



DEVELOPING GOOD  
MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

A HEFCE Initiative

The background of the cover features silhouettes of five diverse individuals in various colors: orange, dark blue, teal, yellow, and dark blue. They are arranged in a group, with some appearing to be in conversation or gesturing. The background is split into a dark blue upper section and a light blue lower section.

# Job Share

## A guide to good practice

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The Flexible Employment Options (FEO) project has investigated the impact of introducing flexible working arrangements within the Higher Education sector. This was achieved through piloting different ways of working flexibly at 4 Higher Education Institutions; the University of Birmingham, Canterbury Christ Church University College, De Montfort University and Staffordshire University. Staff across a variety of departments were offered a range of flexible working options during 2002/3 and the effects were monitored and evaluated. The results from these pilot schemes were disseminated at a series of national events and a Summary Project Report was distributed to all HEIs in England in December 2003. Feedback from these events indicated that personnel from the HE sector would like more information on how specific flexible options can be implemented effectively. This guide has been written to provide support and information for managers within the Higher Education sector who are considering introducing a job share scheme into their organisation. It is intended as a framework for managers to use when designing a job share policy. The background research for this guide can be found in 'Job Share in Higher Education - FEO Project Report'.

Other guides available are:

**Flexitime**

**Homeworking**

For more information visit [www.staffs.ac.uk/feo](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/feo)

## Background

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.

An estimated 200,000 people work in job shares in the UK, according to the Labour Force Survey 1999. This number equates to approximately 1% of the total workforce and the take-up within organisations that offer this type of scheme is usually very low i.e. approximately 1% - 3%.

## Higher Education Sector

Research from the FEO project in 2004 shows that from a sample of 64 institutes 80% of institutes offer job sharing and 36% have a formal job share policy in place, while 50% have informal job share operating within their organisation.

Data from this survey shows that the take-up rate for these schemes is 1.9% which is lower than the UK national take-up rate for 2003 of 3.1%<sup>1</sup>.

These schemes are largely open to all staff although some institutes do restrict the use of job share to administrative and managerial staff.

The take-up rate for the sample of 64 institutes is very low at 1.9% although at some institutes the take up is as high as 5 - 6%.

## Job Share – definition

A job share normally entails 2 people carrying out one full-time job and dividing the responsibilities of the role equally between them. 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 are normally on the same salary grade. There are a number of patterns that can apply (see appendix 1) although a 50:50 split is the most common.

<sup>1</sup> Labour Force Survey, Spring 2003, Office for National Statistics.

# Benefits and issues for the employer

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. There are many similar benefits for an organisation utilising job shares:

## **Benefits**

- 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. A complex job can be done without having to find one person with all the right skills.
- Offering this type of scheme can help to attract and retain staff who do not wish to work full-time. This can reduce turnover and recruitment costs for the organisation as well as improving its public image.
- It can provide continuity of service for customers through periods of absence such as sick leave, holidays or training which saves an organisation paying for temporary cover or reducing the quality of service provided.
- 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 train a replacement while maintaining at least a partial service.
- Written procedures may be necessary to ensure continuity between both partners. This approach is good practice in any event and should benefit everyone within the team and assist overall continuity.

- 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.
- It can result in an increase in productivity with time management and organisational performance being improved as employees focus on completing tasks (rather than leaving them unfinished) due to loyalty to their partner.
- It can result in a decrease in absenteeism due to satisfaction with working hours and the opportunity for employees to better manage their personal commitments more effectively around work responsibilities.

There are, however, a number of issues that need to be taken into account:

### **Issues**

- 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 partner 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 involve training 2 people instead of one.

- Extra accommodation and equipment may need to be found although in many cases this can be shared.
- It may be necessary to provide twice the benefits were they can't be split e.g. company car, health insurance, sports club membership etc.
- This working arrangement may pose some difficulty for managers trying to measure performance as it may be difficult to assess what each partner has achieved individually.
- Job share may result in increased supervision as 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.
- If the role involves supervision of other staff it may cause difficulties having two rather than one line manager.

# Benefits and issues for the employee

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

Many benefits have been identified for individuals who have the opportunity to job share:

## **Benefits**

- 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 allows an individual to cope with caring responsibilities such as childcare, eldercare and care for disabled dependents.
- It provides the opportunity to participate in activities outside work such as voluntary work, study, professional work or other personal interests.
- An employee can work reduced hours when nearing retirement while at the same time passing on knowledge to others that might otherwise be lost.

- It gives employees the possibility to share the workload with their partner if it becomes too heavy hence enabling a better management of work at peak times.
- It facilitates a sharing of ideas and experience and gives each employee the opportunity to test ideas and to generate different perspectives.
- It reduces the pressure to do a full-time job in part-time hours.
- It provides the ultimate, built-in, support system for each partner and gives potential coaching opportunities. This can be particularly useful for senior managers as this type of role can be isolating for an individual.

Despite the many advantages of this type of arrangement there are also some issues that need to be recognised:

### **Issues**

- There is potential for a loss of job satisfaction as it may be difficult to identify the achievements of each individual. Some employees may find this demotivating if they are not individually recognised for their achievements.
- An overload of work can be an issue if managers perceive that they can delegate enough work for two full-time employees instead of two part-time employees.
- If the job share partners are not compatible in terms of working style then the arrangement may not work effectively.

## Preparation – what do I need to do first?

There are some key actions that you need to undertake and some key questions that you need to answer before a job share scheme is designed or introduced.

### **Why introduce a job share scheme?**

As an institution be clear as to why you want to introduce a job share scheme and what you hope to achieve by doing so. It is important to have a clear rationale for promoting job share which should be part of an overall strategy for flexible working. The business case for job sharing highlights the advantages for both the individual and the organisation and can be used to promote this type of scheme.

### **Whose support do you need to ensure success?**

There are a number of key groups of people who have the potential to either make the scheme succeed or fail. Clearly the senior management of the organisation need to be supportive but the most crucial group are the middle and/or line managers who will interview potential job sharers and who will promote the scheme internally as well as managing the job share partners on a daily basis.

Another key group are the trade unions who should be involved at the earliest possible stage in order to gain their support and commitment to the scheme and to assist in the promotion and communication of the scheme. The trade unions can also bring a different perspective to the discussion which is useful to incorporate in the early stages so that any problems are resolved or anticipated in advance of implementation.

## **What do you need to know?**

A number of organisations have job share policies and some have been in place for many years. It is worth investigating what other organisations are doing and potentially benefiting from their experiences. Appendix 2 lists some organisations that could provide further examples or information.

## **Design – what do I need to consider when designing a scheme?**

There are a number of factors that need to be taken into account when designing the policy. It is important that you spend time getting the detail correct before the policy is launched.

### **Who will it apply to?**

It is important that you are clear from the start which jobs / roles this scheme will apply to or if there are any specific groups of staff that will not be included for any reason.

Within HE most jobs can be shared between 2 people; academic roles are ideally suited for this type of arrangement, as are many administrative and support roles. Although job share for managers or manual staff is rare there is no real reason why management and manual positions should not be job-shared as well. In practice there are very few roles that cannot be shared. The most common reason for not allowing a role to be shared is that it is already part time.

### **What options will be offered?**

There are a wide range of different patterns that can be used for job-sharing (see appendix 1) and it is important that you consider which of these you will offer to employees before the policy is implemented. Most policies specify that there

must be an overlap of the two job share roles to improve communication although some organisations also specify that no extra cost must be incurred which may result in a reduction in the overall number of hours available to customers.

### **How much discretion will managers have?**

Although there may be rules or guidelines about the types of scheme on offer the policy will need to make clear how much discretion managers will have in terms of allowing a role to be job shared and in deciding what pattern would work in practice. The key is to allow some flexibility so that managers are able to actually manage their team effectively without allowing them to undermine the policy completely by automatically refusing all job share requests.

### **How will each job share be advertised?**

Most job share policies state that every job will be advertised as a job share unless an authorised senior manager or personnel director gives specific permission for it to be classed as a non-job share post. The relevant line manager for the vacancy usually has to justify why a particular role is not able to be job shared.

### **How will job share candidates be short-listed?**

You should short-list candidates based on their individual merits and no account should be taken of any other job share applicants at this stage in the process

### **How will job share candidates be interviewed?**

You should interview job share candidates individually, as with any other candidate. If the most suitable person for the job is a job share applicant then a partner must also be appointed. If there is no partner available then the job share

applicant should be offered the job on a full time basis. If this person does not accept the post on a full time basis then the next best candidate should be offered the job.

### **How will job share candidates be offered a post?**

Some schemes specify that a job offer to one candidate is dependent on the other job share candidate accepting the post and both partners are then given a joint contract.

### **How will job share appointees be trained?**

Any training required initially can be given jointly or separately depending on the type of training and the availability of the partners. Certain types of training could be undertaken by just one job share partner who would then have responsibility for training their partner.

### **How will job share partners be appraised?**

You should carry out appraisals in the normal way with each individual having a separate appraisal. Any training or development needs would be identified at this stage which could be different for each partner. Any performance issues would need to be discussed with the appropriate job share partner.

### **What happens if a promotion opportunity arises?**

If both job share partners want to apply for promotion then they would do so as individuals and their applications would be considered on an individual basis.

If only one partner wanted to apply and was successful then both partners would have to find new partners. The policy would need to specify whether this was the responsibility of the organisation or the individuals. Most job share policies allocate this responsibility to the organisation.

### **What happens if a job share partner leaves the organisation?**

You should state in the policy whether it is a joint contract and therefore when one person leaves the contract is terminated or whether it is the responsibility of the individual or the organisation to find a replacement partner.

In most policies the contracts are not joint and the organisation is responsible for advertising for a replacement partner. However, if the advertisement is unsuccessful then the remaining partner is usually offered the full-time post. If they do not want to accept a full-time post then they are, in effect, redundant unless the job can be split rather than shared. In reality most organisations will attempt to find the individual other part-time work rather than resort to redundancy.

### **What happens if one job share partner goes on maternity leave?**

The organisation would normally organise temporary cover unless the remaining partner was in a position to cover the full time role on a temporary basis.

### **What happens if one job share partner is absent due to sickness?**

You should deal with short-term sickness in the same way that you would if any other employee were absent i.e. the individual would be expected to cope with any backlog on his/her return to work. For long-term sickness the organisation could organise temporary cover, if necessary, unless the remaining partner was in a position to cover the full time role on a temporary basis.

### **What happens when one job share partner goes on holiday?**

Depending on the circumstances of the job sharers or the policy of the organisation holiday periods can either be covered by the remaining partner as advance notice is normally given or the employee can manage their workload around their period of absence as is the case with most full-time employees.

## **How do we deal with Bank Holidays?**

If the working week is split so that one partner works Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and the other partner works Wednesday, Thursday, Friday then the partner who works at the beginning of the week will naturally have more bank holidays as most, although not all, bank holidays fall on a Monday and Tuesday. Legislation protecting part-time workers (Part time Workers [prevention of less favourable treatment] Regulations 2000) means that employers need to be careful to give individuals the same rights as full-time workers. It is therefore recommended that Bank Holidays are allocated on a pro rata basis with each job share partner having an equal number. The same advice applies to any discretionary days that a University may offer.

# Implementation - how do I put it into practice?

As with any policy there are some general principles of good practice that you should follow during implementation as well as some specific questions concerning role analysis that you should ask as a line manager considering a request to job share.

## General Principles

### Consultation and communication

As with any policy it is important to have a consultation phase before the policy is implemented and this process should include the relevant trades unions or employee representatives.

Good communication is crucial if the policy is to succeed. Managers need to be aware of the policy, contribute to its design and be fully briefed or trained in how to use the policy before the policy is implemented.

Employees also need to be aware of the policy and understand the reasoning behind its introduction before it is put into practice.

### Commitment

You should gain the commitment of line managers to the scheme to ensure a high take up. Training should include pointing out the legal pitfalls of refusing a job share application - particularly from women returning from maternity leave.

### Advertising

It is important that you ensure that the policy is adhered to and that if all jobs are to be advertised as job share then that is what actually happens.

Make sure that whoever is responsible for deciding that a vacancy can be job shared is a champion for job sharing and will be as supportive as possible.

### **Policy**

A clear policy implemented in advance of the start of the scheme following full consultation is imperative if the scheme is to be a success. Comprehensive guidelines will mean that managers and staff will have confidence to use the scheme and ensuring that all the details of the scheme are in place at the outset will avoid confusion once the scheme is up and running.

### **Flexibility**

Ensure that the policy allows managers to retain freedom to agree patterns at a local level. No policy can fully take into account the specific requirements of every department. To avoid managers choosing to simply ignore the scheme, however, any decision refusing a job share should be made only with the approval of a nominated person e.g. the Director of Human Resources.

### **Awareness**

Creating awareness among staff about opportunities for job share is crucial if the scheme is to be used fully. It is also important to approve a number of job shares so that there are examples available for people to emulate.

### **Monitor and review**

Monitor the scheme, its take-up and any problems that arise. This should be done on a regular basis and the scheme reviewed to keep it current and operating smoothly.

# Role Analysis

It is useful to examine the role in more detail by asking a series of questions when considering whether a job share is feasible.

## Resources

- How much time would be required to train a new employee?
- How much extra time, if any, would it take to supervise an additional person?
- Would other employees have more work because of the job share arrangement (i.e., administrative tasks)?
- Would any extra equipment be required e.g. desk, chair, PC, printer etc?

## Continuity

- How much of the job involves long term projects or continuous tasks?
- Are there specific tasks in the job that can be done by each partner?
- Does the job have supervisory responsibilities?
- If the job does have supervisory responsibilities, is there a logical way to assign supervision tasks to each partner?
- Do the job share partners have similar work habits and attitudes? (If a partner has not been found, this is something to consider.)

## Communication

- Is there a large amount of contact with supervisors, subordinates, or customers in this position?
- Do both partners have good communication and interpersonal skills? (If a partner has not been chosen, this will be something to consider.)
- How and when will the partners brief each other?
- Will the extra time it takes for the partners to brief each other reduce productivity in the job?

## Potential Benefits

- Will job sharing help me retain a good employee I might otherwise lose?
- Will job sharing help me cope with extra staffing needs during vacation and peak work periods?
- Will job sharing have a positive effect on morale in the team?
- Will I benefit from the additional expertise that the new partner will bring to the group?

## Contract details checklist

The contract for a job share arrangement should include the following;

- Either a joint or an individual contract depending upon the design of the scheme
- A clause detailing if an offer to one partner is conditional on acceptance by both partners
- The days and hours to be worked by each partner
- The pay and any overtime arrangements (after normal hours or after standard week)
- Pay/cover arrangements for when one partner is on holiday
- Arrangements to cover sickness absence or any other kind of absence
- Arrangements when one partner leaves the organisation
- Arrangements when promotion opportunities arise
- Arrangements for training

## Key success factors - how can I make it a success?

There are a range of factors that will affect the success of the scheme from the employer's point of view.

- Choosing the right people is critical if the job share is to succeed. Research shows that having partners who complement each other in terms of style but have different skills work best together. If the partners are too similar or have widely different styles then there is less chance the job share will succeed.
- Having a comprehensive policy in place that has been developed with the support of the Trade Unions and managers within the organisation is crucial for any scheme to work effectively. Employees and managers alike need to know how the scheme works and what rules need to be followed.
- Good communication is essential particularly between the job share partners but also with other members of the team and with the relevant line-manager. Good communication should be an integral part of any team but if this breaks down it will be exposed more quickly within a job share arrangement.
- Having a detailed job description and role analysis at the outset is important if the job share arrangement is to succeed. If both partners and the line manager are clear about the responsibilities of the role then there is less chance that confusion will arise about who is responsible for which aspects of the role and the line manager should find it easier to assess the performance of each partner.
- Particular job share arrangements need to be well-publicised and administrative arrangements need to be well-organised from the outset. For

example all e-mails should automatically copy to both partners so that communication and continuity is maintained at all times. Everyone should be made aware of the job share arrangement so that they allow more time for consideration of documents for comments for example.

- If the scheme is to have a significant take-up rate then it needs to be actively promoted both within the organisation and externally to attract job applicants.

There are also a number of critical success factors for individuals participating in a job share scheme:

### Critical Success Factors for Individuals

- Both partners need to present a united front at all times.
- Any individual with controlling instincts will not succeed at job share, both partners need to be able to allow their partner to work in their own way.
- Managing the expectations of colleagues is an important factor. It may be necessary, for example, to ensure that people allow enough time for both partners to read and comment on any documents for discussion prior to a meeting.
- It may be useful for each partner to find an ally or champion if possible to provide mentoring and support, particularly in the early stages of the arrangement.
- Effective communication between partners is crucial if a job share arrangement is to succeed.

## Summary

- Job share schemes can work very effectively. A wide range of organisations from various sectors use it successfully including for top-level positions.
- To ensure that a job share arrangement succeeds there are critical factors that apply, for example, making sure that the partners' skills and style are compatible and ensuring that communication at all levels is effective.
- If the correct approach is adopted, there are very few jobs that cannot be job shared.
- Job sharing can bring many benefits to the organisation, customers and the employees. However, if a job share is not managed effectively problems can arise such as incompatibility of partners, poor communication and breakdown in continuity.
- The support of senior managers is crucial if the scheme is to succeed.
- When introducing any policy there are certain steps that should be followed:
  - Define rationale for introducing policy
  - Identify potential benefits for employer and employee
  - Consider possible issues for employer and employee
  - Design a transparent and flexible policy
  - Consult and communicate
  - Implement
  - Promote
  - Monitor, review and adapt

# Appendix 1

## **Job Sharing Patterns**

- 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 a less useful method because of travelling time and cost
- Split week - this is the most common pattern, according to the 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.

### Useful Links

#### Useful contacts

Working Families	<a href="http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk">www.workingfamilies.org.uk</a>
Equal Opportunities Commission	<a href="http://www.eoc.org.uk">www.eoc.org.uk</a>
Flexibility	<a href="http://www.flexibility.co.uk">www.flexibility.co.uk</a>
Work Foundation (Industrial Society)	<a href="http://www.theworkfoundation.com">www.theworkfoundation.com</a>
National Statistics	<a href="http://www.statistics.gov.uk">www.statistics.gov.uk</a>
Cranet	<a href="http://www.cranet.org">www.cranet.org</a>
UCEA	<a href="http://www.ucea.ac.uk">www.ucea.ac.uk</a>
Ivillage UK Ltd	<a href="http://www.ivillage.co.uk">www.ivillage.co.uk</a>

#### Job share policies available on-line

Aston University	<a href="http://www.aston.ac.uk">www.aston.ac.uk</a>
Bath Spa University	<a href="http://www.bathspa.ac.uk">www.bathspa.ac.uk</a>
University of Bradford	<a href="http://www.bradford.ac.uk">www.bradford.ac.uk</a>
University of Durham	<a href="http://www.dur.ac.uk">www.dur.ac.uk</a>
University of Hertfordshire	<a href="http://www.herts.ac.uk">www.herts.ac.uk</a>
University of Leeds	<a href="http://www.leeds.ac.uk">www.leeds.ac.uk</a>
Leeds Metropolitan University	<a href="http://www.lmu.ac.uk">www.lmu.ac.uk</a>
Liverpool John Moore University	<a href="http://www.livjm.ac.uk">www.livjm.ac.uk</a>
University of Manchester	<a href="http://www.man.ac.uk">www.man.ac.uk</a>
Middlesex University	<a href="http://www.mdx.ac.uk">www.mdx.ac.uk</a>
Southampton University	<a href="http://www.hr.soton.ac.uk">www.hr.soton.ac.uk</a>
University of York	<a href="http://www.york.ac.uk">www.york.ac.uk</a>
Norfolk and Norwich health Care NHS trust	<a href="http://www.nnuh.nhs.uk">www.nnuh.nhs.uk</a>
West Devon Borough Council	<a href="http://www.westdevon.gov.uk">www.westdevon.gov.uk</a>
Salford City Council	<a href="http://www.salford.gov.uk">www.salford.gov.uk</a>

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May 2005

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