

# **Reduced Hours and Job Sharing**

## **Working Time and Flexible Working**

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## Reduced Hours

### Overview

This section defines the British Council policy on reduced hours working. Reduced hours working is when someone, by agreement, works fewer hours than the standard ones, whether indefinitely or for a limited period (see Standard Working Hours, Overtime and TOIL). Standard reduced hours working is where one member of staff has sole responsibility for the duties of a job. Reduced hours working can take a number of forms, and includes job-sharing (see Job-Sharing).

The section covers:

- applying to work reduced hours in a current job
- refusing an application to work reduced hours
- applying to work reduced hours in a vacant job
- filling a reduced hours job
- right to reduced hours working
- terms and conditions for job-sharing and reduced hours.

### Audience

This policy applies to UK-appointed staff. It can provide good practice guidance for country/territory TACOS and/ or English and Exams/ OAS staff contracts, subject to local law and conditions.

### Responsibilities

Before agreeing to a request to work reduced hours, line managers must ensure a fair and practicable allocation of work for the member of staff and for the member of staff's colleagues.

### Policy

Working reduced hours benefits staff who are unable to work a full standard week. It also provides more flexibility for the British Council, for example by filling a post that is more suited to reduced hours working than full-time working. The British Council takes a flexible approach to any request for working reduced hours, particularly where there are strong welfare grounds for making a request. Wherever operationally possible, reasonable requests are granted.

In the UK, staff who have a child under age six (or under 18 if the child is disabled) have a statutory right to request flexible working. Staff who want to exercise this right should refer to Parents' Contracts.

### Guidance

#### Applying to work reduced hours in a current job

The most common reason for a request to work reduced hours is the need to care for dependants, but there may be other reasons. A flexible approach is recommended towards any request to work reduced hours:

- If a member of staff wants to work half a week only, but the job cannot be adapted accordingly, a job-share might be appropriate (see Job-Sharing).
- If the workload is seasonal, a compromise solution may be the answer. That is, consider full-time work for specified busy periods, or supplementary temporary cover during those periods.
- Consider adjusting the workload, or changing priorities and deadlines. Line managers are advised to contact HR Services in the UK, or the HR overseas team, for advice.

**Refusing an application to work reduced hours**

Unlike a job-share, a request to work reduced hours need not be turned down because the member of staff's performance or attendance record is considered poor. In some cases, a reduction in hours may improve matters. However, if, after discussion with the member of staff concerned and with HR Services in the UK, or the HR overseas team, a line manager cannot agree to a request to work reduced hours in the current job, the line manager must give the member of staff reasons for the refusal. Staff may, if they wish, appeal against decisions within the appropriate line management chain.

If it is agreed that it is not possible to reduce the standard hours in the current job, then the member of staff may:

- apply for other jobs advertised in the British Council which are already reduced hours, or which could be converted to reduced hours
- in the UK add his or her name to the appropriate job-share register (see Job-Sharing).

The line manager must tell the member of staff that the British Council cannot guarantee reduced hours work, and that there may be a lengthy wait before an opportunity arises.

**Applying to work reduced hours in a vacant job**

Staff who want to work reduced hours can apply for a full-time job advertised in the Bulletin or within the office, if they believe it could be suitable for reduced hours working.

If, as a result of the recruitment process, a member of staff is found to be the best person for the job, the recruiting manager must discuss and investigate the practicalities of converting the job to a reduced hours one.

Any offer of appointment must be made conditional on the outcome of these discussions. To safeguard the member of staff in his or her current job, the recruiting manager and the member of staff must delay transfer arrangements until both are happy that the job can be successfully converted to reduced hours.

**Filling a reduced hours job**

If line managers have vacant reduced hours jobs within their line management, they must first notify HR Services in the UK, or the HR overseas team. It is important to do this as soon as the vacancies are known as there may be a member of staff who needs a job urgently.

A member of staff returning from maternity leave may have priority to fill a vacancy over other interested applicants. This is because the British Council has a statutory obligation in the UK and a contractual obligation overseas to re-employ such staff in the same pay band, working the same number of hours per week, subject to certain conditions. Thus, in the UK, if a member of staff worked reduced hours prior to maternity leave, she also has the right to return to a job on a reduced hours basis. Some women who have worked full-time prior to maternity leave also wish to return to a reduced hours job; it is British Council policy that every effort be made to arrange this, but no guarantee can be given.

In the UK, if no suitable person is available, the line manager must advertise the reduced hours vacancy in the Bulletin or within the Office in the same way as a full-time vacancy (see Recruitment Policy and related procedures).

**Right to reduced hours working**

In the UK, a member of staff recruited to the British Council on a reduced hours contract retains the right to continue working the stated hours. A member of staff who was recruited to work full-time and has switched to reduced hours working does not normally have a contractual right to work reduced hours.

While a line manager must make every effort to maintain the agreed pattern of reduced hours working, operational needs are subject to change and it may become necessary to reconsider

staffing requirements. If a line manager needs to change a reduced hours job in some way, the line manager must discuss the changes and implications with the job holder. See Changing a reduced hours job below.

### **Terms and conditions for job-sharing and reduced hours**

Before any reduced hours arrangement is finalised, the line manager and the member of staff must both be aware of the terms and conditions described in this subsection, for staff working reduced hours. Staff working reduced hours must be given the same opportunities for training, development and promotion as full-time staff. Refer to *Terms and Conditions for Job-Sharing and Reduced Hours*, for full details.

### **Procedures**

- 1) Once a new working pattern has been agreed, the details must be confirmed in writing. The line manager must contact HR Services in the UK, or the HR overseas team.
- 2) HR Services in the UK, or the HR overseas team, must:
  - a) Amend the contract with a letter (see Letter to Member of Staff Moving to Reduced Hours Status).
  - b) Attach to the letter a copy of Terms and Conditions for Job-Sharing and Reduced Hours.
  - c) Recalculate leave using the annual leave calculator.
  - d) Complete the necessary payroll forms.
  - e) Send the letter to the member of staff.

**Note:** It is essential that you make contact with the appropriate HR Services person as soon as possible, to avoid over or under-payments of salary.

### **Changing a reduced hours job**

#### When the member of staff accepts the change

- 1) If there is a need to change the hours of a reduced hours job, and the member of staff can accept this change, the line manager must contact HR Services in the UK, or the HR overseas team.
- 2) HR Services in the UK, or the HR overseas team, must:
  - a) Amend the contract with a letter (see Letter to Member of Staff Changing a Reduced Hours Job).
  - b) Recalculate leave using the annual leave calculator.
  - c) Make the necessary changes to salary.
  - d) Send the letter to the member of staff.

#### When a member of staff cannot accept the change

If the member of staff cannot accept the proposal, then:

- 1) If the member of staff has a contractual right to work reduced hours, the line manager must:
  - a) Write formally to offer the member of staff the revised job, and to explain that, if this is unacceptable, the job will be advertised in the Bulletin, or if overseas, within the Office.
  - b) In the UK, contact HR Services to see if a partner can be found to turn the post into a job-share, if the hours of the job are being increased.
  - c) Contact HR Services in the UK, or the HR overseas team, to discuss what to do next if no alternative job can be found (this must be done as early as

- possible as, in these circumstances, the member of staff may become redundant).
- d) Encourage the member of staff to apply for any advertised vacancies: job-share, reduced hours or full-time (with a view to working reduced hours).
  - e) In the UK, encourage the member of staff to ask HR to add his or her name to the job-share register (see Job-Sharing).
- 2) If the member of staff does not have a contractual right to work reduced hours, the line manager must:
- a) Write formally to offer the revised job and explain that, if this is unacceptable, the current job will come to an end in six months from the date of the letter (six months allows time for the member of staff to look for another job if necessary). See Letter to Member of Staff Changing a Reduced Hours Job.
  - b) In the UK, contact HR Services to see if a partner can be found to turn the post into a job-share, if the hours of the job are being increased.
  - c) Encourage the member of staff to apply for any advertised vacancies: job-share, reduced hours or full-time (with a view to working reduced hours).
  - d) In the UK, encourage the member of staff to ask HR to add his or her name to the job-share register (see Job-Sharing).

## Job-Sharing

### Overview

This section describes the British Council's job-sharing scheme, whereby two people share the same full-time job, carrying out the duties it entails at different times from each other.

This section covers:

- handling an application to job-share in a current job
- handling applications to job-share in a vacant job
- filling a job-share vacancy
- priority for staff returning from maternity leave
- dividing the week
- handover period.

### Audience

This policy applies to UK-appointed staff. It can provide good practice guidance for country/territory TACOS, subject to local law and conditions.

### Responsibilities

Staff contemplating a job share must consider the implications before making a request. Line managers and Human Resources (HR) Services are responsible for carrying out the procedures in this document.

### Policy

The British Council's policy is to facilitate job-sharing. In addition to being an important element of the British Council's equal opportunity policy, it can provide significant organisational benefits:

- experienced staff who might otherwise leave can be retained
- vacancies can be filled internally, thus saving the cost of external recruitment
- the British Council's image as a good equal opportunity employer is enhanced.
- Job-sharing is not a right, but line managers must make every effort to accommodate an application to job-share.

## Guidance

If a member of your staff asks to job-share in a current job, you must discuss with the individual how a job-share might work in practice and must also explore all alternative flexible working patterns.

### **Handling an application to job-share in a current job**

#### Finding a job-share partner

Whether or not a job share partner has already been identified by the member of staff, the line manager must consult HR Services. HR Services will identify staff who are returning from maternity leave or a career break and to whom the British Council has an obligation to find a job. If a partner cannot be identified by this means, you must advertise the vacancy in the Bulletin.

#### If no job-share partner can be identified

If there is no suitable partner available and there are no responses to a Bulletin advertisement, the member of staff may have to:

- continue working full-time
- apply for alternative jobs.

#### Refusing a request to job-share

If, after discussion with the member of staff concerned, you are unable to agree to convert a job for job-sharing, then you must give the member of staff the reasons for your refusal. The member of staff may appeal against your decision to your line manager.

Even if a job is suitable for job-sharing, a line manager may refuse a request to job-share on grounds of an individual's poor performance or attendance record. This is because, if a job-share were set up, an unfair burden might be placed on the other partner. However, before turning down a job-share on these grounds, as line manager you must:

- examine carefully the reasons behind the poor performance or attendance record
- consider whether allowing a job-share might improve matters
- consult HR Services before taking a final decision.

Again, the individual must be told the reason for the decision and may appeal against it using the appeals procedure. If you and your full-time member of staff agree that it is not possible for the current job to be shared, then the member of staff will have to seek another job to share.

### **Handling applications to job-share in a vacant job**

All British Council jobs in the UK and overseas can be shared unless it can be shown that there are aspects of the job which make job-sharing impossible. As a line manager, you must avoid making unwarranted assumptions about what makes a job unsuitable for sharing. For example, if the duties of the job include making visits overseas, this does not necessarily disqualify job-sharers.

Existing or potential job-share teams can apply for jobs advertised in the Bulletin in the same way as individuals. If both a team and an individual are short-listed you must interview both. It may sometimes be the case that while the team as a whole is not acceptable, one member of the team would be acceptable. If you wish to consider appointing only one half of a job-share team, you must discuss the situation with both members of the team and give them your reasons. If they both wish to continue being considered as a team, you must reject them for the job. If the acceptable member of the team wishes to be considered individually, you must consider that team member, provided an appropriate job share partner is found.

You must make any offer of appointment to one person from a job-share team conditional on finding a suitable partner, and you must delay finalising the transfer until it is known whether

or not a partner is available. This safeguards the individual appointed who may be placed in a difficult position if no partner can be found.

A member of staff without a partner may also apply for full-time jobs and ask to be considered as part of a potential job-share. If such a member of staff matches the criteria for the job, you must short-list and interview the individual. If the candidate is acceptable, you must consider that individual provided an appropriate job share partner is found. Any offer of appointment must be conditional on finding a suitable partner.

### Priority for staff returning from maternity leave

A member of staff returning from maternity leave may have priority over other interested applicants. The British Council has a statutory obligation in the UK and a contractual obligation overseas to re-employ such members of staff in the same pay band, working the same number of hours per week, subject to certain conditions. Thus, if a member of staff worked in a job-share prior to maternity leave, she also has the right to return to a job-share. Some women who have worked full-time prior to maternity leave also wish to return to a job-share; it is British Council policy that every effort be made to organise this, although no guarantee can be given.

### Dividing the week

A job-sharer usually works 36 hours within a two-week period. The following types of arrangements are most common but may need to be adapted to suit the needs of the job, the partners, and the line manager.

Arrangement	First Partner	Second Partner
Day share	Works every morning	Works every afternoon
Half-weekly share	Works all day Mondays and Tuesdays, and Wednesday mornings	Works Wednesday afternoons and all day, Thursdays and Fridays
Day on, day off	<b>First week:</b> works Monday, Wednesday and Friday <b>Second week:</b> works Tuesday and Thursday	<b>First week:</b> works Tuesday and Thursday <b>Second week:</b> works Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Week on, week off	Works one week (for example, Monday to Friday, or Wednesday to Tuesday)	Works the next week (with or without an overlapping day)
Three days/two days	<b>First week:</b> works two days <b>Second week:</b> works three days and so on	<b>First week:</b> works three days <b>Second week:</b> works two days and so on
Short days	Works six hours net on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays	Works six hours net on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays

### Handover Period

A handover period with both partners present is advisable in some jobs, while in other jobs job-sharers find handover notes or telephone discussions sufficient.

## Procedures

### Filling a job-share vacancy

- 1) If one partner leaves a job-share within your line of management, first offer the remaining partner the job on a full-time basis.
- 2) If the remaining partner does not want to accept the job full-time, contact HR Services who will let you know of staff who are returning and in need of a job. Do this immediately as there may be a member of staff in urgent need of a job.
- 3) If no suitable person is identified, advertise the vacant half-job in the Bulletin (see Recruitment Procedures).

### If no job-share partner can be identified

- 1) If a new partner has not been identified three months after you advised HR and the remaining job-sharer of the vacancy, the job-share comes to an end. At this point, you must again formally offer the remaining job-sharer the job on a full-time basis. If the remaining job-sharer is unable to accept the job full-time:
  - a) Encourage the individual to apply for any advertised vacancies: job-share, part-time, or full-time with a view to job-sharing.
  - b) Advertise the job as a full time vacancy.
- 2) If, six months from the date the vacancy was notified, no suitable alternative employment has been found for the remaining job-sharer, and a full-time posting is still not possible, ask Head HR Pay and Employment Relations (HR PER) for agreement to terminate the contract of the remaining job-sharer. The contract will then be terminated with six months' notice and without compensation.

### Offering a job-share to two members of staff

When two members of staff have been offered a job on a job-share basis:

- 1) Make the transfer arrangements in the normal way (see Transfers (Internal and Overseas)).
- 2) If either of the partners is converting from full to job-share hours, HR Services must take the following action:
  - a) Amend the contract(s) with a letter.
  - b) Attach a copy of the British Council's schedule on job-sharing and part-time work (see Reduced Hours) to the postings letter. You, as line manager, and the potential job-sharers must all be aware of its contents before they finally agree to the job.
  - c) Issue notification of leave entitlement.
  - d) Complete *form CP4* at the earliest opportunity to avoid overpayment of salary.

### Reverting to full-time work

Similarly, when a job-sharer (or part-timer) reverts to full-time work, it is important that HR Services:

- 1) Issues a letter to cancel the job-share/part-time arrangements (see Notification of Reversion to Full-Time Work).
- 2) Adjusts annual leave.
- 3) Ensures pay is adjusted to full-time rates by completing *form CP4*.

## Terms and Conditions for Job-Sharing and Reduced Hours

### Overview

This chapter details the terms and conditions that apply to British Council staff who are job-sharing or working other patterns of reduced hours.

### Audience

This policy applies to UK-appointed staff. It can provide good practice guidance for country/territory TACOS and/ or English and Exams/ OAS staff contracts, subject to local law and conditions.

### Policy

Staff working reduced hours must be given the same opportunities for training, development and promotion as full time staff.

### Pay

Staff working reduced hours receive the same rates as full-time staff and are paid pro rata according to the number of hours worked. Staff who share jobs are in the same pay band but are likely, because of previous pay status, to have different salaries.

### Hours of Attendance

Staff working reduced hours work the agreed hours in a pattern of work to suit the department and themselves. It may be necessary from time to time to vary these hours. Flexible working hours are allowed, subject to the normal operational constraints.

Sometimes the nature of the job may require staff to work additional hours. If they are willing to do this, they are paid at plain-time rates, until a standard full-time week has been worked, or they are given time off in lieu (TOIL). Hours worked in excess of a standard full-time week qualify for overtime under the normal rules (see Standard Working Hours, Overtime and TOIL).

If staff attend a training course outside their normal hours, then either the additional hours are paid at plain-time rates, or TOIL will be granted.

### Annual Leave and Public and Official holidays

Staff working reduced hours are entitled to the same number of paid days annual leave on a pro rata basis as a full-time member of staff. They are likewise entitled to receive, on a pro rata basis, the same number of public and privilege holidays as full-time staff.

The entitlement to annual leave and public and privilege holidays, for staff working reduced hours, is established by using the annual leave calculator. The total entitlement to public and privilege holidays is calculated pro rata and then adjusted to ensure that the total number of working days is the correct pro rata equivalent to those of a full-time member of staff.

Entitlements to other types of leave is also adjusted on pro-rata basis; e.g. study leave; time off to care for dependants, special leave etc.

### Temporary Promotion

Temporary promotion can be arranged for:

- full-time staff who cover for the absence of staff working reduced hours, including job-sharers
- staff working reduced hours, including job-sharers, who cover for the absence of other staff working reduced hours

- staff working reduced hours, including job-sharers, who cover, on a reduced hours basis, for absent full-time staff.

This is subject to the normal rules on temporary promotion (see Pay Policy, Pay System for Pay Band 10 and Senior Management Team (SMT), and UK Pay System).

Refer any queries on the interpretation and implementation of rules to HR Services in the UK, or the HR Overseas team, or HR Pay and Employment Relations (HR PER).

### **Transfer and promotion**

Staff working reduced hours are considered for transfer or promotion in the same way as full-time staff. In a job-share, promotion of one half of the partnership is not dependent on promotion of the other. As for all staff, promotion is dependent on merit, skills, experience and the availability of a suitable job in the higher pay band.

### **Sickness Absence**

In the UK, you must telephone Absence Line as soon as you are fit to return to work, whether or not you are due in the office on that day. For staff working reduced hours, this is either the first working day after sick leave or, if a period of non-working days intervenes, the first non-working day after sick leave (see Sick Pay). Overseas staff must follow the sickness absence procedures in their Terms and Conditions of Service.

### **Sick Pay**

Staff working reduced hours are included in the sick pay scheme on the same basis as full-time staff, and receive sick pay on a pro rata basis.

### **Pensions**

In the UK, staff working reduced hours are included in the Civil Service Pension Scheme on the same basis as full-time staff. The superannuation scheme entitlement for staff working reduced hours is based on actual reckonable service and notional full-time pensionable pay. For example, if a member of staff has a reckonable service of 40 years and worked half-time, the entitlement would be 50% of the full-time salary.

Further information is available from the Civil Service Pensions website.

### **Maternity**

Staff working reduced hours are included in the scheme on the same basis as full-time staff but receive maternity pay pro rata. In the UK, a woman returning from maternity leave has the right to return to work in the same pay band and to work the same contractual hours as those worked immediately before she started maternity leave, subject to giving three weeks' written notice of the date on which she proposes to return.

### **Training**

Staff working reduced hours are eligible for all training schemes and opportunities and have equal access to all training facilities.

### **Redundancy**

Under the redundancy agreement, the rights of staff working reduced hours are not prejudiced, in the event of a staff surplus.