

Job Split, Job Share, Job Support Toolkit

and Case Studies

Exploring options for staff to reduce time fractions at FedUni
A manager/staff member guide



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All requests and enquiries regarding use and availability of this publication should be directed to:

Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity

Federation University Australia

PO Box 663

Ballarat VIC 3353

Australia

Telephone: (03) 5327 9357

Email: equity@federation.edu.au

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Caution: The most up-to-date version of this Toolkit is available at www.federation.edu.au/worklife

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Work and life balance at FedUni

FedUni strives to provide a flexible workplace, and our managers will consider seriously requests from staff members who wish to make changes to help them better balance their work and personal lives.

FedUni acknowledges that many benefits can occur for the employee and the workplace when managers engage positively in the process of negotiating changed working conditions with their staff members. FedUni is also committed to fulfil external (legislative) expectations around flexibility for staff, particularly those with parental or carer responsibilities.

Legal expectations include staff being able to request a change to work arrangements if they require flexibility, and the way that managers must respond.

Who might consider reducing their time fraction?

Staff members may wish to reduce their working hours to a smaller time fraction because their work and life balance has changed for some reason. Perhaps they are returning from maternity leave, caring for sick family members, easing into retirement, or studying. They might be full-time and wanting to move to part-time, or they might already be part-time and wanting to reduce their time fraction further. The reduction in hours might be permanent, or for a given time period. Generally, when this occurs, the issue is what to do with the relinquished part of the position. It may be useful to consider:

- Can an existing position be divided up to best suit the staff member and the workplace?
- What might be the impact on the staff member? The supervisor? The team? The broader community? Can all this be managed?
- What needs to be done to implement the changes?

If you find yourself in a position where you want to cut back your hours, or are a manager who has a staff member making such a request, then this Toolkit will be of assistance to you.

Case studies

The case studies at the end of the Toolkit, and the examples drawn from them throughout the Toolkit, provide examples of how University staff and managers have handled these situations.



Scope of this Toolkit

The focus of this Toolkit is on situations where existing staff members wish to make a reduction in their existing hours, and the process for exploring their options. When staff members request a reduction in their time fraction – and hence workload and duties – the consequence is determining how the remaining workload and duties will be undertaken. This Toolkit explores the three main ways of dividing up such a position at FedUni and aims to assist staff members and managers explore them.

However, before going any further, it might be useful to consider other flexible arrangements (for example, 48/52, flexible use of hours, or working from home) before making the decision to reduce hours. This is because it is important to consider the effect that reducing hours may have on pay, superannuation and other entitlements. FedUni's Flexible Work Arrangements Toolkit provides detail on other options available. (See www.federation.edu.au/worklife)

Options for dividing a position

Job split

A job is split into relatively un-related part-time positions. Generally the duties are divided, creating two separate part-time positions (for example, a teaching load divided between two part-time teachers).

Case study

Alex's staff member (Peter) was approaching retirement and wanted to reduce his time fraction to 0.4 and have a more flexible work pattern to allow for some travel each year. Alex, in discussion with Peter, split the job into two areas of expertise and recruited a new staff member with the required skills. Alex looked at this as a positive step to assist with job satisfaction and to diversify the skills of his staff.



Job share

The job responsibilities are shared between two or more people. Generally, the duties of the overall position remain unchanged and two people share them (for example, an administration role where the staff communicate and coordinate to cover all aspects of the position).

Case study

Celina and Komal work in an executive assistant position in a job share arrangement. Each of them works three days, overlapping on Wednesday afternoons. Their work tasks are not split in any way; they say it's as if two of them work as one person. Although there are no job divisions, they do draw on each other's strengths for some tasks. They have the same phone number and share a desk, with an extra laptop when required.



Job support

One staff member reduces hours (retaining responsibility for all position outcomes) and a support person at a lower level is employed to undertake some of the tasks associated with the position. (for example, a HEW 7 staff member wishes to reduce their time fraction to three days per week, and the remaining budget is used to employ a support person at HEW 3 level for three days per week).

Case study

When Fiona returned from maternity leave part-time, she reduced her time fraction by 0.4. This was put towards funding a full-time administrative position to be shared with another staff member. Dividing Fiona's responsibilities between Fiona and the Administrative Officer was relatively simple, as the Administrative Officer took over the general enquiries and the administration tasks, such as payments and website updates. They set up a specific email address so that contact could be made continuously, even on the two days when Fiona wasn't there.



Deciding which option is best

How do managers and staff decide the best way to approach a request to reduce hours?

The right solution will depend on the needs of individuals, the needs of the work area, and the nature of the job itself.

It is important that staff members and managers keep an open mind about what solution is the best one and how (or if) it will work.

Human Resources can provide advice throughout this process on any legal and industrial implications, and can assist with the design and implementation of flexible arrangements. Managers, in particular, need to seek advice from Human Resources on the time-lines for responding to requests for changed arrangements and on any process requirements.

Case study

Elisa's advice (as a manager) to others going down this path is: '...to sit down very early – all parties – before positions get entrenched...'

She reflected that she'd had a starting thought of: 'It just won't work', as she saw a number of challenges in having a full-time person request to go part-time in a key position in a dynamic environment and role. She was supportive of job share as a concept, but didn't think it was appropriate in this particular job. Her opinion now is that if they can make a job share arrangement work in a dynamic space like theirs, then it can work just about anywhere.

Case study

When Kim was planning to go on maternity leave with her second child, she raised the idea of returning to her role in a job share scenario.

At first, Ron (her manager) was very concerned about how a full-time position with the responsibility for working on multiple projects would work as a job share role. His instinct was that the job didn't suit job share as it had operated for so long with one person in the role and he felt job share would compromise the role's capabilities. But once they actually looked into job share options and broke the role down into the tasks undertaken, Ron realised that the role's projects could be separated for two people to work on. Ron saw that his immediate reaction was incorrect – and his tip is: 'Stay open minded.'



To help determine which arrangement is best for your situation you need to consider all three options for job division and really examine which one will best address both staff and workplace needs, and is realistic in your work environment.

Managers and staff members need to discuss:

1. The nature of the job itself and what options are appropriate
2. Allocation of hours
3. Responsibilities and reporting
4. Communication between staff members involved, managers and other staff
5. Infrastructure
6. Performance review
7. Reviewing the arrangements.

The sections that follow provide some detail about these aspects.

Ultimately, the decision might be that none of these options is possible. But managers should not make such a decision without going through a thorough and balanced process, such as that outlined in this Toolkit, and without being aware of FedUni and legislative expectations.

Step 1

The nature of the job

When a staff member wishes to reduce their hours, the first task is to look at the nature of the job and the tasks and responsibilities being undertaken. Most positions can be divided in various ways.

It is very important to have an up-to-date position description (PD) to use as the basis for discussion. (Note: If the PD has not been updated for some time, it would be good to do this as a first step.) Then, the manager and staff member need to break the position down. It might be useful to sit together at a computer or in front of a whiteboard to do this.

Consider

- What are the various tasks that need to be undertaken and can they be split into separate groups of tasks that could be performed by different staff members?
- Do the same tasks need to be undertaken every day or can they be performed more flexibly during the course of a week?
- What are the outcomes the position is responsible for and can the responsibilities be split?
- Does the position have staff members reporting to it? Would it be feasible for them to report to separate managers?
- Does the position have a reporting relationship that requires supervision and guidance on a daily basis, or does the reporting relationship happen more on an 'as needs' basis?

Which option do you think might be the most appropriate in your situation?

Part-time options	Suitable?
Job split This can work well when the position can be neatly split into two distinct roles that can operate independently; for example, a teaching position that currently involves two distinct subject areas or courses, that can independently report to a manager and has distinct responsibilities and staff reporting to it.	
Job share This can work well when the position has tasks, responsibilities and communication/reporting relationships that can't be neatly separated, but that can be undertaken in a partnership/collaboration model.	
Job support This can work well when the responsibility for outcomes cannot be easily separated and ideally remain with one person, but where another staff member can undertake some of the tasks of the position and/or undertake support functions.	



Case study

Glenn had a full time position as a teacher but wanted to pursue some work in a commercial venue, with a view to opening up his own business. He did think of giving up his job altogether, but his manager listened to his request for shorter hours and set about arranging it with him.

Together they came up with a plan that best used Glenn's skills and interests. Another staff member picked up 0.4 of the time fraction that Glenn relinquished, undertaking completely different job responsibilities to Glenn and bringing new skills to the department.

Case study

When Bronwyn returned from maternity leave, she wanted to return to her administrative role at 0.4 instead of 0.8. Her manager, Peta, felt that the position lent itself to a job share arrangement, with Bronwyn and Megan (who had replaced Bronwyn while she was on leave) each working two days a week.

Bronwyn and Megan were both responsible for all duties and did whatever tasks needed to be done on the day. Peta said that to some extent there was a natural separation of the work according to the particular skills of each person, but Megan and Bronwyn also worked on common tasks.

Step 2

Allocation of hours

Thinking about the allocation of hours will help clarify which options will work.

For job split

Both parties can have their hours determined individually, depending upon the requirements of the part-time load. For example, they might end up being on campus at the same time if classes run concurrently.

Case study

When Lara returned from maternity leave her teaching job was split and another person undertook some of the teaching on a sessional basis. As that staff member travelled from Melbourne to teach, all of her teaching was scheduled on the one day for convenience. Lara said that the differences in their skills made splitting the job quite clear; each of them teaching self-contained classes.

For job share

Various arrangements are possible, depending upon the preferences of staff and what works for the particular position. It could be: one day on, one day off; three days one week, two the next; or working part of each day, for example, one job sharer could work in the mornings, while the other works in the afternoons.

Case study

Celina and Komal, in their job share role, allocated their hours so that the whole week would be covered. Celina works Monday to Wednesday and Komal works Wednesday to Friday. Their manager was able to allocate extra funding to enable a half day overlap to assist in communication, with both of them working together on Wednesday afternoons.

For job support

The hours worked will depend upon whether continual coverage of the working week is needed and what level of overlap is required for adequate supervision of the support staff member.

Note below possible days and hours for each staff member to work

Week 1	Hours of incumbent staff member	Hours of additional staff member
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Week 2	Hours of incumbent staff member	Hours of additional staff member
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

Step 3

Responsibilities and reporting

The existing staff member (the incumbent) and the person taking up the other aspects of the role need to be clear about their respective roles, responsibilities and reporting arrangements.

Consider

1. How will the responsibilities be divided?
2. What upward and/or downward reporting relationships will be affected?
3. What is the existing staff member's attitude to giving up/sharing responsibilities?

For job split

- Can both staff members have independent responsibilities for outcomes and independently report to manager(s)?
- What impact (if any) will this have on direct reports (i.e. staff who report to the position)? Can these be simply allocated to the separate positions?
- Do the workloads in the split fit the allocated time fractions?
- Has the existing staff member fully thought through what responsibilities, activities and relationships that they will be relinquishing – and what their role might be in mentoring or leaving alone the new staff member, depending on the needs of the new staff member?



For job share

- Will employees perform similar tasks?
- How will the responsibilities be split? Will they be shared with job sharers interchanging and undertaking the full range of tasks within the position? Or will the responsibilities be divided into specific tasks?
- Can you make the division of responsibility practical and understood by all?
- Can some/all responsibilities be divided by project or client?
- Will the job sharers report to the same manager?
- What impact (if any) will it have on direct reports? How can these be allocated?
- Has the existing staff member fully thought through what it really means to share a position – the need to be an equal partner with their job sharer, not the senior partner?

Case study

Peta set up a job share arrangement for two staff members in her program area. Peta's manager, Maryanne, was initially concerned that the job share arrangement did not increase Peta's workload, due to challenges in having her staff share tasks and responsibilities. Peta and Maryanne found that these issues could be managed with open communication and clear expectations.

For job support

- Who will the support person report to?
- Are both sets of position responsibilities clear, differentiated and appropriate to the levels of appointment?
- Has the existing staff member fully thought through what it is that they will be delegating to the support role? Will they need support in managing staff if they haven't had a supervisory role before?
- What will be the impact on the people the incumbent currently supervises? Who will supervise on the days the incumbent is not working?

Case study

Kim's work arrangement underwent a metamorphosis from a job share to a job support arrangement. Her job share position meant she shared responsibilities equally with her job sharer, but when it became a job support position her responsibilities changed. She then had responsibility for an administrative assistant and had to make sure that she gave very clear instructions for the days that she wasn't working, and establish how the two of them would communicate with each other.

Step 4

Communication

It is important that all relevant staff members are kept informed of changes to work arrangements, particularly if there will be more than one person to liaise with.

A new arrangement may affect other staff in the immediate work teams, as well as staff more broadly in the University, and even in the wider community.

Additionally, communication strategies between the job split/job share/job support parties need to be worked through.

For job split

- To what extent do the incumbent and the additional staff members need to communicate with each other? How will this occur?
- If splitting up clients, students or functions, how will staff members inform people of their new hours?

For job share

- The time and willingness of job sharers to talk openly to each other can be a factor in the success or failure of a job share. What arrangements will enable job sharers to talk openly with each other?
- Enabling some overlap time is a very useful strategy. How might this be facilitated? Perhaps through some extra fund allocation or through leaving some portion of the week uncovered?
- Could job sharers use the same phone number and set up a joint email that both staff members can access?
- Could each person check the other's mail, email and voicemail to address any pressing issues?
- Could the hours of work for each staff member be put in the email signature box, along with the email address of the other staff member?
- Some communication possibilities for job share arrangements include:
 - > voice messages, lists/notes for each other, email
 - > a work folder, joint staff meetings, meetings with each other
 - > a joint diary – electronic or hard copy – to record details for each other
 - > phoning each other at home, or at a given time.

For job support

- Who can the support person seek assistance from when the person they are supporting is not present?
- What mechanisms will there be for the support person to have phone calls, emails directed between them and the person they are supporting? Arrangements such as those listed for job share may be suitable.
- What communication strategies are needed to let the broader community know who to contact in different circumstances?

Consider

- When the job is divided, how can the part-time staff members involved best maintain contact with the workplace and other staff?
 - With managers?
 - With each other?
 - With direct reports?
- How will you establish clear lines of communication?
- What communication strategies suit the requirements of the position?
 - The staff members?
 - Their managers?



Case study

As the manager, and the main point of contact across two job sharers, Ron was quite concerned that communication between the two was going to fall back onto him, as he would be aware of what had happened on each day of the week. He made this very clear at the beginning of the process, and communication strategies were set up to alleviate this – a communication diary, shared voicemail, email and including Ron in the job sharers' emails.

Step 5 Infrastructure

When a position is divided there may be infrastructure issues, depending upon the way the position is to be structured. Funding implications should be considered.

For job split

- A job split option may give the flexibility to have two people at work at the one time (for example, classes could be scheduled concurrently). However, that may require additional computer and office resources.

For job share

- If there is no overlap, staff members can share the infrastructure. For overlap, think about sharing space and the use of a laptop or the creation of two nearby workstations.

For job support

- Think about the availability of two work stations close together for maximum efficiency.

Suggestion

Make a list of the infrastructure arrangements and/or requirements for each staff member. Think about desks, phone, email, computer and any other specific requirements.

Step 6 Performance review

Setting clear and unambiguous objectives for measuring performance for each role is an important aspect to get clear right from the start.

Consider

- What are realistic expectations of performance, based on the hours being worked and the levels of the positions?
- What performance objectives are appropriate to set for each staff member?

For job split

- The manager needs to do separate performance reviews for each staff member, according to their separate and distinctive PDs.

For job share

- The manager needs to do a separate performance review for each job sharer.
- Usually there will be similar performance objectives, but these may be individualised if there has been some splitting of tasks with individual responsibility for actions. Individual skill sets and experience of each of the job sharers may determine what is individualised.
- Hold an additional joint meeting to talk about overall performance of duties and to discuss job share strategies that could improve performance.

For job support

- The performance of each position holder is assessed separately.
- This can involve more than one person doing a performance review:
 - > the incumbent’s manager reviewing the incumbent staff member
 - > the incumbent reviewing the support person.

Suggestion

Note what performance review arrangements would work for each staff member.

Step 7

Recording the arrangements

By now you should have a good idea about how to divide up the existing position and the following table may be useful for you to record the details for each staff member.

Job division arrangements

Position title			
Arrangement		<input type="radio"/> Job split <input type="radio"/> Job share <input type="radio"/> Job support	
Incumbent staff member		Additional staff member	
Reports to		Reports to	
Direct reports		Direct reports	
Responsibilities		Responsibilities	
Days	Hours, from:	to:	
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Infrastructure	Available	Required	
Desk			
Phone			
Network access			
Computer			
Other			
Performance reviewer		Review date	
Communication strategies			

Step 8

Implementing the new arrangements

Once you have worked out how the position will be divided it is time to consider what else has to be done before you can implement the new arrangements.

Now is the time to contact Human Resources to make sure the right process is followed for the planned changes to working arrangements.

Important dates

1. When will the new arrangements start and end? Are the involved parties aware that the arrangements are for a defined period, at the end of which the position will default back to the incumbent and their original time fraction unless further actions are instigated?
2. What will be the timeline for consideration of possible extension or termination of arrangements? Who will initiate discussion about this? How far in advance will you start? Are you aware of Human Resources' timelines for contract renewal and terminations?

Approval process for changed arrangements for the incumbent

1. Who is the delegated officer that needs to approve these arrangements?
2. Have you written and agreed on the PD for the changed role?
3. Check with Human Resources that the arrangements comply with FedUni and legislative requirements, and to ascertain what must be done to formalise them.
4. What needs to be done in relation to the incumbent? The process must involve Human Resources who will prepare a letter to the incumbent outlining the changed pay and arrangements.

Note

It is important that the incumbent understands that the arrangement ties them in to a reduction of hours for a set period. It is possible that their circumstances may change before the arrangement is due to end, and they may wish to return to their original time fraction.

It would usually not be possible to do this in their existing job, as the additional staff member would have a contract of employment with a specified end date. However, it may be possible (but not guaranteed) to find an alternative position or an additional position either within the organisational unit or elsewhere in the University.



Suggestion

Make a checklist of things you have to do before the appointments are made.

For example: arrangements checked with everybody, approval given, new PDs written, contract variations made, the date arrangements will begin and end, and diarise a date to review arrangements.

Step 8

Implementing the new arrangements (continued)

Appointing the additional staff member

1. Check with Human Resources that the arrangements to fill the new position comply with FedUni and legislative requirements, and to ascertain what must be done to formalise them.
2. How will you go about filling the additional position? Do you need to advertise or can you use a FedUni process such as higher duties or temporary appointment? Perhaps part of the position will be taken by an existing staff member who wishes to increase their time fraction.
3. Have you written the PD for the changed role in consultation with the incumbent?
4. In selecting the person to fill a job share or job support position, consider how you can involve the incumbent in the selection process. With job share, it is extremely important that the two have a commitment to teamwork and collaboration.



Case study

Celina's position was advertised both internally and externally – the advertisement actually said that it was a job-share position and specified the days that the person would have to work. Celina was a member of the selection panel. Komal, who was selected for the position, said that it was good to see the person she would be working with in the interview.

Step 9

Monitoring the job division arrangements

New job arrangements need to be monitored to ensure that managers and staff continue to have work arrangements that meet their needs. It is also important that the monitoring arrangements are agreed to, rather than presumed. The best way to do this is to communicate with staff members up front so that they know the conditions under which their job arrangements will be monitored and when that will occur.

Ongoing monitoring

1. Initially, new job arrangements may seem cumbersome as staff members and managers adjust to the new roles and responsibilities, particularly with job share and job support. Make sure that enough time is allocated to getting the arrangements established and that everyone is prepared for an adjustment period.
2. It may be useful to have regular review periods in the early stages to fine-tune any issues that provide difficulty.
3. Ongoing monitoring of the arrangements may be a simple conversation or could involve more investigation and/or negotiation to ensure that they are working efficiently.
4. It may be that you need to frequently review the agreement, analyse what works well, what needs adjusting.

Final review

Prior to the set date for the arrangements to end, a final review is needed to ascertain how successful the arrangements have been and what further actions need to be taken. It is important to set a date for the final review, taking into account Human Resources' timelines for contract extensions and terminations. Check with Human Resources if you are unsure of their timelines.

There are three outcomes that would arise from the final review of the arrangements:

1. The arrangements will finish, and the incumbent staff member will revert to the original work mode. The additional staff member's contract will cease (or be adjusted, if they were an existing FedUni staff member). Remember to revisit Human Resources to be certain about entitlements and what needs to be done at this stage.
2. The arrangements are to be extended for a longer timeframe. Again, Human Resources can help you with formalising this.
3. Different arrangements are required, possibly because individual or workplace needs have changed. If this is the case, then some (or all of) the aspects described in this Toolkit may need to be considered and recorded all over again.



Case study

To assist the arrangement to work well during this time, Rana, the manager of two job split staff members, implemented a number of strategies. She engaged in plenty of discussions and staff meetings, visits to the classroom (minimal) and regular catch-ups. She also listened for student feedback, both formal and informal. She said that they had a big de-brief at the end.

Help!

It is possible (but hopefully unlikely) that despite the best of efforts, a staff member and manager cannot reach an agreement or plan that they are both satisfied with. If this situation should occur, then guidance should be sought from senior and/or specialist FedUni staff, to ensure all options have been explored, and to assist in reaching a final outcome. Managers need to check the industrial/legal implications of refusing a reduction in hours.

Managers and staff are encouraged to seek assistance, information and/or resources.

Managers considering refusing a request for changed arrangements should seek advice from Human Resources before making a final decision.

For advice about interpretation of staff entitlements under awards, enterprise agreements and policies, contact Human Resources.

For advice on what might be reasonable for staff to expect, or Managers to provide, in terms of flexibility where the request to reduce hours relates to carer, religious or cultural reasons, or because of disability or a chronic medical condition, contact Human Resources or Equity and Equal Opportunity.

Useful references

Leave and Work Life Balance website at
www.federation.edu.au/worklife

Maternity Leave Toolkit and Flexible Work Arrangements Toolkit at www.federation.edu.au/worklife

Children in University Activities Policy and Procedure <http://policy.federation.edu.au/>

Breastfeeding of Infants Policy and Procedure
<http://policy.federation.edu.au>

Notes

Case Studies

Job Split, Job Share and Job Support



Note: These case studies reflect real FedUni stories and experiences, but names and job titles have been changed.

Executive assistants – staff perspective

Celina & Komal, Executive Assistants

Celina

When planning to return from maternity leave I spoke to Denise, my manager at the time, and said that I was looking to return part-time, rather than full-time as I had been before my leave. So it was arranged fairly simply, that I would return to work 3 days per week, and that Kerry, who had been seconded as my maternity leave replacement, would continue on and work 2 ½ days per week. This allowed for a ½ day overlap for us. Our manager allocated extra funding for this ½ day overlap.

For Kerry it was a matter of timing as she had to wait a few months until the contract expired for the person filling her full-time job. In the meantime she worked 0.5 job sharing with me and 0.5 in another position within the University. When Kerry returned to her 'old' position we had to find another person to job share with me. The position was advertised both internally and externally – the advertisement actually said that it was a job share position and specified the days that the appointee would have to work. I was a member of the selection panel and we appointed Komal as my job share partner.

Our work tasks are not split in any way; it's as if two of us work as one person. We have the same phone number and share a desk, with an extra laptop when required. We have a ½ day handover time during which we talk a lot to catch up on everything that is to be done.

I know that I am a much better parent and a much better Executive Assistant for working part-time like this.

Komal

Like Celina, I had returned to work after maternity leave, but in another organisation that was not prepared to have my Executive Assistant position as part-time or job share. There are not many part-time Executive Assistant positions available, so when I saw this one offered it seemed too good to be true. The flexibility that the University was offering was attractive to me; the days and times of work were set, and things were black and white in that regard. When I came to my interview it was good to see the person that I would be working with if I was the successful candidate. As it turned out, I did get the job and we have indeed been working together. In the early days Celina taught me what I needed to know about the University.

The two of us

We have been working together now for nearly 12 months and get along really well. Each of us works 3 consecutive days, overlapping on Wednesday afternoons. We can ring each other at home if there is a query we need to sort out. Although there are no set job divisions, we do draw on each other's strengths (like Komal for drafting letters and Celina for the website).

Although it was not part of the deal, we fill in for each other as much as possible. Recently each of us had a holiday and the other person came in 4 days per week and worked from home on the 5th day, checking emails and voicemail from home. We dealt with anything urgent and left other things until the Monday when we would be in at work again. Working each other's days like this gave us an understanding of what the other person's job pattern was like, for example it was much busier at the start of each week than in the latter part.

You have to feel comfortable with the other person. We found that we are quite similar, with an identical work ethic. We even have children the same age, and so does our manager, who is really supportive of us. Between all of us we work around what needs to be done. Sometimes we feel a bit guilty about leaving a job partly done for the other person to finish, but we have to remember that each of us is only half of the position. We constantly talk to our manager about what works and what we need to do differently. We talk to other job sharers to see how they work things out.

We are both proud that we have made this arrangement work; perhaps we put in more effort because we want it to work out. We feel privileged and grateful to have the opportunity to work like this and bring some balance into our work and family life.

Executive assistants – management perspective

Ian, Senior Administrative Manager

This job share came about as the result of a request from Celina returning from maternity leave (after a more temporary arrangement came to an end). The nature of this role did lend itself to a job share; I believe many jobs can be worked in a flexible model, allowing and accounting for relative responsibilities, time fractions of each participant, and the overriding organisational requirement.

When dividing the Executive Assistant position I relied on my past experience and practice (from another workplace) and advice from the University's own practice leaders in this area. I consulted Celina about possible options and we discussed the time fractions and the position description for the new staff member (deciding it would be the same). Celina was also directly involved in the selection process.

When Komal started we had to initially work through administrative issues of how the 'to do' list moved from one person to the next, and how daily actions were recorded. Because Celina, Komal and I work so closely together everything runs smoothly. We communicate via a role-based email and regular face-to-face time and they are both here together on Wednesdays.

We all also quickly learnt what to do when each of us had family responsibilities (some unexpected) and how to manage the diary around that.

The effect upon other staff has been difficult to fully attribute, but I think the fact that we have a functional and highly visible arrangement in place sends a positive message (and a practical example) throughout the University.



Job support – staff perspective

Fiona, Research Officer

A few months before I was due to return from maternity leave, I met with my manager and requested to return part-time (0.6) instead of full-time. Jeremy was supportive of my request and the fact that he had already thought about how to manage my return certainly helped. Prior to my going on maternity leave it was identified that additional administrative support was required. Jeremy was also aware of another area within our School that needed administrative support, so suggested a full-time administrative assistant be recruited to be shared between my role and the Student Liaison Officer. The money allocated to the remaining 0.4 time fraction was put towards funding this full-time administrative position. The Student Liaison Officer was on the interview panel for this position.

Dividing the job responsibilities between me and the Administrative Officer was relatively simple, as the Administrative Officer took over the general enquiries and the administration tasks, such as website updates. We set up a specific Research email address so that contact could be made continuously, even on the two days when I wasn't there. She also picks up my telephone and responds to emails when I am not there.

The Student Liaison Officer and I share an office and our shared Administrative Officer sits nearby. Having someone there full-time means that there is always someone available to handle the day-to-day enquiries, and plenty of time to discuss things together on the days I work. Time spent between Research and Student Liaison support is not always confined to distinct days and times for the Administrative Officer, but all the work gets done just the same.

I was surprised at how easy it was to set up and how it all fitted in with childcare for me. The arrangement works well for everyone and I would have no hesitation in doing it again.

My manager was fantastic in supporting my return to work plan and bringing on the additional administrative support which made it so much easier for my transition back to work. It was important for me to have a balance between family and work, and knowing that there was someone there full-time for the students to contact certainly made me rest easier. Having 0.5 administrative support to take over many of the daily and time consuming tasks means that I am able to focus on the more complex tasks of my position in a 0.6 timeframe. Whilst I retain responsibility of the job, it takes the two of us to work cooperatively to get it done. The arrangement works well for everyone and I would have no hesitation in doing it again.

My tips for job support

Tip 1:

If you are not going to return to work in the same capacity as you left, give your manager plenty of notice. I met with my manager about 5 months before I was due to return to work.

Tip 2:

Do some of the groundwork before meeting with your manager. You know your job best, so put together some feasible scenarios on how you might be able to go about dividing your job.

Time to pursue industry experience

Management perspective

Lisa, Head of Department

When I took up my position as Head of Department one of the first things I did was to review the work arrangements for my staff members. Glenn had previously requested to change his time fraction to 0.6 as he wanted to spend some time working in industry.

I discussed with Glenn what he liked most to teach and what his greatest skills were. This way we identified how we would split up his job and keep him teaching in the area where he had most to offer students. It was agreed that he would spend most of his time in the business training facility (two days per week) working with apprentices. Glenn was prepared to be flexible about other activities like competitions and external activities for students.

It was very important to communicate with other staff members about Glenn's changed job role and with Glenn himself about getting the right balance of hours, especially with external activities like competitions where it is easy to work beyond allocated hours. We developed a good relationship, with both of us prepared to give and take where necessary. Another staff member picked up the 0.4 time fraction that Glenn had relinquished. That person had completely different job responsibilities and there was no need for both staff members to be present at the same time.

The benefit for me was that I was able to build on the practical skills that Glenn is passionate about. Glenn's work in a commercial venue enriches the experience that he offers our students. He brings back new ideas and information on current industry trends for adaptation into our training facility. I was able to use the 0.4 time fraction to provide opportunity to another staff member, who also brought new skills to the Department.



Staff perspective

Glenn, Teacher

I had a full-time position as a teacher but wanted to pursue some work in a commercial venue, with a view to opening up my own business. I did think of giving up my job altogether, but my manager listened to my request for shorter hours and set about arranging it for me.

I discussed with my manager where my teaching interests lay and what my strengths were. Together we came up with a plan that suited us both.

The arrangement has worked particularly well for me. Not only do I have the balance in my working life that I was looking for, but I am also exposed to new knowledge, products and processes from the commercial world that I bring back to the Department. Up-to-date information is particularly important in my area, where there is constant change, and working outside the University means that I can share new information with my students. All of us benefit from this.

Job sharing on a contract – staff perspective

Sopheia and Carmel, Executive Support

Sopheia

I had a two year contract for a full-time position before I went on maternity leave. When it was almost time to return from leave I let Human Resources know in writing that I wanted to return to my old position, but on a 0.5 time fraction. Human Resources discussed with me and my manager how this might work and I returned to work 2 ½ days per week. Carmel, who was seconded to my position while I was on leave, was offered a contract for 3 days (0.6) per week and this allowed for a ½ day overlap time when we were both here together. Carmel's original position was re-negotiated with her manager to a smaller time fraction so that she continued working full-time.

Although my manager did not like the idea of job share at first, it all fell into place easily once it was set up. We had an initial meeting with our manager to refine the details and then we started quarterly reviews to discuss what was working, what was not, and how we could improve it. We have each had our performance review and our manager has indicated that, despite initial reservations about job sharing, he is happy with the arrangements and our performance.

At first there was perhaps a little bit of an issue about ownership of the job and what our roles were. Our manager gave each of us some individual projects to focus on, along with our PA work, and it was a good strategy as we soon moved past that.

Basically we do the jobs as they arise on our given days of work. We have a shared email for the unit, which we both respond to, plus our own private email addresses. We share a phone and a desk, and use a laptop on the times when we are both here together. We set up a job log to keep track of what each of us has done and where we are up to with things. We both update it weekly as we finish our days of work, and it is there for the next person to check as they begin their period of work. It was really our manager who had to remember who he had discussed what with and we fixed this by including all of us in the emails we sent out.

These arrangements continued until my contract came up for renewal and I agreed to renew it as a full-time position. Once that was done, I negotiated part-time to coincide with Carmel's contract dates, so that we could continue as we were. Renewing it like this protects both of us in that it ensures that there is a full-time position for us to share.

The job has changed a little in that we now have a new supervisor and I have increased my time fraction so that I am now working 0.6 too. Carmel also works 0.6 job share and so there is one full day of overlap when we both work together.

I appreciate being able to work like this and the help I have had from Human Resources. The arrangements work really well for my work/family balance. Anyone considering a job share like this should remember it is important to work with your manager and job sharer to put in place systems and tools that will make it successful.



Job sharing on a contract – management perspective

Elisa, Manager

I admit that there were a number of challenges in having a full-time person request to go part-time in a key position in our dynamic environment. Ultimately we arrived at an arrangement which is working well for both the work environment and for the staff members involved. However, in hindsight we could have progressed this employment arrangement easier, and I am happy to pass on some of my insights to other managers.

My opinion is that if we can make a job share arrangement work in a dynamic space like our unit – where the challenges are from both the external and internal environments – then it can work just about anywhere.

Sopheia's position was filled on a full-time basis by Carmel when Sopheia was on maternity leave, and I realise that it really wasn't in my thinking that Sopheia would come back to this position part-time. I was thinking in a more operationally-easy way, envisaging Sopheia coming back full-time to this position or we'd find her a part-time option in another role. So, when she first raised the concept of part-time in her own role I had a starting thought of: "It just won't work".

I saw lots of issues with how we would ensure continuity of communication and knowledge in supporting the team, which is small and mobile, with a lot of activities occurring some distance away. I was supportive of job share as a concept, but didn't think it was appropriate in this job. I now realise that is not a good starting position – no starting position should be set in stone. With Sopheia and I having quite different positions at the outset, things were quite uncomfortable and Human Resources was asked to give assistance. After some time I recognised there was potential for the really good working relationship with Sopheia (developed over a number of years) to be adversely impacted, so I made a more concerted attempt to explore constructive options.

Processes and systems were identified and implemented so that Sopheia and Carmel could achieve the continuity and reliability that the team required. I worked with Sopheia and Carmel and distributed the position responsibilities based on their skills and interests. Initially I increased the overall job fraction to 1.1 so that there could be ½ day overlap to aid communication. Having the two staff has also now enabled me to further increase the overall time allocation to 1.2 to respond to increased workload, with Sopheia increasing her time fraction to 0.6.

It may be that the role does not work as well as it might if it was full-time, but it is working well. I'd rate it as a very satisfactory outcome. And it has meant that Sopheia and the unit have the benefit of her staying in her own role and we have the added benefit of Carmel's contribution to the team.



My advice

My advice for others going down this path is to sit down very early – all parties – before positions get entrenched, and to have open minds. Once it is decided that job share is the best option, then it is imperative to set up protocols for working and to set up regular meetings, for example, fortnightly, from the outset to examine how it's going – warts and all – and to refine the arrangement. The arrangement can work when all parties have a good attitude towards it, have good processes and systems and have continuous communication and feedback.

Approaching retirement – management perspective

Alex, Head of Department

Peter is approaching retirement and requested a reduced time fraction and a more flexible work pattern to allow for some travel each year. I discussed with him how he thought this could work and we agreed to reduce his time fraction to 0.4 and set up a work plan. Human Resources helped in setting it all up.

Annualised hours involves a calculation of the number of hours that must be worked over a year for the particular time fraction (in Peter's case 0.4), taking into account such things as leave entitlements and public holidays. The work plan established how many hours had to be worked, and I was able to structure the timetable to work Peter in and out for his teaching during block release times and still give him the flexibility he wanted.

I looked at this situation as a positive step for Peter and a good opportunity for me. It allowed me to focus on changing needs of the school and I was able to use the 0.6 time fraction to recruit a new staff member (Maria) with the new skills I required. Maria also needed to work flexibly and is timetabled to do her teaching in the mornings. She starts and finishes 1 hour earlier to enable this.

The job was split so that each person teaches in their own area of expertise. There is no need for them to communicate or overlap their attendance, though each of them keeps in touch via scheduled staff meetings. Peter catches up with information and any changes when he returns from his time off.

If I have to contact Peter when he is not working he will always respond to my emails, even if he is away on holiday.

Initially other staff members had to adjust to the changed hours and work mode, but it was not a problem. Both Peter and Maria are familiar with the running of the department and are self-sustaining as they know how things work and can, for example, organise their own supplies. There is no extra burden for other staff. I review the arrangements annually and speak to both staff members at that time. Each year, the arrangements are recorded in their work plans. It works very well for all of us.

I think the benefits are that I have been able to meet everyone's needs and help with job satisfaction for both staff members. Also, it has allowed me to diversify the skills of my staff to meet changing school needs.



Changing circumstances

Supervisor perspective

Peta, Program Coordinator

While Bronwyn was on maternity leave, her administrative position (0.8) was backfilled by Megan. When Bronwyn's maternity leave was over she was keen to return to work, but at a reduced time fraction. Instead of finishing when her contract had expired, Megan agreed to remain and work the remaining time fraction.

The position lent itself to a job share arrangement with Bronwyn and Megan each working 2 days of the week. Both people were responsible for all duties and did whatever tasks were to be done on the day. To some extent there was a natural separation of the work according to the particular skills of each person, but there was also a lot of overlap with both people working on common tasks.

The communication between both staff worked well, primarily with emails and an occasional phone message to each other. When required, they would alternate days of work with each other to maintain coverage in the position, and attend to family or other commitments.

Changes

After some time Bronwyn resigned because her family relocated to another city. The 0.8 vacancy was advertised as a full-time position. In effect, the job share had finished, but by a strange quirk, Ben, the applicant who was offered the full-time position, only wanted to work 0.8. This meant that we were able to negotiate a new job share arrangement with Megan, who agreed to pick up the additional time again.

Once again, this job share works well, providing full coverage of the position and flexibility in staffing with both staff members covering for each other when necessary. Occasionally the staff have even reorganised their hours so they can work together to complete particularly complex tasks.

My comments and tip for job sharing

I believe job sharing is a sensible approach to employment and it enables staff to balance work and whole-of-life commitments.

Initially my Head of Department was concerned the extra staffing would create additional workplace challenges, particularly with the dynamics of sharing tasks, responsibilities and a shared work area. It is true that closer monitoring is initially required to ensure all parties are respected and treated equally – by each other and by other staff – but with open communication, clear expectations and respect, this is easily managed.

Establish a culture of trust, open communication and respect. Develop a team approach rather than a hierarchy of power, so collaboration, and not competition is the shared expectation when people enter the workplace.



Management perspective

Maryanne, Head of Department

As Peta's manager, I was initially concerned that the job share she proposed for her staff members did not impact upon Peta's time to do her own coordinator's job. I wanted to make sure that she had considered all possibilities and chosen job sharing because it was the best option, rather than the only option.

We had a lot of discussion initially; good discussion, to make sure that it would work. All of us were positive about it. Formalising the process in terms of employment contracts was not a problem and went very smoothly. Once the job share was in place we had informal discussions along the way. I found that Peta's workload had not appreciably increased and that the job share was working fine.

Job metamorphosis – staff perspective

Kim, Project Officer

I wanted to return from maternity leave into my previous position, part-time rather than full-time. I discussed with my manager how this could happen and we decided that I would return to my job at 0.6 time fraction and that a further 0.5 position would be advertised. That allowed for an extra ½ day overlap.

Job share

The position lent itself to a job share option so the two of us worked out how we could do this. We shared a workstation and used a laptop on the ½ day when we were there together. We discovered that we both had similar work habits; we kept our workstation tidy, were considerate of each other, and had the same work ethics. Our shared voicemail and email gave the times and days each of us were working, so that people could contact one of us specifically if they wanted. We kept a communication diary in hard copy that we would write in at the end of our work period, recording what had been done and what the outcomes were. It was a good running sheet for us to refer to. We made sure that our manager stayed in touch by including him in our emails.

Job support

The time came when my job sharer left, for family reasons, and the position changed again. By this time my department was in a really busy time of the year and we had no time to re-advertise, but still needed to find someone to take up the duties I could not do in my time fraction. My manager and I discussed this and we decided that a number of my duties could be packaged together into a part-time administrative support position at a lower HEW classification. With this in mind we re-wrote my position description.

We employed Jackie, who provided administrative support for my position and for the whole team. I made sure that I gave very clear instructions for the days that I wasn't working, and the two of us used a diary to communicate with each other. The job support option worked very well; Jackie and I were at a similar life stage, with young families.

PS

I am now working full-time in a different job and Jackie has a continuing position at FedUni.



Job share/support tip

The main message I have for job sharers is to establish clear communication, keep each other involved and keep your manager in the loop as well. When two people want to be in a job share or support arrangement then they will make sure that it works well. I would be really supportive of others who wanted to job share as I have experienced it myself and know that it can bring good productivity.

Job metamorphosis – management perspective

Ron, Team Leader

When Kim was planning to go on maternity leave with her second child, she raised the issue of returning to her role in a job share scenario. At first, I was very concerned about how a full-time position with the responsibility of working on multiple projects would work as a job share role (although I didn't voice this to Kim). I discussed the options of job share with the Equal Opportunity Manager, and was given quite a lot of information about how to plan for it and how to identify if it would work. Kim was really excited about job sharing her role, and I was really keen to keep Kim in the role after her maternity leave, so was interested in pursuing this option.

My instinct was that the job didn't suit job share as it had operated for so long with one person in the role and I felt job share would compromise the role's capabilities. I was very wrong! Once we actually looked into job share options and broke the role down into the tasks undertaken, it was clear that the role's projects could be separated for two people to work on.

I spent quite a bit of time working with Kim on how the role could be set up as a job share and what communication strategies we would need to put in place to make sure it worked. As the role is quite project oriented, we felt that it was best to split the job up into separate projects. This resulted in the two staff members having responsibility for their own projects, but also sharing basic administrative duties as required.

I realised that a cross-over period between the two staff members was imperative to the success of any job share. In order to do this, we had to work with a 1.1 time fraction, rather than a 1.0 time fraction. This provided a half day cross-over for the two staff to touch base on their work and projects. I had regular meetings with the two staff to see how things were going.

As the manager, and the main point of contact across the two staff members, I was quite concerned that communication between the two was going to fall back onto me, as I would be aware of what had happened on each day of the week. I made this very clear at the beginning of the process, and the communication strategies (such as the diary which Kim referred to) were set up to alleviate this. Whilst I did have to communicate some information between the two, it certainly wasn't a problem.

The staff member who replaced Kim when she went on maternity leave resigned a few months before Kim was due to come back. We then decided to advertise for somebody part-time, in the hope that they would be trained up and then remain in the position in a job share arrangement with Kim when she returned to work. We were very fortunate to find the perfect person for this option and she worked with Kim for a number of months. The job share suited them both and they met the job's requirements exceptionally well.

Sadly, this person had to leave a few months into the role, at which point we switched to a job support role, due to the time of year and the tasks that had to be undertaken. The job support role has also been very successful and the position has continued on for a number of years (separate to job-sharing with Kim).

Other staff members in the department were not affected by the role changes, as far as I was aware. There may have been some hesitations in communicating with two people, when they used to communicate with one, but there were no problems as a result of it.



Job share/support tip

Stay open minded. My immediate reaction of thinking job share wouldn't work was completely incorrect. I think that the project role is a very complicated position to manage as a job share/support and if we can manage it, many other areas of the University should consider it also. It may sound as though it was easy in this case study, but we put a lot of time and effort into planning how it would be managed before it even began, which I think was a key to its success.

Returning early – staff perspective

Lara, Lecturer

I was a full-time staff member on maternity leave and requested, for family reasons, to return to work early and to work only three days per week for six months.

My job is a specialised one, so it was difficult to get just one person who had the right skills while I was on leave. I was replaced by two people, both of whom came up from Melbourne to work as sessional teachers. The administrative and organisational part of my job was taken over by another colleague who was already working at the University. He was given teaching relief during this time.

When I returned early my job was split and one person stayed, on a sessional basis. As she travelled from Melbourne to teach, all of her teaching was scheduled on the one day for convenience. Differences in our skills made splitting the job quite clear; each of us taught self-contained classes. As the other teacher was sessional, more was required of me and I assisted with some co-ordination during this six-month period. Sometimes on my days off I would think of something and give her a ring. It was a juggle at times, with some after hours work when necessary. The sessional teacher reported to me, but ultimately we all reported to the course coordinator.

We adjusted aspects of the arrangements with discussions and phone calls as needed. I had a performance review towards the end of the six-month period and we agreed that there had been some disruption, especially for students. That's why I have been happy to be contacted at home whenever necessary.

I feel I was fortunate in that I had a supportive Supervisor and Head of School and was confident that I would have been accommodated if it had been necessary for me to work part-time for a longer period. That made a big difference to how I felt about my working life.

The following year I returned full-time to my original position.

I love my job, and that has been my underlying thing, even when it was difficult to balance the needs of my home life with my working life. For me the secret to making this arrangement work was all about the quality of the relationship I have with my colleagues and with the students that I teach.



Returning early – management perspective

Rana, Course Co-ordinator

When Lara's circumstances changed and she returned to work early on a part-time basis to share her position with one of the people who had replaced her on maternity leave I decided the best way to divide the position was to review the available skills, match these to the curriculum and take Lara's wishes into account.

One issue that arose with this arrangement was due to different working styles (in both teaching and planning) and communication (students receiving mixed messages). The management of a staff member travelling to and from Melbourne, also working at other jobs, affected smoothness of operations and convenience of forward planning for project work in particular. Generally though, there was good will and tolerance, and an attempt to keep students at arm's length from administrative issues.

The sessional employee was not used to University procedures and needed a great deal of assistance. This fell to other staff when I was unavailable, causing a lot of frustration at the time. It has strengthened my knowledge of what we would look for regarding organisational skills on other occasions. The experience allowed all staff to collaborate on 'who goes where' planning within the staff profile.

To assist the arrangement to work well I engaged in plenty of discussions and staff meetings, visits to the classroom (minimal) and regular catch-ups. I also listened for student feedback, both formal and informal. We had a big de-brief at the end.

I think it is always valuable to work with new situations. When approaching this sort of arrangement though, be careful regarding expectations on both sides, keep talking and be honest.





Contact us

Equity and Equal Opportunity

Call: 5327 9357

Email: equity@federation.edu.au

Web: www.federation.edu.au/equity

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