



Quality part time work

Work life balance fact sheet 1

What is *quality* part time work?

Part time work can take many forms, depending on business and employee needs. The part time arrangement can vary according to the number of days worked in a week, the actual work days, the hours worked per day and the total hours worked in a given period. Part time work can be 'standalone' or a job sharing arrangement where two part time employees share one full time job.

Successfully implementing part time work means focusing on the 'quality' of the work rather than just reducing working hours. Part time employees should be seen as valuable contributors to the workplace and provided with work that is meaningful and satisfying. They also need to have access to training, development and promotional opportunities.

Benefits of quality part time work

Providing and encouraging quality part time work allows employees who do not wish to work full time to remain in the workforce and retains their skills and talent.

Quality part time work can be used to:

- provide workplace flexibility;
- attract a wide pool of applicants for new jobs; and
- retain experienced and skilled employees.

How to implement quality part time work

Develop a policy on part time work

It is important for employers to develop and communicate a policy covering part time work. The policy should include:

- how requests for part time work are considered;
- access to training and promotional opportunities for part time employees;
- flexibility to move back to full time work; and
- access for all occupational/seniority levels for both men and women.

Conditions of employment

Part time employees should be offered equivalent employment conditions to full time employees (pro rata wages and access to benefits), job protection, predictability of hours and protection against discrimination. Part timers are eligible to be paid for any sick leave or annual leave taken on a day they would normally have worked, or if a normal work day is a public holiday.

Work scheduling and allocation

Part time work is not only about reduced hours but also requires employers to consider:

- a recording system for hours worked;
- workload assessment to ensure that work allocation matches hours worked;
- reallocation of excess work;
- an agreed work schedule to avoid incremental increases in working hours; and
- measures to maintain customer service standards and productivity targets.

Training and career progression

Part time employees should be offered equal access to training. Fewer opportunities for training for part time workers can result in accumulated disadvantage over the long term, including reduced prospects for promotion and difficulties returning to full time work. Ongoing career development is as important for part time staff as for other employees and all part time employees should be considered for promotion where appropriate.

Workplace culture

Workplace culture may have a negative effect on the quality of part time work. Employers should support part time working arrangements and guard against the development of negative stereotypes or stigmas.

Communication can assist in achieving a positive workplace culture. Strategies include:

- other staff are advised of part time arrangements;
- part time workers are kept informed about day-to-day work matters;
- wherever possible, part timers are included in team meetings, social activities and consultation processes; and
- management messages emphasise the benefits of part time work.

Evaluation and performance management

An evaluation process is essential for ensuring the quality of part time arrangements. Consideration should be given to how the success of the part time arrangement will be monitored and how the performance of the employee will be assessed.

Dealing with requests for part time work

Be prepared. Handling requests for part time work and other flexible work arrangements can be made easier by having a clear policy or position on part time work. This includes processes being in place for assessing requests by employees. Having a policy means that decisions can be made consistently, fairly and quickly.

When a request for part time work is received, managers should thoroughly consider the request and examine ways in which the request could be accommodated. Being creative and flexible is important. If it is not possible to meet the arrangement exactly as requested by the employee, discuss the issue and try to develop an alternative arrangement that suits everyone. Establishing a job sharing arrangement may be a solution if the job needs to be filled on a full time basis. Job sharing is the sharing of one job by two or more employees who work on a part time basis.

If a request is to be refused, it should only be on the basis that the job cannot be undertaken on a part time or job share basis and there must be significant and clear business reasons why full time employment is a necessary requirement for a particular role.

Any decisions made regarding approval of part time work should be documented in writing and a copy provided to the relevant employee. If a request for part time work is denied, the employee must be provided with reasons in writing.

Part time checklist

- Developed quality part time work policy or practice?**
- Part time arrangement and work time schedule documented?**
- Copies given to all relevant staff?**
- Measures implemented for career progression and training opportunities?**
- Means of communication considered?**
- Other staff informed of the part time arrangement?**
- Evaluation and feedback measures developed?**

Where to go for more information

Further information about work life balance strategies is available from the Department of Commerce work life website www.worklife.wa.gov.au