



STAFF FORUM DISCUSSION SESSION SUMMARY

Topic: 4 day working week: A fair option?

Date/ Time: Thursday 25th June 2020 at 1pm

The Staff Forum welcomed attendees to the discussion session and explained that these discussion sessions will be hosted weekly during the current consultation period. The Staff Forum is pleased to see that so many colleagues are interested and keen to engage. The Staff Forum highlighted methods for staff to 'Get Heard' including drop-in sessions, joining the [distribution list](#) and emailing any questions/comments/suggestions to staff-forum@reading.ac.uk.

Colleagues in attendance raised many comments and questions about the potential options and it was clear that staff were keen to receive information about the process from the University/ Vice-Chancellor directly. Colleagues in this discussion group asked whether the minutes of consultation meetings could be shared. Chair of the Staff Forum, Steve Guest, who was hosting the session confirmed that the consultation group had discussed and agreed sharing the minutes of the consultation meetings with staff; however there was no specific date that this information would be released.

Colleagues in this discussion group asked questions about how the potential options could reduce the number of redundancies; more specifically the group asked which option(s) could 'save' the most jobs. The Staff Forum confirmed that they have asked for this subject to be made clearer for staff and noted that in a previous discussion, a visual guide or a calculator was suggested to aid staff to see how it would affect them personally. The Staff Forum have asked for a model to show the potential cost savings of the current options.

The discussion covered three main themes:

- **Can Staff choose which option to go for? – 4 days/ pay cut/ pay freeze etc.?** The Staff Forum noted that this question has been raised in the consultation meetings; the UEB *may* consider this approach and are looking at creating a model to cover this.

Colleagues in this discussion session also suggested a different approach where staff could be automatically signed up for e.g. a 4-day week but have the option to change to another. If staff can commit to an option that is their decision it would be more appealing.

- **4-day week workload:** the university will need to ensure that workloads decrease and reassure staff that they would only do four days-worth of work for four days' pay.

Colleagues in this discussion session raised questions about the 4 day week option and what this would mean for the university and for individual staff (it was noted that 'hours as required' is stated on some contracts for staff grades 6+). Questions were asked about

whether staff would have the flexibility to choose when they would be working (whether 4 days or the hours of 4 days spread over 5). The group raised concerns that the University should not be seen to close for a day.

The group were also concerned if the 4-day week was successful then the University may not go back to a 5-day working week after the University has financially recovered.

- **Salary status:** Colleagues in the group raised concerns about salaries and pensions. The group asked about whether normal salary status would be resumed after the agreed period. There were particular concerns about pensions of staff who were close to retirement. The Staff Forum confirmed that these questions had been raised during the consultation meetings.

What colleagues in the discussion have asked for:

- More clarity on what the potential options are and what impact these options would have on reducing the number of redundancies required?
- When will the agreed option(s) be put in place?
- Would colleagues be able to pick up additional work in an alternative workplace to cover for loss of earnings?
- Colleagues in this discussion asked whether the 4 working days would be staggered to help comply with social distancing measures?