

DYNAMIC WORKING TOOLKIT

The Toolkit is designed both to promote understanding and to provide practical assistance for implementing dynamic working at Bangor University.

It will help Managers and their teams think creatively about dynamic working, to facilitate conversations and provide a knowledgebase of helpful tips and approaches. It is not a policy but rather a collection of ideas and suggestions based on emerging best practice and shared experience. We will continue to update and modify the Toolkit to reflect what we learn as we change and move forward.

It's therefore intended to encourage and facilitate conversations about dynamic working arrangements. These are arrangements which do not require a change to contracted hours, job descriptions or other terms and conditions of employment. It will focus on assessing to what extent there is flexibility within a role, a team, and a service in order to enable some autonomy around when, where, and how individuals carry out their work.

Formal flexible working arrangements such as requests to reduce working hours, work part-time, job share, take parental leave or take unpaid leave etc. are subject to University policies and procedures and need to be made in accordance with those policies.

It is structured around the 7 themes that underpin our approach to dynamic working, whilst also looking at some common myths and misconceptions, and how to address them.

1. DYNAMIC BY DEFAULT

Dynamic Working embeds flexibility and mobility into our normal way of working, rather than being something exceptional. Having flexibility in time and location applies to more types of activities than is often thought, as long as they are implemented in the right way and managed well.

The best ideas start with a conversation. And in a culture of trust, there needs to be a willingness to exchange ideas about working in different ways.

Our ambition therefore is that flexibility becomes the norm. While there is no 'one-size fits all' approach, greater agility and collaboration should be the aim for all colleagues.

There are sometimes constraints around the types of flexibility that may be appropriate for different kinds of work. These constraints are often down to factors such as:

- The hands-on or site-specific nature of many work activities
- Security needs – both as regards access to data and access to particular work areas
- The provision of or availability of support services at specific times

- Technologies available for working remotely.

For some people, the potential for flexibility may quite limited given the nature of all the activities that make up their role. However, our approach is to encourage people to think innovatively about how different activities within a role may be amenable to different kinds of flexibility.

Where work is very location-specific, there may be possibilities in varying the time patterns of people's work. This, of course, is subject to agreement by the line manager and not compromising the work or putting the additional workload on colleagues.

The main thing is not to find the least flexible element of your work, and make that the default position for all work activities, many of which may be much more suitable to be carried out at other places and times, according to need.

Some people may be looking for a contractual change to their working pattern, such as moving to part-time or becoming primarily home-based. For this, colleagues should refer to the University's Flexible Working Policy.

2. INCLUSIVITY

It is quite easy for people who are regularly working remotely or who have a different time-pattern of work to be left out of things or to feel left out. Working at different times and in different places means that, although the work is mostly the same, there are different habits and behaviours that will help us work more effectively.

We have many different channels to communicate – voice, video, email, chat, instant messaging, posting documents into shared systems and letting people know they are there – and keeping everyone professionally up-to-date through these channels is vital. We need to use these wisely to ensure that staff receive appropriate and timely communication and not overwhelm colleagues.

An inclusive approach will prevent anyone from feeling excluded or marginalised, or worrying that they are getting isolated, which is essential for teamwork and maintaining good colleague relations.

We should be well-organised anyway, but sometimes when everyone is together in the office, good organisation and being systematic gets a little frayed at the edges. With people working remotely, working at different times, it is necessary to get more orderly and systematic about sharing information and keeping everyone updated about what is happening and what you are doing.

At the individual level, working away from colleagues and immediate supervision, good self-organisation and time management are essential. Colleagues need to know when and where you are working, so keeping your presence status updated is essential. This is automatically updated in most cases and should only be changed where appropriate.

Your manager and your colleagues need to be able to interact with the work you do. So it is important to keep them up to date, and also to share all work-in-progress in shared areas. This will help others to deal with issues that may arise while you are not there, let managers know if there is any support needed, and make the handover of work easier in job-share and work-delegation situations.

There are many ways to keep the social dimension of teamwork going even when not working together all the time. Setting aside times for all the team to meet together remains important, though care needs to be taken that this is not always on a day when an individual colleague is not working.

Some organisations arrange outside activities to bring people together, but often these are generated by people within the team according to their interests. These can be supported and encouraged. Using the new collaboration technologies, sometimes colleagues keep a voice channel open for long periods as they work so they can fire off questions to each other, or just get more of a feeling that they are working in a team. Virtual coffee breaks or lunches can be arranged too.

Inclusivity can be achieved by also flagging up of achievements of the team and of the organisation as a whole; for example, how the team has contributed to University wide goals, delivered value to its customers, enhanced the student experience, and regular flagging up of achievements of team members, to promote a sense of pride in each other's achievements. When you see team members less often, it's important to recognise their efforts. Saying 'thanks' and 'well done' never goes amiss. If someone is working away from the team, it can be dispiriting to complete a piece of work and have no response to it.

When people are co-located, there is usually a lot of informal knowledge-sharing that goes on as a matter of course. When working in a more distributed way, it's worth thinking through how knowledge can be shared with each other. Ways to do this might include:

- Using part of a team (virtual) meeting for a team member to present an area of specialism
- Making sure everyone knows who is the 'go-to' person for help on particular issues

- Making videos, presentations or webinars to share the work people are engaged in.

The social interaction needs to continue when people are working in different places. So there needs to be a common understanding of how the online collaboration tools can be used for non-work interaction. Teamwork and team building are based on social interaction. So it remains important that people do actually all get together at regular intervals or at times of particular importance. As well as working together, it is good if these occasions can also include some free time for getting to know each other better in a relaxed way.

3. DIGITAL FIRST

Technology supports colleagues to work flexibly and to collaborate from anywhere/ Dynamic working means learning about the capabilities of the remote working and collaboration technologies available. The University uses a range of tools and applications such as Office 365 to help you work more effectively, with further information available on the web page of [IT Services](#).

Used properly, the new technology can replace a lot of time spent in meetings with more flexible collaboration. You can also reduce much of the email and attachments sent and received, by using messaging and shared areas for documents.

A number of process changes have been accelerated due to the pandemic but more change is needed to ensure that we are working efficiently and using technology optimally. Training on the new ways of working is also required to ensure that staff know where to find information and access services.

The University has invested in laptops to ensure that a significant majority of staff can work in a more flexible approach between home and the office.

4. COLLABORATION

As noted earlier within this toolkit, our ambition is that dynamic working becomes the norm. Whilst there is no 'one-size fits all' approach, greater agility and collaboration should be the aim for all colleagues.

Very few of us work in isolation, so Dynamic Working is not just about where we work and how we work, but also about how we engage and collaborate with each other. Our work arrangements should foster a culture of collegiality. The University is a community with shared values, joint activities and significant social interactions.

Historically we will think of collaborations typically taking place via meetings, and those being face to face. Our experiences during the global pandemic of 2020 and 2021 has shown us that collaboration is not reliant on such meetings. Working dynamically presents us with opportunities to approach this differently.

The University has a number of Committees, Sub-Committees, Strategy and Task Groups which make up the formal decision-making structure of the University. The current set of Strategy and Task Groups were reviewed and reduced significantly in September 2019, and the Committees and Sub-Committees are set out in Ordinances agreed at the Council in April 2020 and in Regulations agreed from time to time by the Senate. There are also a small number of additional groups which are also considered as formal groups where they are timetabled by Governance Services, are formally minuted with those minutes shared with the Council, and / or the Executive and / or the Senate. A full list is provided in Appendix 1

The formation of the new Senior Management Group could potentially replace a number of other groups and communication fora which are currently in existence, as this Group incorporates all senior positions within the University both in terms of Colleges and Professional Services.

In order to support Dynamic Working, all Non-Council meetings will be scheduled on Wednesdays and Thursdays and all meetings of the Council and its's subcommittees on Fridays. In line with Welsh governance advice, these meetings will be in person for all attendees except in exceptional circumstances.

One Thursday each term has been designated a 'development day' and is free from organised meetings to allow all staff to engage in development activities, as time for CPD, skills development and support has been highlighted as a weakness.

This should leave Mondays and Tuesdays free of official in-person meetings. All other meetings will be in person or online at the agreement of the individual attendees.

Again, as noted earlier we have many different channels to communicate – voice, video, email, chat, instant messaging, posting documents into shared systems and so forth.

Dynamic working enables us to think differently about the meetings that we would have historically held face to face. There are a number of factors that are useful to consider as to what format is most appropriate;

Creative meetings where there is a need to brainstorm as a team – these might be best conducted in person to allow the free-flow of ideas and contribution

Meetings with individuals that are of a sensitive nature – for example proving a form of pastoral care or emotional support and advice, and being guided by the individual concerned as to their preference.

5. MAKING THE MOST OF OUR SPACE

It is widely recognised within our Estates Vision that we need to consolidate and rationalise our estate however it should not be seen or considered to be a driving force in moving towards a culture of dynamic and smarter ways of working. Unlike many other organisations we are in a fortunate position in this respect. The potential impact of dynamic working will be varied and a future reality unknown, but it is clear that day-to-day staff numbers on-campus will be reduced. With that reduction, opportunities will emerge for us to provide space that will support a culture of dynamic and smart working.

- Opportunities where workspaces can be allocated to activities, not individuals and not on the basis of seniority;
- Opportunities to provide a range of different spaces to work, both for desk-type work and for different kinds of collaborative activities;
- Opportunities to create team zones to reflect the work needs of the individual team, but are non-exclusive and should be welcoming for colleagues from other teams to use;
- Opportunities to create better spaces for different kinds of collaborative activities such as informal breakout spaces, meeting rooms, spaces for confidential one-to-ones, spaces for Teams calls, project rooms (etc).

Many of our buildings accommodate individual or shared offices, with very few communal office spaces. New and smarter ways of working may enable greater flexibility in space design and usage. Our future way of working will involve the sharing of space and recognise that the modern office isn't all about desks.

For some staff the home working environment means that they are unable to work remotely. The University is not asking staff to work from home and therefore is not obliged to provide all the equipment required for all staff to work this way. The home office remains the responsibility of the individual employee, should they choose to work remotely. All staff working from home are strongly recommended to undertake a DSE assessment of their workspace and seek advice from their local DSE Assessor, if necessary. There may be tax allowances that individuals can claim, and the University will promote these as appropriate.

6. OUTCOMES

A key feature of Dynamic Working is being managed by results and outcomes.

This involves the development of a culture of trust. Working in a Dynamic Working team, the manager is not looking over your shoulder to see that you are working. However, they do need to know what you are doing and to have insight into its quality.

So it is essential to feedback regularly on the work you are doing and how it is going. This involves both direct communication and keeping work in shared areas at all times.

This is a focus on results and outcomes rather than presence or process.

It's not only about using new tools in new workplaces. More than anything, it is about changed working practices, changed mind-sets, and changed behaviours at work. All this adds up to develop a Dynamic Working culture. The key differences between a Dynamic Working culture and a traditional culture are summed up in the following table:

Traditional Working	Dynamic Working
Management by Presence	Management by Outcomes
Territorial & Personalised use of Space	Working in Shared Spaces with greater focus on Collaboration
Considers Dynamic Working as the Exception	Operates from Dynamic Working as a Default Principle
Focus of Work is on Where you are Based	Work is done at different places and at different times, as long as the work is done effectively
Holding onto the Past	Commitment to Continuous Improvement and Innovation

7. WELLBEING AND WELNESS

Dynamic Working has the potential to help colleagues lead more balanced and healthy lives. Research has shown that different people have different kinds of 'flexstyle' in relation to work-life balance. Some people need rigidly to separate work and home life. Some take a more integrative approach, and as long as work is professionally done, can slide between work and home issues without too much difficulty. In the end, it's about delivering the results.

Whether a 'separator' or an 'integrator', one still needs control of those boundaries in order to work effectively. A key area of managing that work/life interface is the ability to 'switch it off'. Having the technologies to 'work anywhere, anytime' does not mean we should work everywhere, all the time. By agreement people can make themselves available outside of agreed work times on a limited, discretionary basis to deal with issues of high importance, pressing deadlines, emergencies, etc. But everyone has the right to switch off from work, and it's important to protect this in order to be most effective when we are working.

When people are working more remotely, some of the signs of stress or underperformance may be harder to spot. All team members can keep an eye out for each other. Be prepared to ask how people are getting on, just as one would when together in the office. A number of wellbeing resources are available, and can be seen on the [wellbeing area](#) of the HR Web pages.

Sometimes people are concerned about health and safety and potential occupational health issues connected with remote working.

The basic principle is that the employer has the same duty of care to employees wherever they are working. There is no specific legislation around home or remote workings though the University has developed and signposted good general guidance which is available on its [web pages](#).

As mentioned previously, we also wish to explore some **common myths and misconceptions**, and how to address them.

'It's all about benefits for employees – especially people with caring responsibilities'

Dynamic working does indeed have many advantages for people who have to combine work and caring responsibilities but it is important to distinguish both as this 'family-friendly' potential is only one side of the story.

The key features of a dynamic approach to flexibility – working at different times, in different places and with new technologies – are about promoting more effectiveness and efficiency in our work. In doing so there are new opportunities to enable people to contribute their best while having more choice in organising their working pattern.

So it's about reducing unnecessary travel, replacing a meetings culture with a culture of flexible collaboration.

As noted elsewhere within the toolkit, formal flexible working arrangements such as requests to reduce working hours, work part-time, job share, take parental leave or take unpaid leave etc. are subject to University policies and procedures and need to be made in accordance with those policies.

'This kind of job can't be done flexibly'

If you start thinking about a job from the way it has always been done, you may conclude that it can't be done differently. Thinking about Dynamic Working involves thinking in innovative ways. Certain types of work indeed will be more place-specific, and other types of work more time-specific. But the key to thinking through change is to:

1) Look at the *activities* involved in the work, rather than how those activities are packaged up into a whole job. Some activities are likely to be more capable of being done in different ways than others. It's important to resist focusing on the least flexible activity and making that the time and location of that activity the default for all the other activities.

2) Look at activities across the team. How can sharing and delegating activities create scope for more flexibility – and make us more effective and efficient as well?

3) Consider how work can be carried out using the new technologies we are rolling out, e.g. by having more remote interaction through Teams and Skype for Business for example.

There may be much more scope for dynamic working than initially thought.

Some questions for the manager to consider about the role could be;

- *What is the purpose of the role?*
- *To what extent is the role dependent on being at a specific location? E.g., Information Desks, teaching rooms, staffing live on-site events*
- *To what extent is the role tied to specific hours? E.g., staffing live enquiry channels, being on call for support*
- *Is there a need to be on call outside of normal service hours?*
- *To what extent does the role depend on use of location dependent equipment/resources? E.g., shelving books, equipment only available on campus*
- *How much interaction with other team members is required? Must this be in-person? How will this be facilitated?*
- *Can distinct functions be carried out on different days so that some days or hours can be spent on site and others at home or elsewhere?*
- *What is the potential impact on other team members? On customers and services?*
- *How much flexibility is possible for each team member while upholding the needs of the service?*
- *Will I need to balance competing needs for flexibility within the team and encourage compromises?*

'I need to have my team where I can see them'

One of our main goals is to manage by outcomes, rather than by presence. Simply turning up to work does not mean that people are working well, and this also has the assumption that the manager is always there in the office to watch over people.

'We'll never see each other, our team will become fragmented'

This can be one of the greatest fears when people first start to work differently. In practice, people do see each other much more often than some people initially fear – but having everyone all working at the same time in the same place may become less frequent.

Well-managed remote working teams have techniques and routines to keep in touch and build team spirit even when working at different times and places.

'It will be harder work to manage performance'

With dynamic working, methods of scheduling, monitoring and evaluating work often need to become more systematic compared to when managing performance relies heavily on looking over presence.

A key feature of Dynamic Working is managing through outcomes and results. This should lead to better management, better monitoring of work-in-progress, better quality and fewer missed deadlines.

This does depend also on allowing colleagues to get on with the job and take greater responsibility for organising their own work and taking ownership of the output.

By managing by outcomes, it often matters less where and when much of the work takes place.

'Dynamic working and career progression – they don't go together'

They can do, and they should do. Working at different times and locations should not make a difference in most cases if the principles of working in Dynamic Working are applied.

'It's all about hot-desking – which will be a nightmare because we'll be running around looking for somewhere to sit all the time'

Dynamic Working may at times involve the sharing of space, however space-sharing isn't a problem if it's approached in a spirit of goodwill and teams adopt working practices to make it a success.

Dynamic Working is well established in many other organisations and more problems are feared during the change than actually develop in reality.

The following are some of the most commonly feared problems, and the ways to deal with them should they arise.

<p>Isolation</p>	<p>The fear of employees becoming isolated is most associated with extensive or full-time remote working. Most remote working is not full-time, and there is regular contact with colleagues in the office.</p> <p>Good training for team members and managers in effective remote working plus good protocols for reporting and team communication ideally addresses this fear in most cases. People often focus on homeworking but having the option to work in places other than home can be important. Arranging face-to-face get-togethers for social interaction and teambuilding remains important.</p> <p>Individuals can feel marginalised if, for example, working remotely or part-time they miss out on hearing about development opportunities. It is essential to maintain an inclusive communications culture.</p>
<p>Over working or being always on</p>	<p>When a long-hours culture or a culture of “presenteeism” combines with the technologies to work anytime, anywhere, there is a real risk of overworking and burn-out.</p> <p>Properly used, the technologies and the new working practices should empower employees to control their availability for work more effectively. This should contribute to – rather than harm – work-life balance. However, for this to happen there needs to be explicit agreement about availability for work – and about the right to “turn off and tune out”.</p>
<p>Under-performance</p>	<p>Managers sometimes worry about spotting under-performance when not working in the same place or at the same times as those they manage.</p> <p>With good systems and routines for managing by results and good team communications, this risk should be minimised.</p> <p>However, managers and team members should be aware that things that might be picked up through casual conversation or observation in the office might be missed when not working together in the same place.</p> <p>So signs like changes in levels of contact, not contributing to online meetings or changes in tone of emails and messages should trigger conversations about how they are getting on to see if there is a deeper problem developing that may affect performance or wellbeing.</p>

Resistance to change	<p>Changes to working patterns are not compulsory, so no one should feel forced to work remotely or at different times. However, <i>everyone</i> must be prepared to adapt to work with new ways of collaborating and working in a culture of greater flexibility.</p> <p>It is important that two different cultures are not allowed to emerge – one for people who make the office their main base at regular times, and one for people who work flexibly in some way.</p> <p>Resistance to change at manager or team leader level can be especially damaging to morale and create feelings of unfairness and disadvantage for members of that team when they see other teams working more flexibly. In such instances, intervention from more senior managers may be necessary to resolve the issues and establish consistency.</p>
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Dynamic Working is the opportunity to build a new culture of work, one where we can empower our colleagues to have a healthy work/life balance and be their best at work. A new culture with a new way of working will require commitment from everyone;

<i>As a Line Manager I will...</i>	<i>As a Team Member I will.....</i>
<i>Trust my colleagues to give their best and do their jobs</i>	<i>Do my job to the best of my ability and take ownership of my performance, professional development, and wellbeing</i>
<i>Focus on outcomes rather than time clocked</i>	<i>Focus on outcomes rather than time clocked</i>
<i>Empower my colleagues to achieve a healthy work/life balance</i>	<i>Utilise the resources available to support my work/life balance and inform my colleagues of any helpful resources</i>
<i>Be fair and inclusive of the whole team while appreciating that individuals' needs vary</i>	<i>Support dynamic working while realising I may need to make compromises</i>
<i>Communicate clear expectations to my colleagues</i>	<i>Ask for clarification about what is expected of me if I need it and provide</i>

	<i>honest feedback to my line manager about the support I need</i>
<i>Be honest about performance and what is working or not</i>	<i>Respond constructively to feedback and take ownership of my performance</i>
<i>Review arrangements regularly with colleagues, providing support and guidance</i>	<i>Provide solution-focussed, constructive feedback and suggestions for improving guidance and support</i>

Appendix 1

The following is a list of the formal Committees and Sub-Committees as set out in Ordinances and Regulations:

Council

Senate

Executive

Finance & Strategy Committee

Audit & Risk Committee

Nominations & Governance Committee

Welsh Language Affairs Committee

Remuneration Committee

Health and Safety Committee

Redundancy Committee

Investment Committee

Senate Regulations & Special Cases Committee

Senate Nominations Committee

Senate Prizes and Awards Committee

Senate Appeals Panel

Examination Boards

The following are the agreed Strategy and Task Groups which cover the strategic pillars and cross cutting themes included in the new Strategic Plan.:

Academic Strategy Group

Civic & Community Engagement Strategy Group

Digital Strategy Group

Employability Strategy Group

Equality & Diversity Strategy Group

Estates Strategy Group

Internationalisation Strategy Group

Recruitment & Admissions Strategy Group
Research & Innovation Strategy Group
Student Experience Strategy Group
Sustainability Strategy Group
Teaching & Learning Strategy Group
Welsh Language Strategy Group
Compliance Task Group
Health, Safety and Emergency Management Task Group
Human Resources Task Group

In addition the following groups are seen as formal University groups and as such are timetabled centrally

External Partnership Scrutiny Group
Senior Management Group
Corporate Systems Project Board
Gender Based Violence Group
Joint Engagement Forum

All of the above meetings will be timetabled centrally and arranged for in person meeting. However, it may be that some Council sub-Committees will continue to meet online where external members would need to travel. In which case all attendees would be online.