Library Flexible Work Arrangement Guidelines for 2024-25

April 2024 | Library Cabinet

The Library recognizes that a flexible work arrangement (FWA) is a positive benefit for many people and departments. FWAs provide opportunities for employees to work adjusted hours and/or work remotely. The [FWA documentation from People & Culture](#) includes an overview and logistics related to our campus's policies. FWAs are meant to document a regular, predictable schedule that is structured for a longer period of time. This is important since each FWA is approved by the supervisor with consideration of all active agreements for the unit/division.

This document outlines the Library's aspirations and expectations for all employees with an FWA in 2024-25. The guidelines clarify individual and collective actions and behaviors, as well as some organizational approaches -- all of which aim to continuously improve the experience for all employees, and ensure we continue to meet user needs.

This document includes:
- Background
- Commitments and guidelines
- Highlights and clarifications from the campus FWA policies

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Background

These guidelines were developed in response to the feedback from Library staff during the 2022-23 academic year, and updated each year since. Staff feedback highlighted aspects of the FWAs that were important and/or effective for them and their unit, and aspects that were problematic. Additionally, supervisors shared experiences implementing FWAs in their respective units.

As the People & Culture documentation states: "As our teaching and research activities [at UC Berkeley] are predominantly conducted in-person, it is essential that in-person collaboration and community building continue." One of the biggest challenges for the Library has been figuring out how to adopt flexible work arrangements while also sustaining our extensive on-campus, in-person services.

Commitments and guidelines

Flexible work arrangements offer a way of structuring how individuals and units work, while ensuring that the Library and university sustain operational and business needs efficiently and effectively. We, as a Library, are committed to exploring possibilities for any Library employee who requests some flexibility in their work arrangement. In some cases, depending on roles, services, and functions, this may not be possible or may be minimal (e.g., once a month for a remote work day, or once a month shift in schedule, or some flexibility during summer sessions). To provide this opportunity for the greatest number of people, everyone needs to embrace the notion of supporting each other, being adaptable, and adopting some new practices to benefit the whole organization.

Sustaining on-campus services for our patrons and ensuring responsive service to Library colleagues is a top priority in the development of all employee work schedules and determines the feasibility of all flexible work arrangements. Supervisors need to ensure the business needs of the Library and all units are met, and may consult with other unit/division heads to inform their final FWA agreements, including possible accommodations or exceptions. Supervisors can modify or terminate FWAs for a number or reasons, such as operational changes, staffing changes, and individual job performance.

Whether remote or in-person, responsiveness and participation are key issues that build confidence among Library colleagues in the effectiveness of flexible arrangements, bolster a sense of community and shared goals, maximize productivity and effectiveness, and reduce undesirable side effects of a hybrid work environment. All Library employees are also asked to adopt the practices for [communicating and collaborating effectively in a hybrid environment](#).

To respond to these issues,

As an organization, the Library needs to:
- encourage cross-unit conversations to develop coordinated, coherent service models
- develop mechanisms to assess how well the service models are meeting user needs
- ensure all on-campus services have adequate coverage for all hours, including a backup plan for when the primary operational staff are away
- confirm which services and work are the priority and appropriate for remote employees in all types of positions
- ensure employees' job descriptions including primary work, project roles, and special assignments are adjusted and documented to support flexible work
- adopt and support effective habits for working, communicating, and collaborating effectively in a hybrid environment
- adopt principles to guide when activities will be offered fully virtual, hybrid, or fully in-person, and how those are best supported
- provide opportunities for a mix of in-person and virtual events and activities
- support supervisors in implementing and applying these guidelines
- build the sense of organizational community within and across units

Each Library manager/supervisor needs to:
- develop and communicate plans to ensure that on-campus and virtual services have adequate coverage for all hours, including backup plans
- develop mechanisms to assess how well the service models are meeting user needs
- identify which services and work are the priority and appropriate for each employee when working remotely
- review the job description of each position, including primary work, project roles, and special assignments, and adjust them as needed to create structure and consistency and redundancy so that employees may cover for one another
- ensure the adoption and implementation of guidelines for optimal communication and collaboration in a hybrid environment
- ensure that they are available to the staff in their units, setting a model for availability and flexibility, understanding that presence and communication practices are important, and skillfully developing relationships and community within the unit
- regularly check-in with employees to identify and address issues immediately, and to gather ideas for future revisions to the guidelines

Each Library employee needs to:
- demonstrate that they are engaged, accessible, responsive, effective, and able to meet the expectations and goals for their position, regardless of their schedule or work location. Some examples of expected behaviors are:
  - timely response to patron and colleague inquiries (email or other), striving to address the question (ideally within a day) or acknowledge receipt with an anticipated future response date if more time is needed.
  - attend scheduled meetings in person or virtually as requested by the convenor
  - keep their bCal updated and set the all-day indicator for each day to indicate if they are on-site or remote (publicly viewable by Library colleagues)
- exhibit flexibility in helping cover key roles and responsibilities so all colleagues have an opportunity for a flexible work agreement. Some examples of expected behaviors are:
  - learning and performing new tasks appropriate for their job classification
  - with notice from their supervisor, temporarily changing or suspending a remote day or flexible hours to cover for a colleague
- propose to their supervisor/manager how they could support relevant in-person services and service points when on campus, and support the priority virtual services during remote work days
- adopt the Library's approaches for working, communicating, and collaborating effectively in a hybrid environment, including seeking training or coaching as needed
- understand that some events may only take place in-person and there may not be a virtual option, and adjusting their schedule to attend if needed
- identify and discuss issues and ideas related to the Library's implementation of the flexible work agreements as it applies to their job and unit with their supervisor/manager

Highlights and clarifications from the campus FWA policies

The UC Berkeley FWA documentation includes many important details. **Please read the FWA documentation carefully before signing it**; talk with your supervisor about any questions you have. Here are some important highlights and clarifications about the Library's implementation.

One year term: "Flexible Work Agreements cannot exceed 12 months and a renewal agreement must be completed at least annually." Instead of an auto-renewal process, each spring the Library revises our FWA guidelines that employees agree to follow before completing the FWA forms for that year. For 2024-25, Library FWAs may be effective starting August 12, 2024 and must all conclude by August 11, 2025.

Change of schedule: The flexible work arrangement does not allow for employees to shift schedules or work location between days of the week without advance request and approval. Changes in a work schedule must be discussed by the supervisor and employee before they are made. Supervisors will need to confirm if a substitute day that week is possible. Predictability of schedule is what allows the Library to offer predictable services to patrons and colleagues. When changes are requested, supervisors need time to consider impacts and options. If someone wants to request a one-time change in their regular schedule, they should do so with at least one week's notice. If ongoing changes are proposed, once the supervisor agrees a new FWA needs to be signed by both parties and should use the original agreement termination date.

The Flexible Work Agreement document under section 16. e, General Terms and Conditions, states, "Employee will be able to physically attend scheduled work meetings with reasonable notice based on business and operational needs…as requested or required by the Department." The Library confirms that all employees will come to campus when needed to support core services and operations as determined by the supervisor, who will provide as much advance notice as possible. Employees may be expected to suspend their FWA schedule (remote work or adjusted schedule) such as to attend an in-person shift, participate in an on-site activity, or cover due to absences or vacancies in the unit.

Modification or termination: "A supervisor can modify or terminate the agreement for a number or reasons, including operational changes, staffing changes, performance, etc. Similarly, the operational needs of the unit might require a request for a change or termination to be postponed or denied entirely. For example, this might be the case when an individual is requesting a schedule change that would have an impact on several other individuals or the unit's ability to deliver its service as required. A Flexible Work Agreement may be terminated if an employee's job performance suffers." At regular check-in meetings, employees and supervisors are encouraged to reflect on the work being accomplished and address any issues or concerns. If the supervisor determines that modification or termination is needed, notification will be given according to the terms that apply for that position.

Sick leave: As a reminder, all standard practices for requesting vacation and calling in sick continue to apply. "Employee will request Supervisor approval to use vacation, sick, or other leave in the same manner as when working at Employee's primary work location." In general, sick leave exists to provide paid time off in case of employee illness or injury, medical appointments, for parental bonding, family illness or bereavement leave (particular guidelines are outlined in collective bargaining agreements and policy). If an employee is not able to work due to these types of situations, they should use accrued sick leave. If you are sick, please use a sick day to rest and recover. If you are sick, requesting to switch to a remote work day in lieu of using a sick day generally is not appropriate (unless a formal accommodation is in place, or there is a special policy in collective bargaining agreements and policies related to specific positions). If you feel ill, it is not appropriate to cancel all meetings and commitments and still log it as a remote work day.

Preferred work hours: Most Library services are offered between 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. PT Monday through Friday, though the Library has a few locations and a virtual chat service with extended hours. Unless supporting Library services with exceptional hours, most Library employees should plan their schedules (including flexible schedules) to fit within our Library's core service window. In this way, regardless of work location, Library employees are able to respond to users and colleagues most responsively.