



**Title**

Flexible Work Policy

HR Policy No.:10.030

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**Purpose**

Providence College’s Flexible Work Policy seeks to offer innovative approaches to meeting the college’s operational needs while promoting a balance between work and personal life for its staff. The policy will provide the parameters for both telework and flex scheduling, including the process for consideration and approval. Access to participation in this program is not guaranteed; the availability of telework and other flexible working arrangements is subject to supervisor, department head, and division head/cabinet member approval and conformity with the program as outlined in this policy.

In implementing this program, Providence College will have employees working at different locations and different hours, placing a premium on the need to be creative and intentional in communications with colleagues. All flexible work arrangements must be in the college’s best interests. They should be beneficial or at least not disruptive to the department and Providence College’s operations.

To better serve our students, employees are typically required to perform work on campus. In accordance with this policy, the college offers flexible work schedules, and hybrid work arrangements for staff members when suitable according to strategic priorities and specific work requirements.

**Applicability**

Administrators and staff may be eligible, except where assignments are governed by collective bargaining agreements.

**Policy**

Flexible work arrangements derive from discretionary agreements between the college and an employee that may include modifications to a work schedule, work location, or other arrangements that differ from a department’s usual operating standards and practices. Supervisors may make reasonable adjustments to established standards and practices, so long as the college’s interests are achieved.

The college also recognizes that flexible work may not be suitable for every job. Many types of positions require employees to physically report to work on a full-time basis because of their functions and responsibilities.

Flexible work can also include arrangements that alter the work schedule, such as flexible arrival and departure times.

Any flexible work arrangement will be established on a trial basis for the first three months and may be discontinued at any time in the college's sole discretion.

**A) Hybrid Work Arrangement:** A Hybrid Work Arrangement is an approved, ongoing work arrangement that allows a staff member to perform work, during the approved schedule of the employee's regular work hours, at an approved alternative worksite which will be the employee's home.

The work must be done in a place that is free of distractions and appropriately confidential. A professional work setting must be maintained free of non-job-related interruptions during the regularly scheduled workday. Hybrid workers must maintain a distinct separation between work activities and personal activities. For example, hybrid work is not a substitute for childcare or adult care.

There is a continuum of hybrid work arrangements based on the hours and schedule of the work.

1. **Occasional Hybrid** is occasional or short-term work that is approved by the supervisor on a case-by-case basis, where the hours worked remotely are not part of a previously approved, ongoing, and scheduled hybrid work schedule. For example, once a month basis. Occasional hybrid work may be approved by the supervisor and department head without formal documentation and there is no expectation of regularly scheduled continuance. If the instances and regularity of occasional work increase and the arrangement still meets the operating needs of the department, supervisors should initiate a formal Scheduled Hybrid Work Arrangement with appropriate documentation.
2. **Scheduled Hybrid** is regularly scheduled remote work for up to **two days** per week. This requires a formal Scheduled Hybrid Work Arrangement. Employees with these arrangements may be required to surrender dedicated individual office or workstation space on campus.

**B) Flex Time:** In order to recognize the varied and changing personal needs of staff members and to support staff as they encounter work/family concerns, the college provides flex time. Flex time may be utilized by staff, as deemed appropriate by the supervisor, in consultation with the Office of Human Resources. Flex time recognizes employees' obligations to respond to personal needs, such as taking children to and from day care, helping elderly parents, short-term family needs, and so forth. Flex time enables an employee to adjust daily work schedules to meet their particular needs while still fulfilling the requirements of their position at the College.

It also offers the opportunity to expand the hours during which a work area may be open for operation.

Flex time provides options in setting the work start and end time, typically with a designated core period during the day when all staff members are present or working. An example of flex time is an employee choosing to start work at 7 a.m. so that they may leave earlier, while another member of the same team may choose a 10 a.m. start time and work until later in the day.

Non-exempt employees, i.e., those paid bi-weekly, must record all actual hours worked, follow applicable policies regarding meal/break periods, and be paid overtime if they work more than 40 hours in a work week.

1. **Occasional Flex Time** is an occasional, limited occurrence to shift the start and end time of the work day, and it needs to be approved by the supervisor on a case-by-case basis. For example, an employee needs to shift their hours to come in an hour late on a particular day because they have a plumber coming to their house for an appointment for a sudden emergency maintenance issue.
2. **Scheduled Flex Time** is a change to the employee's regular schedule whereby an employee may apply to their supervisor to begin the process for requesting a regular flex time schedule. The employee will be directed to use the Flexible Work Arrangement Request form. Approval depends upon many factors including, but not limited to, the demands placed on the employee, assurance of sufficient coverage in their department during the hours when the college is open, having appropriate resources available during off-hours (i.e., computers, copying machines, etc.), having sufficient assigned work which can be completed beyond normal hours, being able to work without supervision, and other factors. Any approval of a scheduled flex time is subject to the support of the employee's supervisor, the division head/cabinet member, and the human resources office. Granting flex time to any employee does not ensure an indefinite arrangement. Requests should be renewed annually and should include a start and end date. Requests also should be reviewed if there is a change in the employee's supervisor.

Any arrangement, however, may be modified or revoked at any time as the needs of the College, the office, or the employee change.

## **Criteria**

Before approving or denying a request for a Scheduled Hybrid Work Arrangement or Scheduled Flex Time, the supervisor and division head/cabinet member, with the assistance of HR, will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement. The evaluation will include a review of the following criteria:

### **Department considerations**

- The department supervisor determines how the strategy, purpose, objectives, and goals of the unit are best achieved. As a result of the assessment, the supervisor,

department head, and division head/cabinet member may require that employees, especially those in areas which directly impact the student experience, perform their work on campus.

- Where hybrid work options may be available, department leadership will work with HR to assess which roles may be eligible.

### **Position/role considerations**

Considerations for a hybrid work arrangement or flex time are role-specific, based on the purpose of the position within the department. As such, it is possible that some positions within a unit may be appropriate for a hybrid arrangement when others are not. Several factors should be considered in determining the feasibility of remote/hybrid work, including:

- The position has job functions that can be performed at a remote site without diminishing the quality of the work or disrupting the productivity of a unit or the college.
- Performance can be measured by quantitative or qualitative results-oriented standards.
- The position can be effectively supervised remotely.
- The position has a minimal need for specialized materials or equipment available only at the regularly assigned Providence College work location (including interaction with colleagues, supervisors, clients, and external parties, such as vendors).
- The position either does not have job functions that require in-person interaction, or these interactions can be scheduled for specific days.
- Collaborations and teamwork in the same office locations are not necessary for the overall functioning of the work unit.
- The confidentiality and privacy of the work being performed is not at risk of being compromised if performed in a non-college work location (whether electronically, physically, or otherwise). Additional assessment will be conducted when the employee is working with Personally Identifiable Information or Personal Health Information.

### **Employee considerations**

The supervisor and department head will determine whether the employee requesting approval for hybrid work arrangement or flex time is eligible, in consultation with Human Resources. Approvals are made by the division head/cabinet member. Employees eligible for a formal Hybrid Work Arrangement must be employed in their current role for a minimum of six months of continuous, regular employment and must have a satisfactory performance record. A Hybrid Work Arrangement during the first six months is not advisable because of the need to train the employee, clarify job responsibilities, establish relationships, and assess suitability for continued employment.

Generally, the following conditions must be met to approve an employee for a hybrid work arrangement:

- The employee’s duties, obligations, collaborations, and responsibilities will be unaffected by working remotely.
- The employee demonstrates effective communication skills with colleagues, students, customers, supervisors, etc., and leverages various communication tools appropriately (e.g., email, Microsoft Teams, phone calls).
- Employees struggling with performance as documented (including punctuality, attendance, meeting deadlines, effective communication with others, etc.) should not be considered for this arrangement until such time that consistent, improved performance is demonstrated.
- The employee has received a “meets performance standard” evaluation in all categories in their performance review immediately preceding the request. (The employee must maintain these ratings for the flexible work arrangement to continue).
- The employee has no active disciplinary actions on file for the current or immediately preceding period.
- The employee can maintain a safe work environment.
- The employee has access to all necessary work equipment to perform their duties and is able to troubleshoot remote technology issues (with appropriate college support and resources).
- The employee may not use the hybrid work arrangement to substitute for caregiving services of any kind.
- The college may request and post a new or vacant position as hybrid under certain circumstances. In such instances, the employee(s) may be exempted from the requirement to work on campus for six months prior to working remotely, and the supervisor and department head would approve special arrangements for onboarding new employee(s).

### **Supervisor considerations**

In considering the suitability of Hybrid Work Arrangements, the division head /cabinet member and department leadership also will consider other factors such as reallocation of space needs. Supervisors should evaluate the most effective and appropriate way to manage the work and the team, evaluating their ability and time needed to effectively manage and lead hybrid work. Supervisors are responsible for submitting requests to their department head. Review and approvals of such requests are made by the division head/cabinet member.

### **Approval Process and Employee Responsibility**

The employee is responsible for submitting a Request for a Flexible Work Arrangement (form attached) to their supervisor, understanding that the following conditions will apply if the request is approved:

- The employee must communicate with the supervisor regarding the mutual satisfaction of expectations and to regularly evaluate the arrangement as well as the implementation of agreed-upon work assignment changes.
- The employee must discuss with the supervisor, in consultation with Information Technology, any equipment needs and verify access to internet and phone service.
- All job responsibilities and conditions of employment remain applicable.
- Each employee is expected to follow established college policies, procedures, and guidelines, while maintaining a regular workload.
- Each employee must certify that the remote work environment is safe and meets the same safety standards that are applied to on-campus work locations.
- Unless directed by the college as a condition of employment, an employee is responsible for expenses arising out of an approved alternative work assignment. See pages 8 and 9 for specific information about technology and related equipment.

### **Supervisor Responsibilities**

- The supervisor must complete training on the Flexible Work Policy and the management process.
- The supervisor is responsible for consulting with Human Resources to assess position descriptions for flexible work eligibility.
- The supervisor must review all flexible work arrangement requests, consult with the division's senior administrator and/or vice president/cabinet member, as applicable, and either approve, return for improvement, or deny each request and provide the employee with information and rationale for the decision.
- The supervisor must determine the impact of the potential loss of space/office due to an approved hybrid arrangement.
- Upon approval, each supervisor must clearly communicate defined tasks and expectations, measure performance through results, productivity, and conduct and provide regular feedback on work performance.
- The supervisor should work collaboratively with the employee and address problems and/or known challenges before finalizing approval.
- The supervisor is responsible for reviewing flexible work arrangements on a case-by-case basis by evaluating the individual's performance, responsibilities, and work style while remaining focused on the benefits of continued support.
- The supervisor must review workplace needs on a regular basis and retain discretion to discontinue assignments that are no longer in the best interest of the department and/or college.
- The supervisor is responsible for submitting requests to their department head. Review and final approvals of such requests are made by the division head/cabinet member.

### **Flexible Work Arrangement Agreement**

If the employee, supervisor, department head and division head/cabinet member agree, a Flexible Work Arrangement Agreement will be prepared and signed by all parties, and a three-month trial

period will commence. The signed agreement will be forwarded to Human Resources and a copy will be placed in the employee file.

A signed agreement is valid only for the employee, position, and hybrid work location noted in the agreement. Agreements are for one year in length and can be renewed if agreed by both parties for another year. Should an employee choose to move into another position at the college, or move to a different state or country, the agreement becomes null and void. Employees contemplating a change to another college position or a move to another geographical location should explore the possibility of another Flexible Work Arrangement Agreement prior to making a change. The college reserves the right in its sole discretion to discontinue a hybrid/flex time working arrangement at any time.

## **Compensation and Benefits**

An employee's compensation and benefits will not change as a result of a flexible work arrangement. Expenses for required travel to or from the college will be the responsibility of the employee and not the college. The existence of a flexible work arrangement does not alter an individual's employment relationship with Providence College or the employee's obligation to observe all applicable college rules, policies, and procedures. The staff member's duties, responsibilities, and conditions of employment remain unchanged. The employee must be available by phone, remote video, and/or email at the approved times and days of the week.

Overtime compensation (for non-exempt staff), vacation, and sick leave will continue to be based on approved hours worked during the pay or accrual period. Requests to work overtime or request vacation must be pre-approved in writing by the employee's supervisor.

## **Tax Implications**

The employee must determine, and be responsible for, any tax implications under IRS, state, and local government laws relating to working in a hybrid working arrangement. Responsibility for fulfilling all obligations in this area rests solely with the employee.

## **Hours of Work**

The total number of hours that employees are expected to work ordinarily will not change. Employees agree to apply themselves to their work during regularly scheduled work hours as determined by the supervisor and maintain productivity regardless of the location of the work.

Non-exempt employees are always required to accurately report all time worked. Accurate and timely reporting is especially important for hybrid work arrangements. The failure to accurately report all time worked may result in the termination of a hybrid work arrangement, as well as further disciplinary action. To ensure compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, supervisors must have in place procedures to facilitate the accurate documentation of the work hours of employees working in a hybrid arrangement. Employees are expected to be available for in-person training, coverage for the office to ensure minimum staffing is maintained, meetings, etc., even if the training or meeting falls on a pre-scheduled remote workday. An employee may

request from the immediate supervisor the opportunity to float that remote workday to another day; approval will be solely at the supervisor's discretion and there is no guarantee that the request will be granted.

## **Travel**

Supervisors may require the employee to report to the college worksite or meeting places as needed for work-related meetings or other events. An employee who has a hybrid arrangement is not entitled to reimbursement for travel to attend work meetings.

- Employees working in a hybrid arrangement may be reimbursed for business-related travel arrangements that are approved by their supervisor in line with the college travel policy.

## **Use of Leave**

Hybrid work is not intended to be used in place of sick leave, federal or Rhode Island family and medical leave, workers' compensation leave, or other types of leave. Employees requesting a medical accommodation should follow [the college's Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) request process](#).

## **Equipment**

The college supplies an employee with a single standard IT configuration which typically includes a computer (laptop or desktop) and accessories appropriate for their job requirements and work schedule. The college will provide only one configuration to be used either at the on-site office or at the hybrid office. Employees approved for a hybrid arrangement may be issued a college laptop computer, contingent upon available departmental budget and supply, that they carry between both offices. The college will not ordinarily provide additional accessories beyond what is provided in the standard configuration. All college-owned technology purchases must be procured through or approved by Information Technology. Additionally, all college-owned technology must be configured and provisioned by the IT department. The use of employee-owned hardware is permissible, but only in accordance with the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The IT staff will not provide technical support for employee-owned hardware.

Employees must maintain a reliable internet connection that is stable and fast enough to support day-to-day work tasks, such as email, chat, or video conferencing. Access to the college's secured VPN may be available under some circumstances. Internet services, phone lines, webcams, printers, duplicate equipment (monitors, keyboards, mouse hardware, and headsets), or other technology hardware for remote office use are not provided by the college and are an expense of the employee.

The college recommends that employees use a headset to reduce background noise, improve sound quality, and ensure confidentiality. The employee assumes responsibility for the security of information, documents, and records in their possession or used while working offsite and

may not remove highly sensitive data from the college workplace without the prior written consent of their supervisor.

Certain jobs and approved accommodations may require specialized hardware or software. IT reserves the right to make decisions (which are subject to change at any time) regarding the appropriate equipment. Any equipment supplied by the college is to be used for business purposes only. Each hybrid worker must sign an inventory of all college technology received and agree to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. Upon termination of employment, all college supplied technology must be returned to the college. For details on remote technology recommendations, contact the IT Helpdesk ([helpdesk@providence.edu](mailto:helpdesk@providence.edu)). The employee will be responsible for the maintenance of any personal equipment used in remote work, such as printers or monitors. The college accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment, but the college will maintain any specialized equipment it provides.

## **Technology Support**

The IT department is able to provide remote support for issues related to software, so long as an active internet connection is available. Support personnel are unable to provide hardware or operating system support for any personally owned technology. To address hardware issues with college-owned technology or other issues on devices that do not have an active internet connection, the IT department requires that the hardware be on campus. The IT department does not make off campus, on-site visits.

For issues with internet service at an employee's home, the employee must contact their internet service provider. The IT department is unable to troubleshoot or resolve issues with home internet connections.

## **Workspace and Work Environment**

The employee will establish an appropriate remote work environment. The college will not be responsible for costs associated with the setup of the employee's remote work office, such as remodeling, furniture, or lighting, nor for repairs or modifications to the remote office space. No college-owned furniture (chairs, desks, etc.) may be removed from the campus location for use in a remote work location.

Employees who work remotely should ensure a safe and suitable workspace that is appropriately confidential and free of distractions and interruptions that may interfere with work. Employees are expected to maintain their remote workspace in a safe manner, free from safety hazards, and must possess homeowners or renter's liability insurance, proof of which may be requested by the college. Employees are responsible for reporting work-related injuries to Human Resources as soon as practicable. The employee is liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to their remote office and for non-work-related injuries.

Hybrid workers will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary college information, including confidential student and employee information accessible from their remote office.

Recommended steps include the use of locked file cabinets and desks, regular password maintenance, and any other measures appropriate for the job and the work environment.

### **Termination of the Flexible Work Arrangement**

All flexible work arrangements are subject to ongoing review by the supervisor and Human Resources and may be terminated at any time at their sole discretion. Supervisors will make reasonable efforts to provide two weeks' notice of such a change to accommodate issues that may arise from ending a flexible work arrangement. There may be instances, however, when no notice is possible. In either case, the refusal to return to campus will be considered a voluntary resignation of employment.

Questions about this policy should be directed to Human Resources (401) 865-2341 or [hr@providence.edu](mailto:hr@providence.edu).

### **Responsibility**

The senior associate vice president for human resources, or a designee, is responsible for the overall administration of this policy. This program will be formally assessed by June 2023. It remains subject to further modification.