



RECOMMENDATIONS –

TAKEN FROM THE FEO PROJECT REPORT, 2003

Based on the project research and evaluation of the pilot schemes the FEO team recommends that:

- *The sector takes action to address the issues highlighted by academic staff regarding their concerns over heavy workloads and their inability to utilise flexible working arrangements.*
- *The sector improves the method of collection and analysis of data regarding absence levels and turnover of staff so that more effective monitoring of schemes of this type can take place.*
- *All HEI's that currently do not have a formal policy for flexible working consider introducing this type of scheme within their organisation and, as a minimum introduce a flexi-time scheme for support staff.*
- *Appropriate training for managers is designed and offered to all HEI's to assist organisations in implementing this type of scheme effectively.*

More specifically, in terms of introducing a flexible working policy it is recommended that HEI's:

- *Ensure that flexible policies apply to **all** employees and not just particular groups such as academic staff or women with children. This will promote a fairer working environment for everyone and a consistent approach will also ensure that claims of discrimination are avoided.*
- *Consider all requests for flexible working on an individual basis and focus on the business case rather than on the personal reasons for the request. The needs of the organisation should be treated as a priority but not used as an excuse to refuse every application.*

- *Keep flexible working as a privilege not an entitlement and do not write flexibility into contracts otherwise it will not be flexible.*
- *Ensure that any part-time workers are treated in the same way as full-time workers in terms of allowing career breaks, maternity leave etc and ensure that all employees on fixed-term contracts are treated no less favourable than employees on permanent contracts including any provision for flexible work arrangements.*

In terms of the specific flexible options included in the FEO pilot scheme it is recommended that:

- *All the options should be given consideration by HEI's to be included in any flexible working policy although some options e.g. personalised annual leave may only be appropriate for a small number of HEI's.*
- *HEI's also consider the inclusion of longer-term flexible options such as career breaks which were not included in the FEO pilot scheme due to time restrictions.*
- **Flexitime scheme**
 - *consider which staff groups can or should be included in this scheme*
 - *make use of an open and accessible computerised time recording system for ease of use and no cost e.g. excel spreadsheet*
 - *define the parameters of the scheme at the outset e.g. what are the core hours (if any), how much time can be accrued and over what period, how much time can be taken as leave and over what period*
- **Unpaid leave**
 - *ensure that all leave is unpaid to avoid discrimination claims*
 - *define the limits of the scheme e.g. minimum and maximum number of days to be taken*
 - *agree a definition of what will constitute a day's pay*
- **Home-working**
 - *ensure that employees are not working over 48 hours per week in line with the Working Time Directive (unless they have chosen to opt out) and that they are having breaks from work at the appropriate times*
 - *ensure that any home-workers are covered by the health and safety regulations and have adequate insurance provision*

- *clarify from the outset which party will have responsibility for buying, installing and maintaining equipment used at home.*
- **Compressed hours**
 - *establish how sickness benefits and holidays will be paid to employees who do not work a standard length day*
 - *if possible use in conjunction with a computerised flexitime system for ease of use*
- **Staggered hours**
 - *use as a separate option or include as part of a flexitime scheme*
- **Seasonal hours**
 - *establish a pattern that meets the needs of the team/organisation as well as those of the employee*
 - *agree an annual pattern in advance*
- **Part-time working**
 - *for reduced hours prior to retirement consult the pensions advisor and ensure that the employee is aware of any implications*
 - *for reduced hours on a temporary basis be clear about the end date for the arrangement*
- **Personalised annual leave**
 - *give careful consideration to both the financial implications for the organisation and the health implications for the employee of allowing staff to sell annual leave*
 - *ensure that the policy concerning this option is clear about dealing with employees who have a poor sickness absence record who apply to sell annual leave*

The FEO Team recommends that an organisation considering implementing this type of flexible working scheme should look at the “Next Steps” document on the FEO website (www.staffs.ac.uk/feo) which offers a practical guide to implementation.