



Agile Working Framework

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1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this document is to set out the universal guidelines on agile working practices for all employees and managers at The University of Nottingham UK. The document also outlines how agile working will contribute to our culture. This guidance will help our people consider how, where, and when we work to enable us to deliver our operational responsibilities and meet the needs of our students, colleagues and wider stakeholders.¹

The framework applies to all UK based university staff². This builds on and replaces the previous guidelines published on hybrid working.

The university recognises that many teams have already made progress in developing their ways of working since the pandemic. This framework is not seeking to change or replace successful working arrangements that have been established under the hybrid guidance.

The goal of the framework is to establish consistent organisation-wide principles, with flexibility for line management to consider local needs and variation. The university wants to create an approach that is inclusive of all roles and job families, and lays a foundation that will allow us to continue to evolve our ways of working to make them fit for the future.

There are two guidance documents that cover ways of working:

- The agile working framework (this document) is guidance to deal with informal, day-to-day flexibility.
- The Flexible Working Code of Practice³ sets out the university's approach to flexible working requests under statutory procedure.

This framework needs to be read in conjunction with the Agile Working Operational Guidelines which give practical information to support day-to-day working. A comprehensive set of case studies by job role is available, and staff who are line managing teams can also refer to the [Agile Working Managers' Guide](#).⁴

¹ The scope does not include University of Nottingham in Malaysia or China

² This excludes casual staff and postgraduate researchers

³ [Flexible Working Code of Practice](#)

⁴ See the [Agile Working SharePoint](#) for both the Managers Guide and case studies

The agile working framework is structured as follows:

- **Agile working framework summary** – a one-page summary of the key information in the agile working framework.
- **Core definitions** – clarifies what agile working is and how this compares to hybrid working.
- **Agile working vision** – what the university seeks to achieve through agile working, and the benefits it will bring to both the institution and employees.
- **Agile working principles** – sets out the university's values through **six principles** we can all follow in considering how we work.
- **Expectations of employees and managers** – presents an overview of the behaviours we wish employees and managers to demonstrate.
- **Agile working infrastructure** – outlines the university's approach to providing infrastructure to support new ways of working.
- **Working patterns** – guidance around how to set working patterns, including the *Designing a Working Pattern* template, which is intended to support teams have open discussions about agile working, and explore the most suitable patterns to meet their objectives.

2. Agile Working Framework Summary

Agile working deals with informal flexibility around delivering the responsibilities of an employee's role. The agile working framework provides guidance for managers and employees on how and when to use agile working for team and individual benefit and wellbeing.

Flexible working deals with short-term requests and formal changes allowing employees to change their working arrangements for reasons including, but not limited to a change in personal circumstances (e.g., caring responsibilities), or aspirations relating to a career development or lifestyle goal. [The Flexible Working Code of Practice](#) outlines the procedure for requesting and responding to flexible working requests.

The key points of the agile working framework are as follows:

- The university is not introducing a single organisation-wide target for attendance on campus
- Faculties, schools, departments and teams may wish to establish their own local convention around attendance and working patterns based on business need. The principles and expectations in the agile working framework are designed to help with this.
- Campus remains the contractual place of work for the vast majority of our staff. This means if employees are required on campus, they should be prepared to be on campus.
- Operational responsibilities, the needs of students and colleagues, team culture and communication take priority over personal preference.
- Line managers should lead the agreement of working patterns with their team as part of an open conversation, ensuring an appropriate presence on campus.
- Regular co-location is important for maintaining good working relationships.
- Campus working should not be limited to mid-week, and Mondays and Fridays represent quieter times when more resources are free.
- The types of flexibility possible via agile working will vary from role to role. The job family [case studies](#) present a variety of examples from across the university.
- This guidance seeks to establish a common framework for dealing with informal flexibility across the organisation. It does not seek to overwrite any established arrangements that are already working well.
- Successful agile working will balance clarity of purpose and delivery of outcomes with enhanced personal autonomy, accountability and trust. The local conditions for this will vary according to roles and responsibilities.

3. Core Definitions

3.1. What is agile working?

Agile working is about empowering people to make best use of their time, resources and workspace to be effective and deliver their outcomes. It also offers informal flexibility around working locations and hours, providing the responsibilities of an employee's role and the needs of stakeholders are met.

Agile working encourages teams to have open conversations and explore the question: "what are the most effective ways of working and most suitable working pattern to deliver our outcomes?"

What agile working means for an employee's working patterns (hours and location) and the degree of flexibility possible will be dependent on personal responsibilities and team function. For some roles this may be very fixed, for others more dynamic. Factors unique to each team will include types of work activity, operational hours, service locations and staffing levels. This is explored in more detail in section 8. A working pattern is not an individual decision and should always be agreed with a line manager based on mutual accountability.

As agile working is an informal arrangement, this guidance does not change any established contractual arrangements or terms and conditions. For most employees the primary place of work is campus, and we encourage teams to make the most of our campus spaces.

3.2. How does agile working relate to hybrid working?

Agile working builds on the hybrid working guidance and practice of working flexibly across different locations adopted since the pandemic. Whereas hybrid working enabled people to work either on campus or remotely (where possible), agile working is a broader concept – it's about using informal flexibility to look at *how* we work to meet business needs in the most effective way.

3.3. What does agile working mean for each job family?

At the University of Nottingham, we have a diverse range of job roles, and the opportunities provided by agile working will naturally vary depending on the operational commitments of each team. Within that variance, we believe everyone can benefit from flexibility and an outcome-focused approach to the delivery of work.

Types of flexibility and ways of working that teams may wish to explore include:

- Times of work (including flexing start and end times);
- Locations of work (both on and off campus);
- Greater empowerment via increased participation in decision making; and
- Greater involvement in defining workload including the sequencing and prioritisation of tasks.

Some roles will have less opportunity for informal flexibility than others based on the nature of their work, operational hours and service locations. For these roles, more organised formal flexibility may be the most appropriate approach; for example, compressed working weeks via flexible working agreements or staff rotas.

More information on what agile working means and the opportunities for each job family is provided in the case studies on [Agile Working SharePoint](#). Teams can also find more support in Annex A - *Designing a Working Pattern Together Template*.

4. What is the vision for agile working?

The university's People and Culture Strategic Delivery Plan 2023-26 recognises there is an opportunity to embrace agile working practices and realise the benefits of new ways of working; creating a more inclusive workforce.

The university's vision for agile working is:

'to be a great place to work where people feel trusted and motivated to deliver outstanding work, and have a shared sense of purpose and personal connection to the university's strategic objectives.'

As employees of the University of Nottingham, the shared question we should be able to ask ourselves is: "How do I best use my time and effort to manage my contribution to the university's strategic objectives?". This is core to the mindset the university wishes to establish.

The [Agile Working Initiative](#) has been established to deliver this vision and support three key objectives:

1. Driving outcomes focussed working practices; enhancing effective decision making, productivity and performance;
2. Encouraging collaboration, connection and open communication at a team and university wide level; and
3. Enhancing and optimising use of our campuses, workplaces and technology.

4.1. Why are we implementing agile working and what are the benefits?

Adopting an agile working approach is beneficial to both the university and our people.

Benefits for the university:

- Encourage higher levels of productivity, creative thinking, innovation and successful achievement of outcomes;
- Enable collaboration and idea sharing across teams and departments;
- Support a positive and sustainable student, employee and campus experience;
- Help make the university more adaptable, resilient and ready to embrace the challenges and pursue the opportunities of the mid-21st Century.

Benefits for our people:

- It encourages empowerment at a local level; meaning faster decision making and offers some control and flexibility over the working day (as appropriate to job role);
- It will help create a greater sense of belonging and job satisfaction through shared purpose;
- It supports employees achieve a better work-life balance, managing their time and energy, and promotes enhanced well-being;
- It provides employees greater flexibility on an informal basis, and complements the formalised flexibility provided by a flexible working arrangement.⁵

Delivering this vision will be an ongoing process. The agile working initiative will support this by working with university departments such as HR, Digital and Technology Services and Estates and Facilities to create suitable workspaces, structures, systems and guidance.

The agile working framework is a key foundation of our approach and will continue to be developed alongside other guidance and policies.

⁵ [Flexible Working Code of Practice](#)

5. Agile Working Principles

The university's values serve as the foundation for our agile working principles. These are not rules but six simple principles that everyone at the university can follow when they consider how they work. Through the values these principles connect agile working to our culture.

Effective agile working will require an ongoing commitment from both management and staff to discuss their ways of working. These principles are intended to help guide that discussion.

Our values	Agile working principles
<p>Open</p> <p>We adopt a transparent and straight forward way of communicating with each other and with the world, championing the free exchange of ideas</p>	<p>We are open-minded to working differently</p> <p>We make thoughtful choices about how, where and when we work based on the best way to deliver our goals rather than doing things the way we have always done them.</p> <p>We communicate openly and pro-actively</p> <p>We communicate honestly and pro-actively with our colleagues to share ideas, opportunities and concerns.</p>
<p>Respectful</p> <p>We have regard for each other's rights and feelings and demonstrate this in our behaviour, treating each other with kindness</p>	<p>We empower our colleagues</p> <p>We respect and trust colleagues to use their time wisely to achieve their goals and fulfil their potential; we strive to provide a safe and reassuring environment to experiment and learn.</p>
<p>Fair</p> <p>Our decisions and actions are consistent, impartial and ethical</p>	<p>We work transparently and are consistent in our approaches and treatment of others</p> <p>We are visible and responsive during our work hours for our colleagues and stakeholders using the channels available. We treat others fairly, promoting equity in our teams.</p>
<p>Ambitious</p> <p>We set the highest standards for ourselves and our work and support each other to achieve them</p>	<p>We are focused on outcomes and take accountability for our work</p> <p>We take ownership of our work and make decisions based on the best way to achieve outcomes for our internal and external stakeholders.</p>
<p>Inclusive</p> <p>We are a community where everyone can contribute and be appreciated for who they are</p>	<p>We build thriving, inclusive communities and value others' contributions</p> <p>We work collaboratively; investing time with colleagues across departments to create a shared sense of purpose. We listen and actively incorporate others' insight and expertise to collectively find the best solutions.</p>

Table 1: Values and associated agile principles

Our aspiration is to create a culture which is open to innovation, where we all take personal responsibility for achieving our outcomes; and do so working transparently and collaboratively. These principles are designed to encourage self-management at a team and individual level. When following these principles, employees will be helping to create a culture that balances empowerment with accountability.

For more information on our agile working principles see the [Agile Working SharePoint](#).

By having a conversation with line managers and colleagues about following these principles employees will be exploring what that culture means practically day-to-day in our teams.

A key part of agile working will also be a commitment to become a learning organisation which is outlined in our People and Culture Strategy.⁶ This means adopting an open mindset where continuous learning is encouraged on an individual and organisational level.

To support employees make the most of agile working and encourage development; we have identified **agile working skills and competencies**⁷ and will signpost to new and existing learning and development materials and courses via Moodle.

⁶ [Building a culture for success](#)

⁷ [Agile working learning resources](#)

6. Expectations for Employees and Managers

Building on the vision and the agile working principles, this section outlines the specific behaviours we expect to see from employees across the University of Nottingham.

We outline our basic expectations for all employees, and then follow this with expectations for those responsible for leading teams.

These are intended to inform decision making at a local level and to support effective self-management. Most staff will already be demonstrating these behaviours; however, it is important to document expectations to support discussions.

The core expectation of everyone is that the delivery of outcomes, the fulfilment of operational responsibilities, and the needs of students and stakeholders come before personal preference when agreeing ways of working and working patterns.

Together, everyone is then collectively responsible for supporting their line manager and colleagues with the appropriate presence on campus to ensure their team performs well.

To note, the [meeting time guidance](#) and checklist set by the Athena SWAN Board should also be factored into decision making as part of general employment good practice.

6.1 Our Expectations of Employees

Element	Employees
Outcomes focused & continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the fixed and flexible aspects of your working patterns with your line manager and colleagues. It is important to understand and agree where there is room for flexibility and where there is not • Take responsibility for planning and managing your own time wisely • Be clear about your own accountabilities, tasks, objectives and deadlines • Plan your day and focus your efforts on achieving your outcomes - good planning can create more opportunities for flexibility • Take opportunities to learn, innovate and improve personal and team productivity • Seek out opportunities for professional development (both formal as well as informal 'on the job') including mentoring, coaching and shadowing
Collaboration & communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use digital channels and face-to-face time to pro-actively communicate with your team and other colleagues • Be visible and accessible during the day for your team, colleagues and stakeholders e.g.: where applicable use your Outlook calendar effectively and update your Teams status (to 'available', 'busy' etc) • When planning meetings decide the best format to use and be considerate of colleagues' circumstances and time • Pro-actively network and develop relationships with other teams and departments to gain input from other perspectives
Optimise use of workspaces & technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be present on campus when required • Be prepared to be flexible about the days, times and locations of work on campus to suit activities and ensure you are supporting your team, colleagues and stakeholders • Coordinate days spent on campus with team members to ensure regular check-ins and opportunities for collaboration • Consider the most appropriate location for each activity • Book rooms and desk spaces in advance to ensure co-location with team members and cancel if not required • Be prepared to adapt to new communication technologies and collaboration platforms to stay in sync with colleagues

Table 2: Expectations of employees

6.2 Our Expectations of Managers

Element	Managers
Outcomes focused and continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust and empower your team members to do their job to the best of their ability • Have open conversations about working patterns and be clear about your expectations of presence on campus • Set individual goals linked to team objectives or key performance indicators (KPIs), being clear about accountabilities; and breaking these down into priorities and tasks • Measure team performance based on clearly defined and agreed shared outcomes • Encourage team innovation and experimentation in ways of working to achieve outcomes • Take the time to understand individual's work styles and what support they require; adopting a facilitative and coaching approach • Act as a role model for agile working: encouraging your team to embrace agile working practices and responding to any concerns they may have • Encourage individuals to pursue learning and development opportunities
Collaboration & communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage connection across your team; building strong working relationships to support engagement and motivation • Foster open communication: checking in frequently with your team to re-assess progress, offer support and resolve issues e.g. regular 'stand-up' meetings • Track and monitor goals transparently e.g.: using digital channels such as Teams Planner • Be inclusive and understanding of your teams' needs⁸ to ensure everyone feels heard; and encourage peer to peer sharing and support • Encourage collaboration and cross-functional team working across departments and disciplines
Optimise use of workspaces and technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide the most suitable team working pattern - plan where, when and how best to conduct team meetings and other forms of collaboration • Choose locations to suit the activity • Optimise the use of 'anchor days' where teams are on site and co-located a set day or set days each week to carry out collaborative and creative ideas sessions rather than virtual meetings; • Identify where team members may need digital training or help to develop their technology skills and signpost to support

Table 3: Expectations of managers

⁸ To note, any sensitive issues (e.g. reasonable adjustments) should be discussed individually with team members

7. Agile Working Infrastructure

The university will provide a working environment which enables staff to have flexibility both in terms of the physical workspace and digital tools, as well as remote and flexible working arrangements where possible.

In addition to the development of this framework and supporting people guidance, the university will also seek to update buildings, technology and skills to support new ways of working.

This will include:

- Modernising the design of our buildings to provide an increased range of spaces that match the way teams want to work in future - collaborative, focussed, confidential, informal and formal meeting spaces, alongside new types of teaching and research space. Our goal is to provide space that fits with the way our people want to work when they are on campus to be most productive.
- Increasing the consistency of our computing device provision, both for individuals and in our buildings and workspaces. Our goal is to improve compatibility and ensure teams can work effectively across a range of different locations.
- Investing in our data networks, to improve our physical and wi-fi network capacity. Our goal is to ensure fast, reliable performance across all locations.
- Developing skills and confidence with critical digital platforms such as Microsoft Office 365. Our goal is to ensure our people can get the most out of these enabling technologies.

The transition of our infrastructure will be a longer-term process, and the needs of staff will be a key part of the requirements and planning.

8. Working Patterns

A core part of agile working is that we want decisions to be made at the right level, and a single organisation wide target does not work effectively when we have such a diverse range of roles and responsibilities. However, the university still wants to encourage good presence on campus and it is the responsibility of line managers and employees to maintain that presence.

In that context, what is an effective working pattern and what is an appropriate amount of time on campus?

A working pattern covers the times and locations a team works, with the level of individual flexibility determined by the nature of the work undertaken. This means working patterns will vary team by team. Please see the case studies on the [Agile Working SharePoint](#) for more detail.

Line managers should always lead the agreement of working patterns. Factors that should shape a working pattern include:

- **Operational hours:** Is the team required to maintain operational hours for contact, support or to provide a service?
- **Service locations:** Does the team support a specific service location(s)?
- **Staffing levels:** Does the team need to maintain staffing levels during operational hours and at service locations?
- **Type of work:** Are tasks completed as a group or individually? How much time does the team need to spend time co-located?
- **Stakeholder needs:** Where do students and other internal stakeholders need the team to be?
- **Focus on purpose:** How do the teams activities support its purpose, and what is the best location for those activities?

When considering these factors, most teams will find themselves spending more time on campus than not. The degree of coordination needed within a team will vary, and there may also be variations according to time in the academic year.

Line management may wish to set anchor days, guideline numbers of days on campus, or a more direct rota depending on role.

By following this approach, the university is aiming to achieve nuanced working patterns that have been designed to support team performance and the needs of stakeholders.

Annex A *Designing Working Patterns Together* is a template to help teams work through a discussion around these factors, led by their line manager. Many teams will already have had a version of this discussion. The template is provided as an optional supporting document.

The agile working team are available to support line managers with facilitated sessions should that be helpful.

Annex A - Designing Working Patterns Together Template

As we continue on our journey from hybrid working to agile working, we are encouraging teams to take the opportunity to discuss their working patterns.

We have a wide range of roles at the university which means that there is no one size fits all when it comes to working patterns. It is therefore your responsibility as a team to have open conversations about your working days, times and locations, and to support your line manager in designing the best working pattern for your team. An effective working pattern will meet your operational commitments first and foremost, and also highlight where there is flexibility for individuals.

We understand that teams need structure in their working week to provide stability, create opportunities to connect and build a sense belonging. However, we also want to encourage flexibility so that individuals can maximise the value they bring to their work, and wherever possible work in the ways that best suits them. We call this flexibility within a framework. We recognise that this conversation will be different across job families.

This document provides you with guidance on how to design a suitable working pattern. On the next page, you will find a simple tool that you can use as a team to guide you through these conversations. Our hope is that you use this opportunity to design a working pattern that helps you to achieve your team goals and outcomes, whilst simultaneously empowering you to perform at your best as an individual. There are three considerations that should drive your discussions:

1. **What are my operational responsibilities?**

Having clearly defined, measurable outcomes is one of the key building blocks you need to work in an agile way. Individuals should understand how their role contributes to team level outcomes and strategic goals. You also need to define the operational hours of your team. This allows individuals to think about how to use their time most effectively, and to be innovative in how they might achieve those outcomes.

2. **What are the needs of my team, colleagues, and stakeholders (students and partners)?**

The needs of these groups are an important factor that will also shape your working pattern. You need to fully understand who your stakeholders are and what they expect of you so you can determine how best to interact with them. We encourage you to think beyond just 'the work' - it is important to consider what the organisation needs from you as a member of our community, and how you contribute to the student and staff experience. Regular presence on campus is key to these contributions.

3. **What is my individual scope for flexibility?**

You should identify which elements of your role are fixed due to unchangeable operational requirements, and where is there room for flexibility and experimentation. Considering opportunities to meet your team outcomes and stakeholders' expectations more effectively may allow you to explore better ways of organising as a team and different ways to work as an individual.

Three things to keep in mind during the discussion:

- The [Agile Working Principles](#) should inform the design of your working pattern. If you need help on how you can design an inclusive, outcome focused working pattern, please get in touch with the Agile Team via the [Agile Working SharePoint](#).
- Be willing to challenge your assumptions to get the most out of this process. You don't need to do what you've always done. If you keep the focus on your outcomes and stakeholders, you will find a solution for your working pattern that delivers in ways that work for you and your team.
- This is not the last time you will have this conversation. Your working pattern may need to adapt as your goals change, and as you explore different ways of working. You are encouraged to regularly reflect on your progress, and update your approach as necessary.

Step	Discussion Point	Output
1	<p>Our operational responsibilities</p> <p>What is our team trying to achieve?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are our team goals? • How does my role contribute to our team goals? • What activities do I undertake to deliver these goals? • Do my activities require me to be in a certain place at a certain time? 	
2	<p>Our stakeholders' requirements</p> <p>What do people need from us and how can we excel?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are our stakeholders' expectations? Consider your university community: students, colleagues and partners. • How do our stakeholders want us to work with them and where do we need to locate? 	
3	<p>My individual preferences</p> <p>Given 1 and 2, when, where and how can I do my best work?</p> <p>Think about your personal workstyle in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working times • Working locations • Optimising meetings versus focus time • Productivity • Contribution to team culture 	
4	<p>Our best working pattern</p> <p>What can we do to accommodate our preferences whilst meeting our operational responsibilities and stakeholders' needs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall we have a department or team anchor day and at what frequency? • How will we co-locate on campus and what times and locations are best? • Do we need to offer a variety of working hours or do we need consistency across the team? • Do we want to try different meeting and communication styles within the team? • Do we want to adjust our management and reporting arrangements? 	
5	<p>Expectations of each other</p> <p>What are our key behaviours?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What team culture and ways of working do we want to create? • How often will we review our ways of working? 	