

Mississippi University for Women

Summer 2024 Flex Program Guidelines

Introduction: In 2019, the University created the Summer Flex program which is designed to promote employee work-life balance and reward employees for contributions to our university. Given the success of the program and requests for its renewal, the University is pleased to offer the 2024 Summer Flex program. This program will allow eligible staff to work a flexible schedule with either a 4-day work week, 4.5-day work week, or some other flexible work schedule. **This year's program will last 12 weeks, beginning Sunday, May 12 and ending Saturday, August 3.**

The weeks beginning May 26 and June 30 are ineligible for flex scheduling because they are 4-day work weeks due to Memorial Day and July Fourth holidays.

The program is voluntary and individual employees decide if they wish to participate. The program may not be appropriate for all staff or departments, and it is up to supervisors and cabinet-level supervisors to determine whether participation is appropriate for each department and position. Where applicable, it is strongly encouraged that departments and offices cross train employees so that the office is not dependent on a single person to do certain functions.

Note: All offices MUST be open Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm. Any office with two or more employees may not utilize flex options that result in having no employees present during the work week. Departments are not required to participate in the Summer Flex program if the employees' duties and responsibilities are better served by working the standard schedule during all or part of this time period. Individual department observance of summer hours is determined by the department with approval from the supervising cabinet member.

Eligibility: Full-time or part-time, benefits-eligible employees are eligible to participate in the Summer Flex program. Individual employee participation is voluntary and any employee will be allowed to maintain their regular schedule if preferred. Participation is also not automatic or an entitlement. Each supervisor, with approval from their supervising cabinet member, will work with their respective areas to determine whether a specific position, function or department can achieve its goals and maintain services while allowing flexible schedules.

Advantages of a Flexible Schedule: Flexible schedules work best when they meet both the departmental and university's operational needs in providing effective services and the needs of employees in balancing work and personal life. Some advantages of a flexible schedule may include:

- Enhanced recruitment and retention
- Reduced absences and tardiness
- Improved morale and productivity
- Extended departmental work hours
- Increased cross training for some shared duties and coverage
- Uninterrupted time for creative or detailed work

Considerations for Supervisors in Reviewing Requests for Flexible Schedules:

1. Participating offices with two or more employees MUST remain open Monday through Friday, 8am-5pm. Offices with only one employee should discuss with their supervisor and supervising cabinet member how flex can work without interruption to normal business operations.
2. Will your department be able to satisfy your operational responsibilities and meet student needs?
3. Will every major function be covered Monday through Friday, 8am-5pm?
4. Does your department's work flow allow a lesser staffing level during the summer?
5. A flexible schedule may not be appropriate for a new employee or for any employee whose last performance appraisal was less than satisfactory.
6. Can group meetings be rescheduled to days when all can be present?
7. Can you effectively monitor the work of employees that occurs outside of your typical schedule?
8. Have you considered the effect of flexible schedules on those employees who cannot participate?
9. Have you reminded employees (those flexing and not) to pre-plan now any vacation or medical appointments so that your master schedule for the department takes most time off requests into account?
10. Evaluate conflicting requests for flexible schedules basing decisions on functional coverage needs, employee's relative performance and relative seniority.
11. If a flex schedule for the entire period is not feasible for a particular function or employee, have you considered whether just a week or a few weeks of the Summer Flex program could be 4-day or 4.5 days for that person/function?

Employee Responsibilities:

1. Each employee must do his or her part to ensure that the department's productivity and student needs are being met.
2. For those on a flex schedule, unplanned time off, whether full days or arriving late/leaving early should be avoided to the extent possible. Those not on a flex schedule should keep in mind that a supervisor's ability to approve unplanned time off requests may be constrained by the planned time off already approved and department flex schedule.
3. Planned days off using leave may be requested along with your flex schedule if they can be accommodated within your department. Keep in mind that such additional time off by multiple staff members may affect how many flex schedule weeks you and other staff members in your department can take.
4. Emergency time off during the period will be charged to your leave time based on the schedule on file for that period (i.e. 10 hours for someone working four 10-hour days).
5. State law requires that employees use "one day of personal leave for each absence due to illness." If the need arises to use medical leave, you will be charged personal leave for your first day of illness based on the flex schedule that you have agreed upon with your supervisor and that is on file with Human Resources (i.e. 10 hours for someone working four 10-hour days).
6. Employees working a flex schedule should be mindful that not all employees are participating in Summer Flex before engaging in work (phone calls, emails, etc.) outside of 8am-5pm.

Schedule Options: The current regular schedule is for the employee to work from 8am-5pm, with an hour for lunch, resulting in 8 hours worked per day. During the Summer Flex program, eligible

employees and their supervisors will determine what 4-day, 4.5 day, etc. 40-hour per week schedule is permitted, within the following parameters:

- The extra day off (if a 4-day week) will usually be Monday or Friday. Employees should keep in mind their regular meetings, interdepartmental projects and campus commitments, etc. when scheduling flex time so as not to interrupt the work of their colleagues. In a function that does not require such interaction with others, a flex schedule may be approved for a different day off, if the employee and supervisor agree. The same applies to the half-day option.
- The start and end times for an employee will normally fall between the hours of 7:00 am and 7:00 pm Monday through Friday.
- A shorter lunch may also be used to achieve a desired schedule, but a minimum of a 30-minute lunch is recommended.
- The flex schedule will be predetermined by the employee and supervisor and, to facilitate planning for departmental coverage, will apply for each week of the Summer Flex program, except for any pre-planned vacations.
- The following examples are for full-time employees working 40 hours per week. Part-time, benefits-eligible employees are also eligible for Summer Flex and would adjust their schedules accordingly.

Examples Working a 4 Day Week:

Example No. 1	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Start Time	7:00 am	7:00 am	7:00 am	7:00 am	--
End Time	6:00 pm	6:00 pm	6:00 pm	6:00 pm	--
Lunch	1 hr.	1 hr.	1 hr.	1 hr.	n/a
Working Hours	10	10	10	10	0
Total Hours (Week)	40				

Example No. 2	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Start Time	--	7:00 am	7:00 am	7:00 am	7:00 am
End Time	--	5:30 pm	5:30 pm	5:30 pm	5:30 pm
Lunch	n/a	½ hr.	½ hr.	½ hr.	½ hr.
Working Hours	0	10	10	10	10
Total Hours (Week)	40				

Examples Working a 4.5 Day Week:

Example No. 3	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Start Time	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am
End Time	6:00 pm	6:00 pm	6:00 pm	6:00 pm	12:00 pm
Lunch	1 hr.	1 hr.	1 hr.	1 hr.	n/a
Working Hours	9	9	9	9	4
Total Hours	40				

Example No. 4	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Start Time	7:30 am	7:30 am	8:00 am	7:30 am	7:30 am
End Time	5:00 pm	5:00 pm	12:00 pm	5:00 pm	5:00 pm
Lunch	½ hr.	½ hr.	n/a	½ hr.	½ hr.
Working Hours	9	9	4	9	9
Total Hours	40				

Procedures and Forms: After consultation between supervisor and employee, the employee will complete a Summer Flex Request Form for their supervisor’s approval. **Supervisors within each department will retain an approved copy for their records, provide a copy to their supervising cabinet member AND a copy to Human Resources by Friday, May 3.** If any substantial change is made to the schedule after it is approved by the supervisor, a new Summer Flex Request Form will need to be completed, approved and sent to Human Resources. Questions as to what constitutes a substantial change may be emailed to hinfo@muw.edu.

Please refer to FAQs for more information about flexible schedules and for guidance.

Important Deadlines: Offices are encouraged to consider the Summer Flex program and have discussions NOW about how it could work for your department or office. **Summer Flex Request Forms must be approved and forwarded to Human Resources by Friday, May 3.**

Summer Flex program Frequently Asked Questions

1. ***Who is eligible for the Summer Flex program?***
Any full-time and part-time, benefits-eligible employee.

2. ***When does the program start? End?***
The program commences Sunday, May 12 and ends Saturday, August 3. The weeks of May 26 and June 30 are holiday weeks, recognizing Memorial Day and Fourth of July, and are excluded from flex scheduling.

3. ***I am the only person in my department. Am I eligible?***
Possibly. Your supervisor and supervising cabinet member will need to determine whether a specific position, function or department can achieve its goals and maintain services while allowing flexible schedules. Single-employee offices could possibly partner with their supervisor or another office or department to work a flex schedule. For example, support staff in an academic unit may want to consider partnering with another academic unit support staff.

4. ***Can student workers maintain an office while benefits-eligible employees work a flex schedule?***
Student workers should not be solely responsible for keeping an office open during the Summer Flex program. While it may be acceptable for extenuating circumstances, it should not be a part of the regular flex schedule. (i.e. Employee works a 4-day work week and the student worker is responsible for keeping the office open on Fridays is not permitted.)

5. Do I have to take a lunch break?

It is recommended that you incorporate at least 30 minutes of unpaid time for lunch.

6. I want to participate. What do I need to do?

Review the program guidelines and listen to any parameters provided by your department. Determine your desired schedule and complete a 2024 Summer Flex Request Form and submit to your supervisor. Keep a copy of your approved Summer Flex Request Form to aid you in completing your leave at the end of each month. (Supervisors will retain an approved copy, provide a copy to their supervising cabinet member AND a copy to Human Resources by Friday, May 3.)

7. Am I required to participate in the Summer Flex program?

No, your participation in this program is strictly voluntary.

8. My flexible schedule proposal was denied by my supervisor. What can I do?

Keep in mind that employee participation is not an entitlement. Departmental goals and customer service must be maintained. If you feel your proposed schedule will not disrupt the work in your area, you may discuss your proposal with the next level supervisor and/or Human Resources.

9. What are the schedule options available to me?

You may work either a 4-day work week, 4.5-day work week, or some combination thereof, wherein the total number of hours worked for each week is 40 hours, if you are a full-time employee. You may do this by working four 10-hour days or four 9-hour days and one 4-hour day, or some other flexible work schedule. See examples of possible schedules on page 3.

10. Can I change my participation in the program?

An employee may opt out of the Summer Flex program at any time. Commitment to your flexible schedule is crucial to ensure that your department can achieve its goals and maintain student services during normal business hours. However, there may be extenuating circumstances that warrant a change in your participation. Discuss your concerns/reasons for wanting to change your participation with your supervisor. Any substantial changes to your approved schedule or opting out of the Summer Flex program will need to be approved and submitted to Human Resources immediately. You may contact hrinfo@muw.edu concerning what constitutes a substantial change.

11. What if I need an unplanned day or partial day off?

If you are working a flexible schedule, you should make every effort to schedule your medical and other appointments on already planned time off time. If you still have an unavoidable absence, you should use and document the appropriate leave time. Assuming you miss on a day you are scheduled to work 10 hours, you will take 10 hours of leave. Your hours worked for the week plus any personal/medical leave taken should total 40 hours.

12. How does my flex schedule apply to medical leave?

State law requires that an employee take "one day of personal leave for each absence due to illness." The number of hours for your personal leave to be taken will depend upon the flex

schedule that you have agreed upon with your supervisor and that is on file with Human Resources (i.e. 10 hours of leave for someone working 10-hour days).

13. *Is this an ongoing program?*

The Summer Flex program is in effect from May 12 through August 3, 2024, only.

14. *What if a 4-day or 4.5-day work week won't work for me or my department?*

Summer Flex may not work for every employee or department. Communicate with your supervisor to determine whether any part of the summer can be accommodated to the 4-day or 4.5-day work week, or some other flexible work schedule.

15. *Can I flex across weeks, i.e. work 50 hours in one week and then 30 hours in the next?*

Unfortunately, you cannot count time worked over 40 hours in one work week and apply it to the subsequent work week.

16. *Can I telework while on a flex schedule?*

No. The flex schedule is designed to provide in-person coverage for an office or department from Monday through Friday, 8am-5pm.

17. *Previously, I had trouble knowing when an office was open because it seemed like some offices allowed all of their employees to flex on the same days. Will the University provide me with a master schedule of when offices are open?*

No office is allowed to "close" due to its participation in the Summer Flex program. All offices are to remain open Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm. Any office who has more than one employee working in the office should always have a physical presence during the University's normal business hours. Single-employee offices may work with other offices or departments to cover their office responsibilities while they are taking advantage of the Summer Flex program.