

Dynamic Working - a stepped approach

Considering whether Dynamic Working is appropriate for your team involves taking a good look at the way people work and thinking through how it can be done in ways that are consistent with the University's definition and approach to Dynamic Working.

This can be challenging, as it involves thinking in new ways about the nature of the work being done and how different tasks make up a role, and in some cases how work activities are shared across the team.

This is a tool to help you as the manager analyse the work of your team, and working through these steps to work out how much of it can be done on a more flexible and mobile basis, and therefore whether Dynamic Working is appropriate for your team, and what this would look like. The appendices to this document also contains a number of questions that you may find useful to consider.

Step 1 – Set out the activities involved in a role

Few roles consist of one single activity that absolutely requires work at a particular time and a particular place. Most consist of a range of activities, such as:

- Hands-on work with equipment or facilities
- Analysing information
- Writing reports
- Providing information to others
- Maintaining systems or products
- Developing new ideas
- Managing others
- Processing data
- Collaborating with colleagues informally
- Having internal meetings
- Dealing with customers in person
- Dealing with customers by phone
- Dealing with customers online.

Make a list of the activities involved in your work as an individual or the work of your team and the member within it. Some of these activities may be quite generic, while others might be more specific like working with data in a specific system or supporting customers in a specific context.

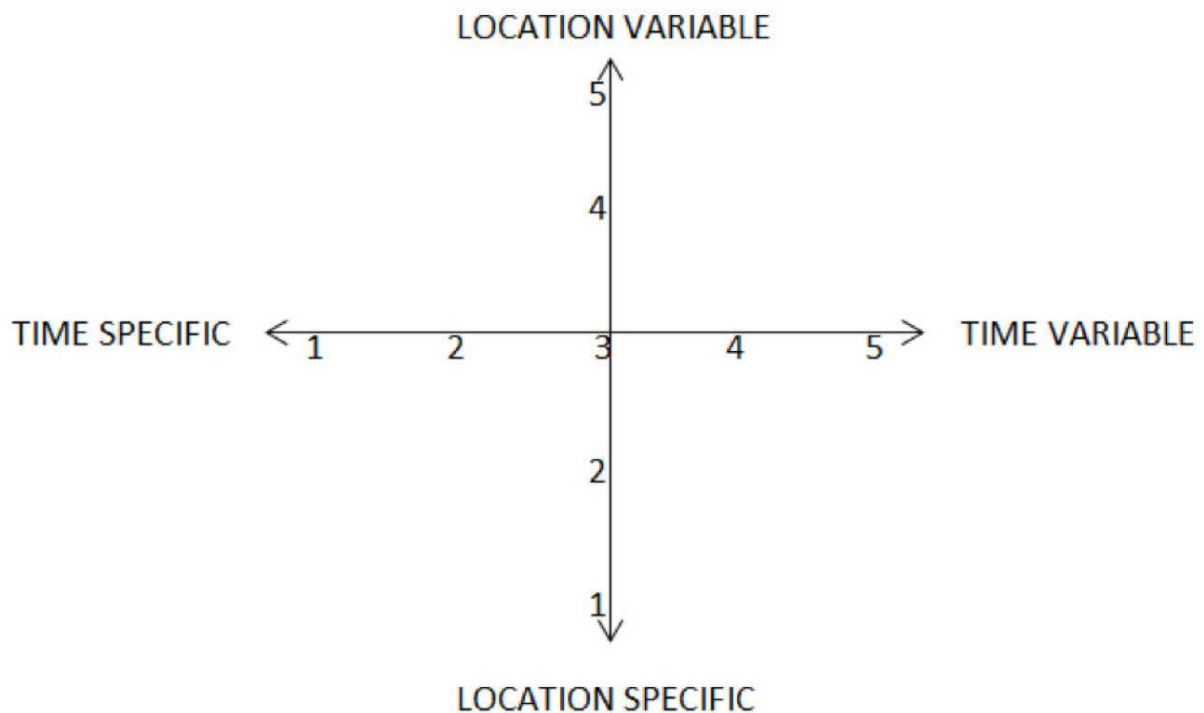
Step 2 – Examine how time-specific and place-specific the tasks involved are

Once you've identified the kinds of tasks involved, a good next step is to look at how **time-specific** and **place-specific** they are.

That is, does the work need to be done at a specific time, or is the exact time the work is done less important, as long as it is done by a certain deadline?

Then ask the same kind of question about the location of work. Do the work activities *have to be done* at a specific place? Are they done at a specific place, like in the office, *out of necessity* or is it just the way it has always been done?

It's useful then to plot the activities on a grid-like the one below to get a measure of how fixed the activities are in time and space:



So, **time-specific work** might include dealing with calls or providing support services. One has to be available at agreed times in order to talk with the respective customer. The exact time a task is done may be less important, on the other hand, for activities like data processing or writing a report. It will have a deadline, but exactly when it is done leading up to the deadline is less important.

Location-specific work could include activities like hands-on work, reliance on a piece of equipment, or reception work. Sometimes this encompasses all or most of a role, but not always. For example, a receptionist may have some other administrative duties as well that might be more location variable.

Most knowledge work can in principle be carried out from anywhere. As long as you have the systems and tools to do the work elsewhere and a supportive environment of trust, the work becomes location variable. That doesn't mean it *has* to be done elsewhere, as there may be other factors involved such as the need to collaborate with others.

Step 3 – Challenge assumptions about how work is done

Carrying out an exercise like step 2 will generate many discussions about how, where and when work is done. It should also be an opportunity to look at:

- how work can be done more effectively by working smarter
- how work activities are grouped together in particular roles, and if a little reordering could increase flexibility.
- how future changes to technologies, workplaces and working practices could change how work is carried out.

So to take one of the examples from Step 2, it may be that certain types of processing work are always done in the office. This, however, may be a legacy from the days of paper filing. With electronic systems, the need to be in a specific place should not be so pressing.

Similarly, who does which tasks may be based on the way the work has evolved over time. But is there any pressing need for the tasks under consideration to be specific to one person? Moving from rigid divisions of work, from 'my work' to 'our work' can be a feature of Dynamic Working.

Step 4 – Assessing interaction factors

One of the main determinants of where and when we work is often the need to interact with other people. This may be interaction with:

- Students, customers, suppliers
- Other team members
- Manager or supervisor – or the people you are managing/supervising
- Interaction with physical places or equipment.

With Dynamic Working, collaborative interaction can be through many channels other than being physically face-to-face.

And with Dynamic Working, management by line-of-sight (management by presence) is replaced with management by results. Command and control are replaced by empowerment and trust.

So in this context, there is greater scope for people to work at different times and different places, as long as the systems for managing and monitoring work are in place.

Assessing the interaction factors, then, is about evaluating whether:

- There are genuine constraints on the interaction that require the activity being done at a specific place, a specific time, and by a specific person (such as the demands of a customer)
- There is **significant added value** by interacting in particular ways (such as when having introductory meetings in person, or brainstorming a new idea or initiative, or carrying out appraisals).

By flexing the collaboration techniques, many activities can be carried out in much more flexible ways. It doesn't mean the team never meets – but it does mean that routine interaction doesn't become an obstacle to dynamic working.

For interaction with physical places or equipment, there may be less scope for varying the place of work. However, there may be scope for innovation in how work is done which can introduce efficiencies.

Step 5 – Assessing the security and confidentiality issues involved in activities

There may be some issues around data security or confidentiality that constrain the range of locations where work can be done. For example, working on sensitive data or having calls about sensitive or confidential issues in public places may not be appropriate, whereas at other offices or in a private space at home these activities might be fine.

These are also considerations to take into account when working in different places in the office. For example, some activities might not be appropriate in a breakout area, but should take place in an enclosed space or office.

The general principle, however, is that risk should be managed, rather than using potential risk as a reason for making work patterns inflexible.

Step 6 – Putting it all together

After working through these steps, you will be able to list the activities involved in a role. This will enable you to see how location and time variable the work is by its nature, the key interaction needs, whether and how activities can be shared or repackaged, and what changes need to be made in order to enable Dynamic Working to have maximum effectiveness – or whether there are just too many constraints at this stage to allow the work to be carried out in a different way.

The Dynamic Working Toolkit provides further information also, on how to support Dynamic working.

Step 7 – Continuous improvement

Examining all the activities in a role or in the team's work should not only be about finding a little more flexibility here and there for existing ways of working.

So when considering how work is done, **seek out every opportunity to improve working processes and practices to make work more effective and efficient.**

This is an involving and empowering process that seeks new ideas from all involved in doing the work.

As time moves on, there will be new possibilities, new techniques and technologies for working better and more efficiently. It's not about finding a once-and-for-all solution, but about being open to continuing change based on the University's Dynamic Working principles.

Appendix – useful questions to consider as you work through the steps

Where and when we work

How much choice do colleagues have over where they work?

What activities or other factors require people to be present in the office?

Are there any issues around lone working?

Are there limitations on frequency for remote working?

What ergonomic and H&S considerations apply, and how are these addressed?

Are there any suitability issues around working from home, e.g. around childcare, information security (etc)

Are there issues around time-keeping or overworking?

Varying times of work - Are there any specific requirements around when people should work? e.g. office cover, meetings?

Are there any special provisions for new colleagues?

How we work together

How do we let each other know where we are and our availability?

How do we let others see our work including work-in-progress?

Keeping in touch - what expectations do we have for contact with managers and other team members?

Method of communication - Any preferred communication channels for particular types of teamwork or customer facing work?

Use of paper - any requirements about going paperless, or using paper for specific purposes?

Teambuilding and socialising - how is team cohesion and identity to be maintained, How is socialising to be encouraged, and how do we use the technology?

Spotting problems and looking out for each other - How will we ensure we are all happy and thriving in our work? How will we spot and deal with potential issues? Whose responsibility is this?

New ways to collaborate

Consider our need for formal meeting room-based meetings?

Any guidance on what meetings should be for?

When meetings are needed, any guidance on when to request people to attend in person (not remotely)?

Etiquette for meetings and remote meetings, for example when to use video, voice, screen-sharing, use of messaging / chat, sharing of information beforehand, should attendees be there all the time?

Ad hoc collaboration When is it better to just have a short interaction with one or two colleagues and what is the best way to do this? Where in the office should such interaction take place?

How we share space in the office

What is our overall approach to space-sharing?

Desks - how individually 'owned' are the desks? Are there different categories of desks? Is there a threshold for desks having to be cleared if unoccupied?

Ergonomics – what is our guidance for working at desks

Do we identify collaboration spaces?

How is space booking handled? F

Filing and storage - where and how should files be stored? How much provision for filing?