



**DEVELOPING GOOD
MANAGEMENT PRACTICE**

A HEFCE Initiative

Flexible Employment in Higher Education

Job share
A report

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Foreword

The Flexible Employment Options (FEO) Project has over the last few years been investigating the impact of introducing flexible working arrangements in the Higher Education sector. This was achieved through piloting different ways of working at four higher education institutions (HEIs) - the University of Birmingham, Canterbury Christ Church University College, De Montfort University and Staffordshire University. Employees across a variety of departments were offered a range of flexible working options during 2002/3, and the effects were monitored and evaluated. A summary project report was distributed to all HEIs in England in December 2003, and the results were disseminated at a series of national events. Feedback from these events indicated that HR and other staff would like more information on how specific flexible options can be implemented effectively.

This report has been written to provide background information for managers within the HE sector who are considering introducing job share, accompanying this report is a guide to good practice. Other reports available are:

Flexitime

Homeworking

Our website will provide background information on the project, and materials and information for organisations wishing to introduce or extend the use of flexible working.

For more information visit www.staffs.ac.uk/feo

Section 1: Introduction

Flexible working arrangements have become much more common over the past 20 years. Employees have put pressure on their employers to provide more flexibility largely in order to cope with childcare responsibilities but increasingly for other reasons linked to improving work-life balance such as to pursue hobbies, to undertake study or to simply downshift. Employers have started to realise that there are potential benefits in having a more flexible workforce and although introducing flexible working patterns makes good business sense other drivers also include legislation and ethical considerations. Many larger employers in the UK such as public sector bodies, supermarkets and financial organisations offer a range of flexible working arrangements including schemes such as flexitime, compressed hours, homeworking, staggered hours and a variety of part-time arrangements such as term time working, seasonal hours and job sharing.

Although flexible working is becoming much more prevalent in the UK there are still many people who view working flexibly as being an alternative to having a career. The perception for some is that only people who work full-time on permanent, standard contracts are ambitious and committed to the organisation. People requesting any kind of flexibility are perceived by some to be less committed to the organisation and their career and are therefore in some cases sidelined within the organisation and gain flexibility at the expense of being under-valued and overlooked for promotion.

Job sharing is a flexible option that in theory allows individuals to work more flexibly while at the same time retaining a higher level of status, recognition and career opportunities. Despite these benefits job sharing is still not a common way to work in the UK where other types of part-time work are much more common. This report examines the current situation within the UK and in particular within higher education (HE) in terms of how prevalent job share schemes are and also the take-up levels. The benefits and drawbacks of job sharing for both employers and employees are detailed and the practical issues around how job share schemes work in practice are also examined.

Section 2: Definition

Job Share

A job share normally entails 2 people carrying out one full-time job. The job does not necessarily have to be full-time and can, in theory, be split between more than 2 people. Benefits such as holidays, pay, pension etc are split on a pro rata basis between the job sharers. The employees involved usually share a job description and the role is usually divided equally although this does not have to be the case. There are a number of patterns that can apply although a 50:50 split is the most common.

- Alternate week – each job share partner has 1 or more weeks at work and then the same number off work. This arrangement is useful where time and cost of travel are significant
- Split day – one job share partner works every morning while the other works every afternoon. This is quite common but less useful if travelling time and cost are issues
- Split week – this is the most common pattern, according to the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), where each partner works 2.5 days per week
- Overlapping week – each job share partner works 3 days so that there is an overlap of 1 day
- Simultaneously for 2 or 3 days per week – each partner works the same days at the same time. This option provides a good communication framework but is not always useful from a customer perspective
- No fixed schedule – this option is very rare as it requires very good cooperation between the partners but potentially it can be very flexible for an organisation.

Job split

There is sometimes confusion over the 2 terms, job share and job split. A role is split when the duties involved are not shared between the 2 partners but each duty is allocated to a specific partner. It gives people with different skills and attributes a chance to contribute to different aspects of a job, to perform tasks specific to their abilities.

Work-sharing

This term is used in the context of a method of alleviating the impact of unemployment by distributing a reduced volume of work among an existing workforce.

A job share can, in theory, be applied to all employees but within the Higher Education sector it is usually utilised by academic, administrative and support staff and is less common with managers and manual workers. These schemes are usually supported by the trades unions although some employee organisations will not condone non-standard contracts. This lack of support from some employee organisations is due to concerns about their negotiating power being eroded if individuals negotiate their own contract rather than relying on the standard contracts negotiated by trades unions and other employee organisations.

Section 3: Background

3.1 History

There have been job sharing roles in the UK since the 1940's when Barclays Bank used to employ some secretarial and administrative staff on an alternate week basis known as 'twinning'. The Post Office also used job shares for some of its telephonists during the 1950's but the modern job share schemes originated in the US and were imported into the UK in the late 1970's. The impetus for these arrangements came from employees, mostly women with dependents who wanted more flexibility around their work to enable them to cope with caring responsibilities. Initially job share arrangements were requested by individual women but organisations began to introduce schemes which were open to the majority of employees.

In the UK the local authorities were the first to try these schemes and in the late 1980's women returning from maternity leave pushed the issue in the private sector. While part-time work has always been prevalent it is usually associated with low paid, low status work. Women who wished to retain their higher pay and status requested job share as a way of doing this. Most of the schemes currently operating are still within the public sector although many private sector organisations do now offer job share opportunities. Central and local government led the way with more flexible working arrangements due to their commitment to equal opportunities.

Originally these types of arrangement in the US involved a contractually shared responsibility for the job i.e. each partner was contractually responsible for the other and had to provide cover for holidays or during sickness absence. This was considered illegal in some countries such as Finland and Germany and there was a great deal of suspicion from some trades unions about this type of arrangement so many job share schemes developed which did not involve contractually shared responsibility although some partners did agree to this arrangement on a voluntary basis.

Different patterns exist in different countries largely due to the different childcare facilities on offer. In countries where childcare facilities are generous then mothers tend to work full-time more frequently whereas in countries where childcare facilities

are not provided there may be more demand for flexible working arrangements such as job share schemes.

According to the Price Waterhouse Cranfield Survey 1995¹, 4 other European countries (Switzerland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden) have more job share schemes than the UK. According to an article in US Today² 28% of firms in the US offer job share, which is an increase from 18% in 1990.

3.2 The rationale for job share

The main driver for job share opportunities has come from women with children but there are other reasons why an employee would value an opportunity to job share including:

- to undertake part-time study or professional work
- to reduce working hours on a phased basis when approaching retirement
- to assist with managing caring responsibilities for elderly or disabled relatives
- to cope with certain disabilities

Unlike traditional part-time work, a job share gives employees an opportunity to reduce the number of hours they work while retaining their pay level and status. With traditional part-time work or job splitting an individual only has responsibility of half of the duties involved in the full role and is therefore normally paid at a lower salary grade. With a job share arrangement each partner has responsibility for the full range of duties associated with the job but works fewer hours and can thus retain a higher grade and pay level.

Job sharing has been utilised for many years by employers in the form of shift work. Where, for example, 3 shift managers cover a 24 hour period doing the same role but in shifts of 8 hours - this is an extended form of job sharing. Due to changes in demographics employers are having to search wider in order to recruit employees and consider ways of attracting previously marginalised groups such as disabled people, men and women with young children or other caring responsibilities, and older workers. This issue has made many organisations consider providing more flexible working arrangements to attract and retain staff.

3.3 The UK picture

The Cranet Survey on International Strategic HRM 1999/2000³ provides figures for various sectors and illustrates the percentage of organisations within each sector that offer job share schemes (see table 1 below).

Sector	% of organisations offering job share
Local Government	99%
Health	95%
Central Government	94%
Education	85%
Energy/Water	70%
Banking	66%
Distribution	52%
Manufacturing	32%

Table 1

It can be seen that job share schemes are still more popular within the public sector compared to the private sector. Overall, 87% of public organisations were using job share schemes in 2000 compared to 49% of private sector organisations.

It is generally larger organisations that introduce this type of scheme and the Cranet data³ shows that 43% of companies with 100 - 199 employees use job sharing schemes compared to 52% of employers with 200 - 499 employees and 70% of those with more than 500 employees.

This research has also shown that organisations that are more strategic (defined as those with HR strategies) are more likely to offer job share to their employees. Of those organisations surveyed that have a written HR strategy, 65% offer job share schemes whereas of those with no written HR strategy only 17% offer job share. The Cranet Survey³ also reveals that in 2000 the number of job share schemes was increasing but less quickly than 5 years previously; 54% of organisations reported an increase in the use of job sharing compared with 60% in 1995.

According to the Labour Force Survey 1999⁴ an estimated 200,000 people worked in job shares in the UK, This number only equated to approximately 1% of the total workforce. The data from the Spring 2003 survey⁵ showed that this had increased to 3.1% with 3.5% of women job sharing and 1.2% of men.

The take-up within organisations that offer this type of scheme is usually very low. For example, although Leicester City Council has offered all jobs on a job share basis since 1986 there are fewer than 5% of jobs that are actually job shared⁶.

Labour Force Survey Statistics – Spring 2002⁷ show women with dependent children under the age of 5 have the highest rate of job sharers at 4.5% while 2.2% of those with children over the age of 5 job share and only 0.9% of women without children job share.

Despite the growth in the use of job share arrangements and the increase in take up of these schemes by men, job share schemes still appear to be marginalised, mostly applying to women in administrative and clerical jobs who job share as a short-term solution while their children are young. There may be a number of reasons why these schemes are not more popular:

- There is still a perception that part-time work is associated with low status.
- There is a lack of role models, particularly for men.
- There may be a perception that working part-time will reduce opportunities for promotion.
- Managers resist allowing job shares for a number of reasons:

- o They may believe it is more expensive because there would be 2 sets of National Insurance (NI) to pay although in reality an organisation saves money by paying less NI as each employee has an allowance or earnings threshold below which the employer does not have to pay NI contributions.
- o They may perceive that it may be harder to supervise 2 people doing the same job and that productivity would suffer.
- o There is a perception in some organisations that if a role involves supervising other people then it cannot be job-shared.
- o They may consider that allowing one job share to go ahead will 'open the floodgates' and they will be inundated with requests of a similar nature by all their employees.
- o They may just be resistant to experiment with something different from the norm.

A key factor in the implementation of any flexible working arrangement is the culture of the organization. Some organisations have only informal practices which can create inequalities and lead to unfairness and tension between teams or departments. There are some roles which are not suited to job sharing which is why the scheme works best when it is one of a range of options. These options can help employers to maximise working hours to meet business objectives, while enabling individuals to manage other responsibilities or interests. For some institutions a general acceptance of the usefulness of flexible working arrangements is needed, as job sharing is viewed by some to be too radical and inappropriate for their particular organisation.

There is a recognised 4 stage work/life model that illustrates this change from a reactive approach to flexible working and a more considered cultural approach. It was developed in the USA and is outlined in "Work-life Benchmarking Framework" by Daniels, Lewis and McCarrahar. Although this is an American model, the process of development is also apparent within many UK organizations with the most difficult step to make being between stages 2 and 3.

↓	<p>Stage 1: Grass roots – the focus is on the provision of childcare and demands for family-friendly conditions in response to the needs of employees, usually women. At this stage, work-life balance is regarded mainly as a “women’s issue”.</p>
↓	<p>Stage 2: Human resources – issues are addressed and initiatives developed and broadened. Policies are usually led by personnel departments, but with support of senior management. Here the focus is mainly on recruitment and retention, and the business case for work-life balance is in terms of financial savings.</p>
↓	<p>Stage 3: Cultural change – it is recognised that innovative work-life policies will only be effective in a supportive workplace culture. The focus shifts and broadens to encompass the work-life concerns of the workforce as whole rather than specific groups of employees. Here the aim is to enhance commitment, increase morale and enable staff to develop as rounded individuals.</p>
↓	<p>Stage 4: Work redesign – awareness of how workplace culture and communication are related to work life goals leads to a focus on work itself. Ways of working which meet at the same time, organisational objectives and employees’ work-life goals are sought, and the importance of achieving win/win solutions is emphasised.</p>

3.4 Higher Education statistics

FEO Project research 2001

In 2001 the FEO team issued a questionnaire to all HEFCE-funded HEIs to establish baseline data concerning the range and number of flexible working arrangements within the HE sector. 50 institutions responded to this survey (42%) and the results showed that overall, 83% of institutes had some kind of job share scheme in place. 24 institutions (49%) had a formal job share policy in place and a further 17 (35%) had local informal arrangements in place.

FEO Project Research 2004

As part of the second phase of FEO Project a questionnaire was sent to every HE institute in England funded by HEFCE - 132 in total. The questionnaire was issued to HEIs in December 2004 and of the 132 institutes contacted 64 responded i.e. 48%. This questionnaire (see appendix 1) asked for basic data concerning:

- the existence of formal and informal job share schemes
- the staff groups that are allowed to use the job share policy
- the number of staff that use the schemes
- the length of time each formal scheme had been in existence

The results from this survey are detailed below:

a) Overall figures

In total 51 institutes had some form of job share scheme in place i.e. 80% - 13 had no scheme in place.

Of these 51 institutes, 39 provided figures showing the number of employees that were job sharing as part of their formal or informal scheme. These figures showed that 1097 employees are job sharers across these 39 institutions i.e. the overall take-up rate is 1.94%. This figure is lower than the UK take-up rate of 3.1% for 2003⁵.

b) Formal policies

Of the 64 institutes that responded 23 (36%) have a formal job share policy in place which is lower than the figure obtained in the 2001 survey (49%). A total of 660 employees are currently job sharing across 17 institutes (6 institutes did not know how many employees were actually job sharing). So the average take-up at these 17 institutes that offer job sharing on a formal basis is 2.2%.

The groups of staff that the job share policy applies to at the 23 institutes that have a formal policy in place is shown in table 2 below.

Formal policy that applies to named staff group	Number of institutes
Academic	20 (87%)
Administrative	23 (100%)
Management/ professional	21 (91%)
Manual	20 (87%)
Research	19 (83%)
Clinical	11 (48%)

Table 2

Two institutes out of the 23 have a policy that only applies to administrative staff while 1 institute has a policy that applies to administrative and management/professional staff. 11 universities have a policy that applies to all staff and the remaining 9 exclude only research and/or clinical staff.

These formal policies have been in place for over 5 years at 13 institutes, between 2 and 4 years at 4 institutes and less than 2 years at 6 institutes. So while many schemes are well-established there are a significant number that have been introduced within the last 2 years. This implies that organisations introducing more flexible working arrangements still consider job share schemes to be a valid option.

c) Informal policies

32 institutes out of the 64 that responded have informal job share taking place (5 of these also have a formal policy in place) which is 50% of respondents as compared to 35% of respondents in the 2001 survey. Of the 27 institutes that have only an informal policy in place, 20 provided figures for the number of job sharers under these schemes. 437 employees in total work on a job share basis so the average take-up at these 20 institutes that offer job sharing on an informal basis is 2.1%.

d) No policies

11 out of the 64 institutes that responded have no formal or informal policy in place i.e. 17%.

e) Size of institution

Those institutions having a formal policy in place for job share averaged a headcount of 2225 staff while those having just an informal policy in place averaged 1975 and those with no policy at all averaged a headcount of 1522.

If the data available is grouped into 3 categories for size of institution it can be shown that the smaller institutes have a lower percentage of staff working through a formal scheme and a higher percentage of staff working through an informal scheme. See table 3 over page.

Size of institution (headcount)	Take up rate under formal policies	Take-up rate under informal policies	Overall take-up rate
< 1000	0.4%	0.5%	0.9%
>1000 < 2500	0.7%	0.2%	0.9%
>2500	0.6%	0.4%	1.1%

Table 3

Trends in the Higher Education Sector

Although the 2 data sets are different it is interesting to compare the data from the 2001 FEO survey and the 2004 FEO survey. The information shows that the number of institutes operating some kind of job share scheme was very similar at 83% in 2001 compared to 80% in 2004. However, the number of formal policies in place from the 2 samples varied from 49% in 2001 to 36% in 2004 and informal policies varied from 35% in 2001 to 50% in 2004. This apparent change in the number of formal and informal policies in place is probably due to the fact that the sample groups were not identical although nearly 50% of the respondents to the 2001 survey also responded to the 2004 survey.

Research carried out by Coventry University in 2004 surveyed 87 HEI institutes in England. This survey showed that 80% of the sample offer job share to employees which is consistent with the figures of 83% and 80% from the two FEO surveys described above.

Section 4: Business Case

4.1 Benefits for individuals

A number of benefits have been identified for individuals who have the opportunity to job share:

- It allows a more balanced combination of an individual's career and family life. A job share provides an opportunity to continue working without sacrificing seniority and still providing potential promotion opportunities.
- It also provides the opportunity for an individual to participate in activities outside work such as voluntary work, study or other personal interests while still pursuing a career.
- An employee can work reduced hours when nearing retirement while at the same time passing on knowledge to other employees that might otherwise be lost. This arrangement can facilitate a smoother transition for both the employer and organisation.
- At times of peak workload, job share provides the opportunity for two people to better share priorities and manage their responsibilities more effectively.
- It facilitates a sharing of ideas and experiences and gives each partner the opportunity to test ideas and to generate different perspectives. This arrangement can work very effectively in terms of problem-solving more effectively.
- It reduces the pressure to do a full-time job in part-time hours. If an employee simply reduces their hours to 2 or 3 days per week and no-one is employed to take over some of their duties there can be pressure on the individual to continue to do a full-time role in fewer hours.
- It provides the ultimate, built-in, support system for each partner, giving potential coaching opportunities. This can be particularly useful for senior managers as this type of role can be isolating for an individual and a job share partner would provide valuable support.

4.2 Benefits for organisations

Similarly there can be many benefits for an organisation that offers job sharing opportunities:

- It provides the organisation with two minds and two sets of experience, skills, ideas and enthusiasm for price of one. It may not be possible to find this range of expertise in one employee. It enables a complex job to be done without having to find one person with all the right skills.
- Offering this type of scheme can help to attract staff who do not wish to work full-time. This can create a much wider pool of people to recruit from giving the organisation more choice when recruiting and leading in turn to improved recruitment performance and improved diversity of the workforce.
- Job share or similar part time options can also help to retain staff, particularly women returning from maternity leave. This can reduce turnover costs for the organisation (estimated at between £5,000 and £10,000 per employee by some organisations). This reduction of turnover of staff can therefore have a significant positive impact on the financial health of the organisation.
- Offering flexibility for employees can also have a positive impact on the public image of an organisation. If an institute has a reputation for promoting flexibility and providing employees with options to better manage their work-life balance they are more likely to attract good quality applications.
- It can provide continuity of service for customers through periods of absence such as sick leave, holidays or training which means that an organisation may not have to pay for temporary cover and may not have to reduce the service provided to customers.
- It may give continuity of skills and knowledge within the role as, even if one job share employee leaves, their partner will be able to maintain at least a partial service if not a full service on a temporary

basis. Another benefit is that the remaining partner may be able to train the new partner and carry out their induction as they will have full knowledge of the role.

- Written procedures may be necessary to ensure continuity between both partners. This approach is, in any case, good practice and should benefit everyone within the team and assist continuity should both partners be absent at the same time.
- Job share can assist in achieving more effective work patterns for the benefit of the organisation because of increased flexibility particularly at peak work periods.
- It is the ultimate example of teamwork as two people have to work, in effect, as one person. The basic elements that make up good team-working must be present e.g. trust, good communication, motivation etc.
- It can result in an increase in productivity with time management and organisational performance being improved as employees focus on completing tasks instead of leaving them half finished. Each partner may be more motivated to perform well due to loyalty to their partner or peer pressure from their partner.
- It can result in a decrease in absenteeism due to satisfaction with working hours and by allowing individuals to manage their personal commitments more effectively around work responsibilities.
- It reduces NI payments for the employer as 2 sets of allowances are taken into account. For example, if an organisation employs one person on £30,000 per annum the NI contribution by the employer would be £2,259 per annum (based on 9%). If an organisation employs 2 people on a job share basis to do the same role paying each one £15,000 per annum then the NI contribution by the employer for each employee would be £909 per annum i.e. a total of £1,818. Saving £441 per annum.

4.3 Costs and drawbacks

- One of the main issues identified by managers is how to fill the vacancy when one job share partner leaves. Some schemes involve the remaining partner taking on responsibility for finding a replacement to share with while in others it is the organisation who tries to find a replacement. It needs to be made clear at the outset whose responsibility it is and what happens to the remaining partner if a replacement cannot be found.
- Depending on the training needs of both individuals and the requirements of the job it may be necessary to train 2 people instead of one. This would increase the cost implications for the organisation although the benefit is that 2 people would be trained with key skills.
- Extra accommodation and/or equipment such as furniture, computer, telephone etc may need to be resourced although in many cases this can be shared. Most job share arrangements involve the partners working different parts of the week so there is usually no need to provide extra resources.
- It may be necessary to provide twice the benefits where they can't be split e.g. company car, health insurance, sports club membership etc. Most benefits such as pay and holidays are divided easily between the 2 partners but in some instances it may be that where benefits cannot be split the organisation will have to provide 2 sets of benefits.
- This working arrangement may pose a difficulty for managers trying to measure performance as it may be difficult to assess what each partner has achieved. There is also a potential for a loss of job satisfaction for the job share partners as some employees may find it de-motivating if they are not individually recognised for their achievements.
- Job share may result in increased supervision time although this should be minimal. For example, two appraisals would have to be carried out instead of one.

- If the partners do not work effectively together then there could be delays in getting decisions made. For example if they do not communicate effectively and provide different responses to a question this could lead to confusion and delays.
- If the role involves the supervision of other employees it may cause difficulties for these employees if they have two line managers rather than just one. The job share partners would have to work very closely together to ensure that a consistent message was delivered to all staff.

Section 5: Job share in practice

5.1 Measuring job share success

A number of research exercises have shown that job share schemes can be very successful:

- o According to an article in The Guardian (6th April 2004)⁸ research has shown that job sharers score very highly in their ability to lead, solve problems and remain resilient in face of setbacks and outperform their colleagues in terms of output.
- o A publication produced by the Industrial Society⁹ which surveyed senior managers in UK found that nearly 70% of job sharing senior managers were reported as performing at a significantly higher level than comparable employees by their line managers.
- o The same survey showed that line managers also ranked 90.8% of job sharers at a higher level than their colleagues for effectiveness in working as a team to deliver the objectives set.
- o This study⁹ also showed that job sharing managers produced a bigger performance dividend for their organisations than did other managers.

'This is a striking finding, given that job sharing has traditionally been regarded as unsuitable for managers and more suitable for roles with less responsibility. Our findings conclusively lay that claim to rest.

Our findings therefore demolish the widely held view that job sharing is inappropriate for managerial positions, and is indeed a solution for senior staff seeking more flexible working patterns'⁹

- o The Cranet Survey 1999³ states that evidence suggests that companies investing in job share schemes have continued to increase its use, suggesting that once adopted, it solves more problems than it causes.

5.2 Personality issues

Research done by the Industrial Society⁹ shows that both 'mirror pairs' (job share partners with similar personality characteristics) and 'opposite pairs' (job share partners with different personality characteristics) can work extremely well together but on the whole people tend not to choose to work with partners who have very different personal styles to themselves. In general terms this research showed that the greater the degree of difference in personality between the pairs the more negative the impact on the teams performance. But teams worked well when partners had different skills and experience to contribute to the organisation.

5.3 Legislation – case law

Job sharers have the same rights as any other full-time or part-time employee. Under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 case law has shown that it could be discriminatory to not allow a woman to work part-time, particularly after maternity leave. The employer would have to prove that there was a real need for the job to be carried out by a single full-time employee. The Employment Act 2000 gives further rights for all parents with children under the age of 6 to request flexible working arrangements including working on a part-time or job share basis.

The case of Home Office v Homes (1984) established the principal that it would be discriminatory to require full-time working as the number of women who could comply was fewer than the number of men, taking into account the burden placed on women due to childcare. Although this principle was initially unsuccessful when applied to job share, there have been a number of cases more recently that have found that a refusal to allow job-sharing is discriminatory:

- Mrs Marshall worked as a head teacher at a primary school and wished to return to work on a job-share basis after her maternity leave. The School Governors considered the request but rejected it on the grounds that a recent Ofsted report had identified the school as one with serious weaknesses and they felt that one person, not two, should be responsible. The employment tribunal ruled in favour of Mrs Marshall stating that refusing to allow her to return to work on a job-share basis was sex discrimination. (Marshall v Devon County Council, 2000)

- Zurich Insurance awarded an employee £20,000 in 1997 in an out of court settlement after she took them to an Employment Tribunal claiming sex discrimination because they refused to allow her to share her job with another person because she was 'too important'.
- In the unreported case of Watts v Ballantyne a woman who was working part-time in a job share arrangement went on maternity leave. While she was on maternity leave her job share partner resigned and she was informed by the company that she could only return to her job on a full-time basis. As she had 2 young children she was unable to do this and the tribunal ruled in her favour stating that the organisations actions were discriminatory.
- In 1998 Catherine Thomasson was awarded £22,500 after her employer Royal & Sun Alliance refused to allow her to return to work on a job share basis after the birth of her child. She held a position as a Business Team Manager and was responsible for a team of 10/12 people.

It is suggested by the approach of the tribunals that an employer must justify the requirement that the job is done on a full-time basis, otherwise, by refusing to allow a job share their actions amount to indirect discrimination.

5.4 Higher Education Survey

Further research as part of the FEO Project investigated in more detail some specific job shares currently operating within HEIs. Those HEIs who responded to the questionnaire on various types of flexible working (see appendix 1) and who stated that a job share scheme was in operation were approached and asked to distribute a questionnaire (see appendix 2) to every job share partner within their organisation.

14 questionnaires were returned by 5 institutes in 2005. 12 of these questionnaires were from clerical and administrative staff and 2 from management. Over half of those that responded had been job sharing for less than one year and only one person had been job sharing for more than 2 years.

a) Reasons for job sharing

The job sharers gave a number of reasons for wanting to job share. Five people stated childcare commitments as the main reason for wanting to job share while others stated reasons such as making time to study, having the opportunity to do another job or to spend time with a partner nearing retirement. The reasons given are detailed in full below:

I have 2 children and wanted to work for 2.5 or 3 days

Wanted to work part-time and nature of job requires full time cover

I enjoy working on a part time basis and having someone to share ideas and problems with. In my present job share post, I feel we compliment each other with differing skills.

Work-life balance. I have 2 primary school aged children. College are extremely flexible and agreed for me to work 21.5 hrs per week mon-fri within school hours. My job sharer works 3 full days as her child is in nursery. This allows us to overlap for some hours over 3 days of the week and therefore attend meetings together and work on projects together as well as sharing the workload.

Wanted less hours

Convenience of not working a 5 day week. Fulfill other teaching commitments.

I have a 2 year old son to look after

Due to being a single parent, I decided to be at home for my daughter who had started junior school and wanted to join certain school clubs.

Suited personal existing arrangement for work. Was working part time, and looking for 2nd part time job. Position that arose was part time job share.

I work part time in order to allow me more time to dedicate to my interests outside of work. I am one of Jehovah's witnesses and I use extra time in bible teaching work.

Due to childcare commitments - wanting to spend more time at home with my daughter but also wanting to work as well.

For a better work-life balance. My job share partner has child care commitments and, for myself, my husband is nearing retirement therefore I wished to spend more time with him.

I didn't particularly want to job share. I wanted to make a transition from full time to part time employment, to enable me to concentrate my energy on my part time degree course and this job share position became available and I liked the sound of it.

b) Overlap

There was a variety of responses in terms of the overlap that people had with their job share partner during the week. The majority of respondents had an overlap of less than one hour although there were some who had no overlap at all and some who had more than 6 hours per week. Table 4 below shows all the responses.

Overlap	Number of respondents
None	3
Less than 1 hour per week	6
Between 1 and 3 hours per week	2
Between 4 and 6 hours per week	0
More than 6 hours per week	3

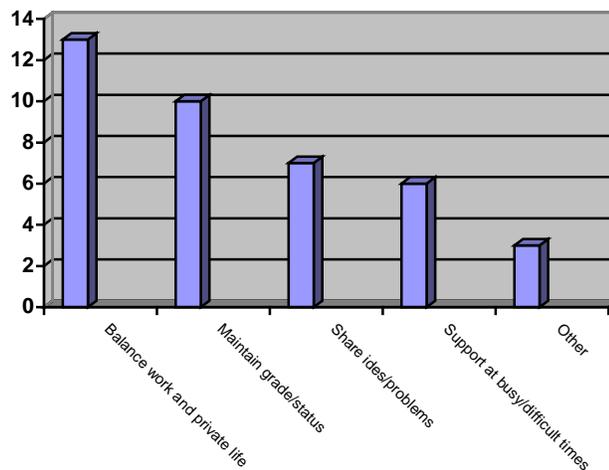
Table 4

c) Line management responsibility

Only three respondents stated that they had line management responsibility and all three stated that job sharing did not affect their ability to line manage effectively.

d) Benefits

The job sharers were asked to identify the main benefits of job sharing and the results are shown in graph 1 overleaf. The main benefit identified was the ability to balance work and private life more effectively (13 people) while the next most popular benefit was to enable grade and status to be maintained (10 people). Other benefits identified were the opportunity to share ideas or problems and to have support at busy or difficult times although fewer people (7 and 6 respectively) identified these as benefits of job sharing.



Graph 1

Additional comments made in this section were as follows:

No real need felt to job share, it just suited my working needs

When taking holidays there is always cover so don't come back to backlog of work as long as holidays don't clash with each other. There is always support for other staff from one or the other of us

You share your workload, so during busy periods you don't become inundated with work. During periods of annual leave there is always somebody to cover.

e) Problems / issues

When asked if they had experienced any problems with job sharing the majority (9) said that they hadn't but 5 stated that they had experienced problems as detailed in the comments below:

With being the afternoon person you don't have any cross over period with your job share so if there's lots to mention I have found that sometimes I have spent nearly 30 minutes plus collating outstanding work in order for my partner to fully understand everything. Secondly, I have found that you sometimes miss out on information because people in the office think that they have already told you but it's your partner they have told. You always have to be aware that whatever you do (work wise) needs to be relayed back to your partner and this can sometimes be difficult as I have always been used to working on my own and in my own way.

Going from being a full time member of staff to part time has proved loss of responsibility and workload is incoherent

Initial problems of ensuring no duplication of tasks undertaken - but easily resolved.

Occasionally, lack of information being passed on can lead to lack of continuity

If someone is constantly off sick or does not concentrate on their work this can cause problems for the other one

f) Key factors of success

The job sharers were asked to identify what they considered to be the key factors in making a job share work successfully. The most common response to this question was some comment about 'effective communication' while other main themes were, flexibility, team-working and equality. The comments are listed below:

Communication between the job sharers, equal division of workloads, both job sharers committed to the job share arrangement

Sharing information, don't assume the other person will know what is going on

Success of the job depends on the flexibility of the people involved. We have clearly defined duties/tasks

Effective communication, sharing some understanding of the role, having the same values in regard to outcome of policies and procedures

Good communication / flexibility / good relationship with your colleagues / being prepared to do your part

Communication between the job share partners and a respect for each others different ways of working

Communication - must schedule time for a catch up meeting each week (45 mins in our case), we also used a log book of current projects and their state of completion. Organisation also a big factor here.

Working as a team, sharing workload and responsibility equally

Share the workload equally. Build on each others strengths, support each others weaknesses. Always keep each other upto date.

You need a certain amount of overlap with job share partner to ensure work/current projects are/have been handled. Using a shared day book of notes is a good idea

A good job share partner who is flexible and works to the same routine as you

Communication and more communication

It is essential that the two of you communicate well, pass on all information and basically think alike

g) Negative comments

The job sharers were asked if they had experienced any negative comments from anyone about their job share arrangement or the service that they provided. Eleven respondents stated that they had not received any negative comments but three stated that they had and these responses are shown below:

Only if my partner is on annual leave and it leaves the office with little cover late afternoon, which I can appreciate and accept this concern

I have received negative comments from other members of staff regarding the work allocation and who gets bank holidays. For instance we have meetings which are held on Wednesday afternoons which are always in my job share partners part of the week. This balances with other things that happen in my half of the week so we do not have a problem with what happens when. I think that although the job share works well for myself and my partner, a full time member of staff would be preferable to my supervisor regarding the continuity of the job.

Occasionally, over lack of continuity. Sometimes there is a reluctance to start a particular task if it is near the end of a person's working week, jobs can be made to wait as a result.

h) General comments

I believe it is essential that both job share partners have the same philosophy to the way the role is carried out, otherwise there could be conflict, both between the two persons concerned and other staff within the organisation

Job sharers tend to work twice as hard than if they were full time due to reduced number of hours! Also provides cover during periods of holiday and sickness.

Important to discuss how work is shared out - each have exclusive projects/responsibilities, or share overall workload. Second option better, but easier for disorganisation/inefficiency if not well managed.

As I only work 2 days a week, I am often referred to as my job share partner's name, which I find frustrating

I believe that if you have the right partner job sharing can be less stressful, and a happy environment to work in.

If one of the job sharers leaves could it put the one who is left in jeopardy if a replacement cannot be found and the one left does not want to work full time?

I think with the right partner job share is less stressful as you feel less pressurised from a time point of view as you know someone is taking over after you have left.

I believe 2 part timers work harder than one full time person as they are more motivated and enthusiastic about work. Job sharers are only a problem if they do not handover and/or communicate with each other.

Part time employment would be preferable to job share as you are continuing with your own work when you come in rather than trying to pick up from where someone else has left off.

Section 6: Conclusions

Job share schemes have been used for a number of years although it is only since the 1970's that they have become more mainstream across a variety of organisations. They were initially more prevalent in the public sector and although the private sector has adopted them to some degree in more recent years, they remain more popular within public sector organisations.

Job sharing differs from part-time working in that it offers the opportunity for both partners to reduce their hours while retaining their grade and status. Part-time work normally involves lower paid work and reduced status as it is often viewed that only clerical and administrative type roles can be worked on a part-time basis. Because job sharing involves an equal split of all responsibilities and duties, unlike job split, it does not result in a diluting of the role and hence a reduction in pay and status.

The sample taken from the HE sector in Dec 2004 as part of the Flexible Employment Options Project shows that 80% of HEIs offer job share although the average take-up is very low at 1.9% (the highest take-up rate is 6% and lowest 0.1%). This low take-up level is reflected in other sectors as well. So although job share schemes are widely available throughout the sector the take-up is very low and there could be a number of reasons for this:

- not many employees request to job share
- institutions do not promote or encourage job share
- managers refuse requests for job share

The need for job share was initially driven by women with childcare responsibilities but can benefit many other people who wish to work on a part-time basis without being penalised either in terms of losing status, grade, pay or promotion prospects. Currently the majority of job sharers in the UK are women and the majority of these are those with younger children although the statistics show that the number of men job sharing increased between 1999 and 2003.

Job sharing is now supported by legislation to some degree and there are several case law examples that show that employers must take requests to work on a job share basis seriously or risk being penalised under the Right to Request Flexible Working legislation or the Part-time Workers directive.

Research shows that job sharing can work very successfully if the scheme is implemented and supported effectively. A critical factor is making sure that the partners are well-matched, i.e. that they have a similar work style and approach but probably different skills and experience that complement each other.

There is still a perception from some managers that many jobs are not suitable for job sharing and there is a reluctance to offer job sharing to more senior managers with line manager responsibilities. The very limited research available shows that senior managers who job share are actually more productive than other senior managers.

There may be some extra costs involved such as training two employees instead of one, providing benefits for two employees where a benefit cannot be split and providing extra accommodation and equipment although these would normally be shared between the job share partners. In many cases these potential costs would not be relevant and where they did apply should be minimal.

There are many recognised benefits for employees who job share, the key one being that it provides an opportunity to continue working without sacrificing seniority and still providing potential promotion opportunities.

The benefits for the employer include the fact that it provides the organisation with twice the experience, skills, ideas and enthusiasm that they would normally get in a role undertaken by just one person. It can also improve recruitment and retention performance, customer service, productivity and due to reduced NI contributions can result in a monetary saving.

Job share schemes can therefore provide many benefits to both the organisation and individuals if they are implemented effectively, actively promoted to encourage take-up and if the right partners with complementary skills are selected.

If the trend towards more flexible working continues, whether due to legislation, pressure from employees or business reasons such as demographic changes it is possible that job share (along with other flexible options) will become more widespread throughout the HE sector. If HEIs positively promote flexible working it is also possible that the take-up of job share will improve particularly when more role models become evident and as managers become more confident in dealing with flexible working arrangements.

Appendix 1

Flexible Employment Options Project



Organisation

Name

Telephone

E-mail address

1. Approximately how many employees (headcount) do you have in your organisation?

(Please include all permanent and temporary staff but not casual workers or part time hourly paid lecturers)

Formal Policies

2. Do you have a formal policy for any of the following:

(please tick as appropriate)

	Yes	No	Don't know
▪ Job Share			
▪ Flexitime			
▪ Home-working			

If yes for any of the above, go to question 3, If no or don't know for all 3, go to question 6

3. How many years has each one been in place?

(please tick as appropriate)

	Less than 2 years	2-4 years	5 years or more	Don't know
▪ Job Share				
▪ Flexitime				
▪ Home-working				

4. Which staff groups does each policy apply to?

(please tick as appropriate)

	Academic staff	Admin/ support staff	Management/ Professional/ Academic related staff	Manual staff	Research staff	Clinical staff
▪ Job Share						
▪ Flexitime						
▪ Home-working						

Definitions of each group of staff can be found at the end of the questionnaire.

5. Approximately how many employees within your organisation currently do any of the following under a formal policy?

- Job share
- Use flexitime
- Work from home on a regular basis (e.g. once a week/month)
- Work from home on an ad hoc basis

Informal Policies

6. Do you have employees who use any of the following on an informal basis:

(please tick as appropriate)

- Job Share
- Use flexitime/Toil (time off in lieu)
- Work from home on a regular basis (e.g. once a week/month)
- Work from home on an ad hoc basis

Yes	No	Don't know

If yes for any of the above, go to question 7, If no or don't know for all 4, go to question 8

7. Approximately how many employees within your organisation do any of the following under an informal policy?

- Job Share
- Use flexitime/Toil (time off in lieu)
- Work from home on a regular basis (e.g. once a week/month)
- Work from home on an ad hoc basis

8. Is there anything unusual about your flexitime scheme, e.g. no core hours, very early start or finish?

Yes	<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Details	
N/A	<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>		

*Academic	Staff on academic contracts primarily undertaking a lecturing/teaching role up to and including professors
Research	Staff on research contracts primarily undertaking a research role
Manual	Staff undertaking a practical role such as cleaners, gardeners, drivers, security staff, catering and craft workers
Management/Professional Academic Related staff	Staff primarily undertaking a management role, such as senior administrators, managers, heads of department, and academic related staff (usually those earning over £25,000)
Admin/Support	Staff undertaking a support role such as clerical and secretarial staff, technicians, and junior administrators (usually those earning less than £25,000)
Clinical	Staff undertaking a clinical role, such as doctors, nurses and physiotherapists

Appendix 2



Job Share Questionnaire – Flexible Employment Options Project

This questionnaire is part of the research being undertaken by the Flexible Employment Options Project (FEO) which is funded by HEFCE. The aim of the project is to investigate the impact of introducing more flexible working arrangements into the HE sector. As part of this research we are examining a number of specific flexible working arrangements – one of which is job share.

Any information that you provide will be used to form part of a report for circulation throughout the sector but no individual will be identified and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. We have asked for a name and contact e-mail address or telephone number so that we can contact you if we need to clarify anything but if you would prefer to remain anonymous then please do so.

Name:.....**Contact e-mail or**

tel:.....

Job title:.....**Organisation:**.....

Staff category

Academic Clerical/Admin Management

Clinical Manual Research

1. How long have you been job sharing with your current partner?

..... months/years

2. How did you get your current job share arrangement / how did you find your partner?

(Please tick only one box)

- Applied externally with identified partner
- Applied externally with no identified partner
- Applied internally with no identified partner
- Applied internally with identified partner
- Other – please explain

.....

3. Why do want to job share?

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4. Do you and your partner have an overlap of working hours during the week?

Yes If yes, what is the overlap? No If no, go to question 5

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5. Do you have any line management responsibilities?

Yes If yes, go to question 6 No If no, go to question 7

6. Does job sharing affect your ability to line manage effectively?

Yes If yes, please explain below No If no, go to question

.....
.....
.....

7. What are main benefits of job sharing for you and/or your job share partner?

(Please tick as many as apply)

- Balance work and private life
- Work part-time but maintain grade/status
- Having someone to share ideas/problems with
- Support at busy/difficult times
- Other, please explain

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.....

8. Have you experienced any issues/problems with job sharing?

Yes If yes, please explain below No If no, go to question 9

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9. What, in your opinion, are the key factors to making a job share work successfully?

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10. Have you experienced any negative comments from anyone about your job share arrangement or the service that you provide?

Yes If yes, please explain below No If no, go to question 11

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11. Any additional comments about job sharing

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Appendix 3

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