
Part time employment - how to guide

Pay equity recommendation sheet six

Providing and encouraging 'quality' part time work for employees at all levels will increase the pool of available skills and talent for employers. This pay equity 'recommendation sheet' provides assistance for employers on how to implement part time work arrangements to assist in attracting and retaining valuable staff.

Quality part time work

'Quality' part time work is work in which employees are part of the regular workforce, and have access to training, development and promotional opportunities. Part time employees should be seen as valuable contributors, and provided with work that is meaningful and satisfying.

Many employees do not want to work full time, due to family responsibilities, study commitments, the desire for extra leisure time, or as part of a phased retirement plan.

Dealing with requests for part time work

Be prepared. Handling requests for part time work and other flexible work arrangements can be made easier by having a clear policy or position on part time work with processes in place for assessing requests by employees. Having a policy means that decisions can be made consistently, fairly and quickly.

When request for part time work is received, managers should thoroughly consider the request and examine ways in which the request could be accommodated. Being creative and flexible is important.

If it is not possible to meet the request exactly as made by the employee, discuss the issue and try to develop an alternative arrangement that suits everyone. Establishing a job sharing arrangement may be a solution if the job needs to be filled on a full time basis. Job sharing is the sharing of one job by two or more employees who work on a part time basis.

If a request is to be refused it should only be on the basis that the job cannot be undertaken on a part time or job share basis, and there must be significant and clear business reasons why full time employment is a reasonable requirement for a particular role.

Any decisions made regarding approval of part time work should be documented in writing and a copy provided to the relevant employee. Particularly if a request for part time work is denied, the employees must be provided with the reasons in writing.



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Integrating part time work into the workplace

One of the keys to successful part time work is acceptance within the workplace for such arrangements. Employees who choose to work part time must continue to be seen by managers and colleagues as a part of the regular workforce. This means part time employees must continue to be included in team meetings where possible, social activities, and communication and consultation processes.

Ongoing training and career development is just as important for part time staff as any other employees, and all part time employees should be considered as valuable contributors who are eligible for promotion where appropriate.

How to implement part time work

Work allocation

In a part time position work needs to be allocated so that it can be done within the hours the employee is at work. It is not reasonable to expect that the employee can just do his or her previous full time job within two or three days for two or three days' pay. When a position changes from full time to part time, the workload of the job needs to be assessed, and some functions, responsibilities or projects reallocated. It makes good business sense to ensure that the employees converting their roles to part-time continue to do the 'high value' projects and responsibilities of their roles, and have access to developmental opportunities in line with their capabilities and career aspirations. Projects and responsibilities of 'lesser value' can then be provided to subordinates for career development.

Work schedules

A work schedule for part time employees should be developed and agreed. This provides employees and the organisation with a clear outline of when the employees will be at work. In organisations where flexible work arrangements, particularly flexible hours, are available to full time staff, these should be made available to part time employees.

Communication

External and internal clients and other stakeholders need to be informed about how the role will now be done, the benefits of the change (retain a valuable staff member, provide developmental opportunities to other staff, maintain continuity of service) and the arrangements which have been put in place to ensure that the stakeholders' needs will be met, regardless of who is completing which part of the project or service.

To ensure that the employees who have converted from full-time to part-time workload are kept informed of all relevant information on the days when they are not in the office or not at work is essential. Communication can be through written notes, emails or the phone or next-day briefings by other designated employees in the same work area.

Conditions of employment

Part time employees are entitled to pro rate pay and conditions based on the number of hours worked. Part timers are eligible to be paid for any sick leave or annual leave taken on a day they would normally have worked, or if a normal work day is a public holiday.

A part time example

Karen is a mature age employee who requested part time work to better balance work and care for an elderly relative. She has been with the organisation for many years and management did not want to lose her skills and experience.

Part time checklist

- Work time schedule agreed?
- Work time schedule consistent with the relevant award or agreement?
- Redesign of role to ensure it is do-able in a shorter working week?
- Re-allocation of lesser value assignments?
- Agreement of 'back-up' staff to assist on employee's non-work day/s?
- Part time arrangement approved by management?
- Part time arrangement and work time schedule documented?
- Copies given to all relevant staff?
- Stakeholders advised of new arrangement
- Other staff in the team informed of the part time arrangement?