



Introduction

The Temporary Reduction in Hours Scheme has been introduced as one of a number of voluntary initiatives to support the financial sustainability of the University in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It provides employees with the opportunity to apply to temporarily reduce their working hours without it affecting any future compulsory redundancy payments should a compulsory redundancy situation arise while the staff member is working reduced hours under this Scheme.

Eligibility and Criteria

The Scheme is open to all staff and is subject to approval by the relevant senior manager (ie Head of School/Department). Applications should be considered and approved if financial savings can be realised.

Requests should be considered within the context of the University's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and within the context of the operational and associated implications of any proposed temporary change in hours, including the impact on colleagues' workloads.

Employees have the opportunity to apply for a temporary reduction in hours initially from 1 February 2021 until **30 September 2022**, and can apply to reduce their hours for a fixed period from a minimum of three months to a maximum of 12 months.

If the arrangement goes beyond three months, the arrangement should be reviewed regularly to ensure that the arrangements continue to be viable. If circumstances change, either for the University or employee, then this should be discussed with a view to gaining mutual agreement to any changes by both parties eg if a reduction in hours is agreed for 12 months and the employee's circumstances change at the six-month point, they may request to return to their normal hours of work earlier than previously agreed. The manager will then need to consider if this can be accommodated or whether the change needs to stay in place for the period agreed. The expectation is that the employee would return to their normal contracted hours at the end of the fixed period, unless other arrangements have been agreed eg via a permanent change which would be requested and considered in line with the Flexible Working Guidelines.

If the employee's substantive role is made compulsorily redundant during the time hours are reduced under the temporary scheme, any redundancy payment will be calculated based on the contractual hours worked before the temporary reduction; where an employee works variable hours, the calculation will be based on actual hours worked in the 12 weeks prior to the temporary reduction beginning.

If the employee requests a permanent change to their working hours then the Flexible Working Guidelines

(<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport/worklifebalance/flexibleworking/documents/flexible-working-guidelines-managers.pdf>) should be followed, with the due considerations outlined within the guidelines. Where any permanent changes are agreed, any future redundancy payments would be calculated on the new permanent agreed hours.

Employer contributions to pension schemes will be altered to reflect the reduced hours.

Employees may wish to continue to make employee pension contributions where enabled by the relevant pension scheme. Employees should speak to the University Pensions Team (email: pensions@nottingham.ac.uk), to discuss the options available during the temporary reduction in hours period to ensure that any implications for their pension membership and benefits are understood.

Annual leave, Bank Holidays and University Closure Days will need to be recalculated for the period of reduced working hours. Please ensure that this is done and recorded in the usual way. The links for calculating part-time leave and part-year leave are available on the HR web site at: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport/absenceandannualleave/annualleave/calculators.aspx>.

Examples

Examples of a temporary reduction in hours could include:

- Working less days in the week eg temporarily not working on a Monday each week
- Working less hours over the week eg reducing daily working hours from 7.25 hours to 5 hours
- Reducing hours on a flexible basis, ie reducing hours from 30 to 20 per week with the working pattern to be flexible to be agreed between the manager and the employee

Considering Applications

All requests should be considered for approval by the relevant senior manager, who has adequate oversight of the wider team/department/area of work. When considering requests, managers should review workload/tasks and output to ensure they are commensurate with the requested reduction in hours. This may mean that activities are re-prioritised/re-baselined to ensure that workload does not increase for other colleagues as result of the temporary reduction in hours. The expectation is **not** that the same work is delivered with less resource. Any applications made should consider how a temporary reduction in hours could be accommodated so that it does not mean that colleagues would unreasonably cover the work or that a backfill on the same grade is required to carry out the work. It is not expected that a reduction in hours for one post will lead to a temporary increase in hours for another post holder; this is a measure intended to support cost reduction and should show a saving to the School/Department.

In certain circumstances, managers may consider whether a temporary backfill at a lower grade to fulfil some of the tasks/work would be appropriate, **if considering this, then the expectation is that meaningful financial savings would still be realised by agreeing the temporary reduction in hours.**

Where more than one request is received within a particular team/department/area of work, and where these cannot both/all be approved, it may be helpful to explore if there is any room for adjustment or compromise in relation to the requests. Each case should be considered on its own merits, looking at the possible operational impacts of each case.

Where an application is made from an employee on a fixed-term contract, managers should consider the request and in particular, any implications around external funding. Where the contract is externally funded, it would not normally be expected that a request for a reduction in hours would be approved if this meant extending the length of the contract. Where the reduction in hours is within the period of the grant, consideration needs to be given as to the ability to meet the expectations of the grant within the reduced hours before any request can be considered for approval.

Other considerations may include any implications on colleagues where the requester is a manager/supervisor of others and the impact of other temporary schemes (eg the Temporary Unpaid Leave Scheme). Unless there are significant operational impacts in relation to requests, senior managers should attempt to approve requests from employees where possible.

Application and Approval Process

Employees are encouraged to discuss their request with their immediate line manager and complete the Temporary Reduction in Hours Application Form (<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport/coronavirus/voluntary-savings-initiatives.aspx>).

Where appropriate, it may be necessary to discuss the application in more detail with the employee. There may be the opportunity to agree a compromise with the employee based on their request if the full request cannot be approved. For example, a request to not work on a Friday may not be operationally viable due to issues of work cover/business critical activity, however, a working pattern of not working on a Wednesday may be able to be accommodated as an alternative.

The line manager should consider the request, complete the approval section of the form and submit to the relevant senior manager (ie Head of School/Department). The relevant senior manager should also consider the request, make a decision and notify the employee within 28 days of the request being made.

Once a request is approved by the senior manager, the completed form should then be sent to the Human Resources Department (email: hr@nottingham.ac.uk) to process the request and issue a confirmation letter to the employee.

Managers should ensure that arrangements are regularly reviewed and it should be made clear to the employee that there is an expectation they will return to their normal contracted hours at the end of the agreed period, unless other arrangements are approved ie a permanent arrangement is agreed via the formal flexible working request route.

Ahead of the temporary reduction in hours ceasing, managers should complete the Return from Temporary Reduction in Hours Form (<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport/worklifebalance/careerbreaks/documents/careerbepolicy.pdf>) on (or before) the 15th of the month prior, to confirm that the hours of work have reverted back to the normal contracted hours.

Where applications are not approved

By exception, there may be circumstances where a temporary reduction in hours cannot be accommodated due to operational reasons. Every effort should be made to discuss and agree a compromise with the employee to enable a request to be approved where financial savings will be realised. Where this is not possible, the employee should be informed along with the reasons why. There is no right for the employee to appeal against the decision and managers should seek advice from the HR Employment Relations Team or their relevant HR Business Partner (<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/aboutus/hr-business-partnering.aspx>) in these circumstances before confirming with the employee.

Further Information

For further advice and support please contact the HR Employment Relations Team (email: hrer@nottingham.ac.uk).