes temporarily unavailable, you must notify your supervisor as soon as possible.
9. You are responsible for all costs associated with your alternate work location including, but not limited to, furniture, internet connection fees and insurance costs. The University will not reimburse employees for expenses related to their alternate work location or travel between the University and the alternate work location.
10. You agree to properly secure and ensure the privacy of any University information, records and materials while working at your alternate work location. You agree to report to your manager/supervisor any instances of loss, theft, damage or unauthorized access as soon as you become aware of it. You are not permitted to take sensitive information such as medical, personnel or financial records away from University property. Electronic access to these records off campus must occur using a University-issued computer. You remain responsible for the confidentiality of all information in your possession while working off-campus.
11. You acknowledge that the University does not insure the personal property of employees and is not liable for third party injuries that happen at your alternative work location. You are financially responsible for any loss, damage and/or financial expenses on or off campus related to their own personal property including insurance costs and deductibles. You agree to maintain homeowner or tenant insurance to protect against financial loss or liability.

Review and Amendment

12. At any time prior to a decision having been made regarding your application, you may withdraw or amend your submission by contacting your manager and People and Culture Advisor.



13. You may request an ongoing change to your Flexible Work Arrangement at any time. Changes will need to be approved by your manager and People and Culture and will be evaluated based on the Program criteria in effect at the time the change is requested.
14. The agreement will be reviewed by your manager within three (3) months of the start date to determine whether it meets the needs of the University.
15. The University may, with four (4) weeks notice, amend your Flexible Work Arrangement on an ongoing basis. If you disagree with the proposed amendment, you should discuss the change with your manager. Failing resolution, you should contact your People and Culture Advisor. Unionized employees may also contact their union for assistance.
16. Your manager may require you to come to campus on days you are scheduled to work from home or outside of your Modified Schedule (if applicable). Where possible, you will be given advance notice. Your managers should make reasonable efforts to avoid this where possible. For unionized employees, such changes are subject to the terms and conditions of the relevant collective agreement.

Termination of Participation

17. You are permitted to withdraw from the Program at any time after approval is received. However, the effective date of the termination will be confirmed by your manager/supervisor. Normally, four (4) weeks' notice is required.
18. The University may terminate your participation in the Program at its discretion. At least two (2) weeks' notice will be provided of the termination of your participation. Less than two (2) weeks' notice may be provided if there are health and safety considerations, or other exceptional circumstances.
19. Flex@X arrangements are not guaranteed to continue if you change jobs or move to a different department. A new Flex@X arrangement would need to be created for the new position and may differ from the prior agreement.