



## STAFF FORUM DISCUSSION SESSION SUMMARY

**Topic: 4 day week: A workable option?**

**Date/ Time: Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 1pm & Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 1pm**

The Staff Forum representatives welcomed attendees to the discussion session and explained that the Staff Forum were hosting discussion sessions during the current consultation period to give colleagues the opportunity to give their views, ask questions and have a discussion about how the options being considered as part of the response to the Covid-19 situation. Colleagues were also invited to send through any other questions, comments or suggestions to [staff-forum@reading.ac.uk](mailto:staff-forum@reading.ac.uk). It was also noted that staff could access the summaries from the discussion sessions via the Staff Forum website.

Staff Forum representatives introduced the topic for discussion and invited colleagues to share their opinions. This discussion topic followed on from a previous discussion session titled: 4 day week: A fair option?

The attendees of this discussion session raised a concern regarding members of staff who have to meet particular requirements for visa and immigration (i.e. a minimum salary requirement). The Staff Forum representatives noted that this had already been mentioned in a consultation meeting and that John Brady responded to the concern and assured that this subject will be considered carefully with regard to all options.

Colleagues in this discussion session expressed concerns on the impact on:

- part time staff
- colleagues who were approaching retirement
- pension contributions
- take home pay
- holiday entitlement

The discussion sessions covered the following themes:

**Work load:** there was a general concern among colleagues who attended this discussion session that even if there was a designated reduction in work load to reflect to working 4 days instead of 5 staff felt that they may have to continue working 5 days to deliver workload and fulfil role & responsibilities. A view was expressed that would rather that it was viewed as a pay cut for a fixed period that recognises that the workloads will remain the same. Concerns were also raised regarding the impact of reduced working hours on colleagues who already work part time as they may no longer be able to carry out their function/role.

**Implementation and Definition of a 4 day week:** Colleagues in this discussion session noted that further clarity was required on what a 4 day week would mean and how it would be implemented.

- A point made that for this option to work there would need to be careful management of expectations i.e. 4 day week = 4 days equivalent of work. This option would need to

be carefully managed. A question was raised about whether any training will be provided to line managers.

- The group discussed that a reduction in the working week might not be possible for some areas – for example; any team that provides 24 hour service. The group discussed how some teams, the Events team for example could be significantly affected as they currently work over 7 days with evenings and weekends included.

#### **Benefits of the 4 day week option over other options:**

- Opinion expressed that at least with this option you don't end up working the same hours for less pay.
- This option could provide an opportunity to take up part time study, volunteering or start up a 'side hustle' if a colleague had another means to earn money.
- There was a suggestion that some colleagues might like some flexibility in their work pattern. The group discussed that there should be a degree of flexibility in this option and that decisions made at team level – flexibility may help people feel supported and could boost morale.

A colleague in the discussion session noted that the Henley Business School have done work on the impact of a 4 day week and asked whether the University has looked at this research. The research may have different context, perhaps the study was not associated with a pay reduction.

#### **What colleagues in the discussion sessions have asked for:**

- More clarity on how this option would be implemented
- Would colleagues be able to work from home on a more regular basis if desired to help reduce commuting costs?
- Has there been consideration of only reducing the 4 day week to a 9-day fortnight?
- A question was asked about whether there are any figures available for the amount saved by use of Furlough Job Retention Scheme.