

Using this document

Guys and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust have agreed to share their Student Flexible Working policy. This document can be used as a guide by any organisation wishing to implement student flexible working, however Guys and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust **MUST** be credited for the original work carried out to develop this policy.

Pre-Registration Student Flexible Working Policy and Procedure

Through effective implementation, this policy and procedure is intended to enable the Trust to support pre-registration student nurses and midwives to balance their clinical placements with their other commitments and responsibilities.

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Document History		

If you would like a Braille or large print copy of this guidance document, or need to have it translated into another language, please contact the Human Resources Department or your trade union representative, and it will be arranged.

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Pre-Registration Student Flexible Working Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust we would like to be able to offer flexible working arrangements to all of our pre-registration student nurses and midwives which enable students to manage their commitments both inside and outside work during their clinical placement hours. Flexible working arrangements provide students with the opportunity to request a change in the way that their hours are worked and can cover a variety of work patterns.
- 1.2 Offering more flexible working arrangements benefits the organisation significantly. Benefits include recruiting and retaining students and staff, improving morale and productivity, reducing work-related stress and lowering sickness absence.
- 1.3 Other benefits of flexible working for pre-registration students are an improved choice and influence over shift patterns, increased engagement and commitment to clinical placements, improved mental health and wellbeing and a healthier work-life balance.
- 1.4 Students should be provided with safe, effective and inclusive learning experiences whilst ensuring services run effectively.
- 1.5 Under this Flexible Working policy all pre-registration nurses and midwives are able to request flexible working to support work-life balance whilst a Pre-registration student. Requests will not automatically be agreed/approved and will have to be reviewed to ensure the request meets the needs of the students and educational requirements in relation to experience and practice hours. of the reason. Students are required to experience the full range of hours expected of a registered nurse or midwife and includes working long days, nights, weekends, bank holidays.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy document aims to provide a standardised and equitable approach for flexible working for all eligible pre-registration students within adult, child and midwifery.
- 2.2 Pre-registration students on apprenticeship programmes are not included within this document as they are classed as Trust employees and should refer to the GSTT Flexible Working Policy and Procedure (2023)
- 2.3 Flexible working agreements do not replace workplace adjustment recommended by Higher Education Institutes' (HEI) occupational health providers.

3. Policy objectives

- 3.1 This policy and procedure is designed to:
 - Provide an equitable framework for the management of flexible working for pre-registration student nurses and midwives.

- Promote the Trust's commitment to balance the needs of clinical placement and pre-registration student nurses and midwives' personal circumstances.
- Support the commitment made in the NHS People Plan (2020) which asked NHS organisations to facilitate cultural change by moving to a position of "flexibility by default" and to ensure that flexible working is available to all pre-registration student nurses and midwives.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 The term flexible working describes a mutually agreed working agreement between Trust, HEI and pre-registration student nurse or midwife covering pattern of work. Such arrangements have to comply with legislation on working time, including hours, rest breaks and the working week.
- 4.2 NHS England defines flexible working as an "arrangement which supports an individual to have greater choice in when, where and how they work". This may include changes to their working pattern, hours and role, and /or the location in which their work takes place.
- 4.3 The application window will be advertised twice a year with dates given to all pre-registration student nurses and student midwives. This is the time when they can apply, although extenuating circumstances will apply throughout the year.
- 4.4 The flexible Working options for Pre-Registration Student Nurses and Midwives are:

Option	Example
No nights	All shifts for placement will be long days, or early and late shifts (depending on clinical area). Please note that this would still encompass both weekdays and weekends.
No weekends	All shifts will take place between Monday and Friday. Please note that this would still encompass both day and night shifts during the week.
Set shift Patterns	This would allow you to select patterns of shifts each week (i.e. every Monday, Thursday and Friday and 1 Saturday per month). You will need to ensure that you indicate whether you are asking for a day or night shift and you will need to ensure that you will be able to complete the required number of shifts per month.

- 4.5 Pre-registration student nurses and midwives may still be required to undertake a certain number of unsocial (weekend and night) shifts during their programme, as outlined by their HEI.

- 4.6 The suitability of these flexible working options will vary from service to service. Therefore, it is unlikely that all of these options will be available to all pre-registration student nurses and midwives on all of their clinical placements.

5. Role and Responsibilities

- 5.1 The Pre-registration Education Teams, in partnership with the HEIs, will arrange flexible working application windows throughout the academic year. All applications will be discussed with the relevant HEI before making a decision.
- 5.2 The Pre-Registration Education Teams will inform practice placement areas of all flexible working applications. Any decisions regarding additional rota requests made by the pre-registration student will be made at the discretion of the practice placement area, with the Pre-Registration Education Teams available for additional support if required.
- 5.3 Pre-Registration Student
- It is the responsibility of the pre-registration student to consider the impact of their request on the overall service, their peers and their learning requirements.
 - The pre-registration student is responsible for arranging a discussion with a relevant HEI faculty member (cohort lead/personal tutor/academic assessor) before submitting their application.
 - It is the pre-registration student's responsibility to submit the application before the submission deadline.
 - If the application is successful, the Pre-Registration Education Teams will inform the student - via email - stating the specific agreed flexible working pattern.
 - If the application is declined, the Pre-Registration Education Teams will inform the student - via email - providing justification for the decision.
 - Pre-registration students will need to apply for flexible working at least annually. Other options may be available depending on local circumstances.

6. Monitoring and Assurance

Policy objectives	Monitoring methods	Assurance	Frequency
Provide an equitable framework for the management of flexible working for pre-registration student nurses and midwives.	Feedback from pre-registration student nurses and midwives through student feedback and student rep meetings	Education Council	3 years / upon review of policy
	Feedback from HEI's and clinical staff.	Partnership Meetings	Twice a Year
	Annual report, encompassing qualitative data on agreed / declined arrangements.	Education Council	Annually

Policy objectives	Monitoring methods	Assurance	Frequency
Promote the Trust's commitment to balance the needs of clinical placement and pre-registration student nurses and midwives' personal circumstances.	Feedback from HEI's	Partnership meetings	Twice a year or through extenuating circumstances during the year

Pre-Registration Student Flexible Working Procedure

7. Eligibility

- 7.1 All host pre-registration nursing, midwifery and nursing associate students have the right to apply for flexible working, irrespective of their reason (other than health reasons which will be declined and are required to be managed through Occupational Health referrals and recommendations,).
- 7.2 Pre-registration students may apply once only in any application window.
- 7.3 Extenuating circumstance requests may be requested at any time by an HEI faculty member only (See section 10).

8. Considerations for pre-registration students applying for flexible working:

- 8.1 Failure to attempt to answer all questions in the application form will result in the application being declined.
- 8.2 Any applications made on the grounds of health will be declined (see section 2.3).
- 8.3 An HEI meeting should be organised by the student before submitting a flexible working application.
- 8.4 It is an NMC requirement that all students experience a variety of day, night and weekend shifts during their pre-registration training. The flexible working request will be declined if it impacts the student's ability to meet the NMC requirements.
- 8.5 Flexible working agreements are valid for up to one year only from the point of approval.

9. Considerations for the Pre-Registration Education Teams who are reviewing applications:

- 9.1 The Pre-Registration Education Teams should give all requests for flexible working fair consideration.

- 9.2 The Pre-Registration Education Teams may refuse requests for any of the following reasons set out below:
1. Submission after the application window deadline.
 2. Inability of a pre-registration student to achieve the NMC requirements.
 3. Requests made to alter the length of recognized shift pattern (Early/Late start).
 4. No evidence of an HEI discussion.
 5. Incomplete application.
 6. Minimal or no consideration of the impact of requests demonstrated.
 7. Applications based on health reasons.
- 9.3 All decisions regarding flexible working requests (including appeals) should be reached within three months of the stated submission date for the original application window. This time limit can be extended if all parties agree.
- 9.4 When the application window opens, students will have 2 weeks to apply. The education teams will have two weeks to review all applications. This information will then be sent to the HEI's for review and final decisions will be sent to the student. However, the usual time frame for requests would be four weeks for all applications to be reviewed initially.

10. Making an application

- 10.1 The Pre-Registration Education Teams will email all host pre-registration students with information about the application window. The email will include the submission deadline and attach the *Pre-registration Flexible Working Guidance for Pre-Registration Students (Appendix 2)*.
- 10.2 Pre-registration students are required to submit their request for flexible working using the online application form. In specific circumstances if the pre-registration student cannot access the online form, they can use the paper form provided in **Appendix 3**. This must have been communicated from the Pre-Registration Education Teams prior to use of paper forms. On completion this must be emailed to the Pre-Registration Education Teams.
- 10.3 Pre-registration students must arrange a discussion with a relevant HEI faculty member (cohort lead/personal tutor/academic assessor) before submitting their application and document the HEI faculty member's details in their application form.
- 10.4 Pre-registration students must complete the whole application form, answering all questions in full and submit the application before the submission deadline.

11. Confirming the outcome of a flexible working request

- 11.1 After the submission deadline, the Pre-Registration Education Teams will download all flexible working applications onto the Pre-registration flexible working database.

- 11.2 The Pre-Registration Education Teams will independently review all applications using the marking criteria in **Appendix 5** before the HEI panel discussions (if applicable) take place.
- 11.3 The Pre-Registration Education Teams will discuss all flexible working applications with the relevant HEI and document discussion details in the panel discussion spreadsheet before making a final decision.
- 11.4 The Pre-Registration Education Teams will email all pre-registration students with the outcome of their application after the HEI discussions.
- 11.5 If the flexible working request is successful, the email will clearly set out the agreed working pattern (**Appendix 4**).
- 11.6 If the flexible working request is declined, the email should state the reason(s) for the unsuccessful application (**Appendix 4**).
- 11.7 The Pre-Registration Education Teams will inform a named HEI faculty member- via email- of the outcome of all applications for their HEI.
- 11.8 The Pre-Registration Education Teams will inform practice placement areas - via email - of the details of the successful candidates' work patterns, as well as the names of any unsuccessful candidate/s. Confirmation of receipt of email will be requested.
- 11.9 All relevant information will be securely stored on the Trust computer network, which is only accessible to members of the Pre-Registration Education Teams.

12. Extenuating Circumstances

- 12.1 If a pre-registration student requires flexible working outside the application window, owing to extenuating circumstances, the student will need to discuss this with an HEI faculty member.
- 12.2 The HEI faculty member will email the Pre-Registration Education Teams with the extenuating reasons and request a flexible working application.
- 12.3 The Pre-Registration Education Teams will send the pre-registration student the application details and give them a submission deadline.
- 12.4 Once submitted, the same process of confirming the outcome of the flexible working request will be followed.
- 12.5 Pre-registration students are unable to make extenuating circumstance requests independently.

13. Making changes to agreed flexible working arrangements

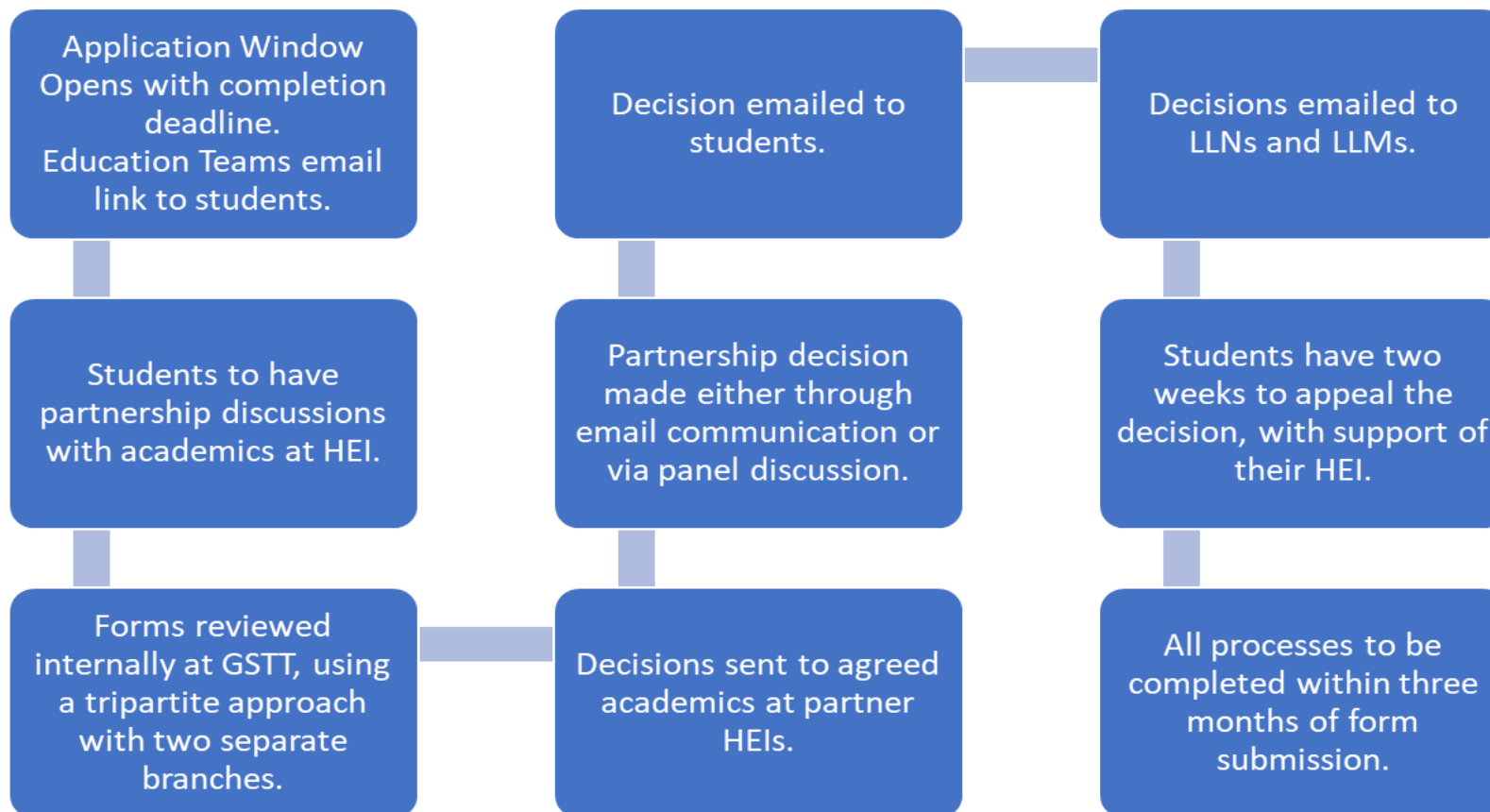
- 13.1 If a pre-registration student wishes to adjust an existing flexible working arrangement they must initially speak with a HEI faculty member.

- 13.2 The HEI faculty member will email the Pre-Registration Education Teams with the reasons for the change and this will be discussed before an agreement is made.
- 13.3 Any changes will be communicated in writing, via email, to the pre-registration student, HEI and practice placement area.
- 13.4 If a pre-registration student wishes to apply for a new flexible working arrangement or revert to their previous work pattern they will need to discuss this with an HEI faculty member and submit a new flexible working application in the next available window if required.
- 13.5 If a practice placement area wishes to make changes to a flexible working request or is unable to accommodate the agreed flexible working pattern they will consult with the Pre-Registration Education Teams before the placement commences.

14. When the pre-registration student wishes to appeal

- 14.1 All pre-registration students must appeal through their HEI with faculty support.
- 14.2 If a pre-registration student wishes to appeal a decision, they must inform their HEI within 14 working days of the receipt of the outcome letter, setting out the grounds for their appeal.
- 14.3 In this letter or email, the pre-registration student must state the reason for their appeal, which must include one of the following:
 - a. The procedures were not followed correctly.
 - b. The decision taken was not reasonable.
 - c. New evidence available that may be relevant to the outcome.
- 14.4 The HEI faculty member must arrange a meeting, at which the pre-registration student, HEI Faculty member and Pre-Registration Education Teams meet to discuss.
- 14.5 The appeal panel will consist of different staff from those that made the initial decision.
- 14.6 The outcome of the meeting must be communicated to the pre-registration student, in writing, within a further 14 working days.
- 14.7 If the appeal is upheld, the notification must specify the changes to the pre-registration student's shift pattern.
- 14.8 If the appeal is refused, the notification of the decision, including reasons, should be given within 14 working days.
- 14.9 The appeal and outcome must be concluded within three months of the closing date of the original application window for flexible working, unless an extension is agreed between all parties.

15. Appendices



Appendix 1 – Flexible Working Process

Appendix 2 – Flexible Working Guidance

Pre-registration Flexible Working Guidance for pre-registration students

Introduction:

At GSTT we would like to be able to offer flexible working arrangements to all of our pre-registration student nurses and midwives which enable students to manage their commitments both inside and outside work during their clinical placement hours. Flexible working arrangements provide students with the opportunity to request a change in the way that their hours are worked and can cover a variety of work patterns. Indeed, we appreciate that offering more flexible working arrangements benefits the organisation significantly. Benefits include recruiting and retaining students and staff, improving morale and productivity, reducing work-related stress and lowering sickness absence. However, it is important to emphasise that while we need to make sure that all our students are provided with safe, effective and inclusive learning experiences we must also ensure our services run effectively.

Under this Flexible Working policy all pre-registration nurses and midwives are able to request flexible working regardless of the reason. However, the application does not replace workplace adjustments recommended by your HEI Occupational Health provider. If your request is on the grounds of health and wellbeing, you will need to seek advice from your HEI. Please note that, during your training, students are required to experience the full range of hours expected of a registered nurse or midwife. This includes working long days, nights, weekends, bank holidays, etc. Your shifts will reflect this schedule and are coordinated to ensure you receive appropriate supervision and support. Therefore, your flexible working request is not guaranteed to be accepted.

We have created a separate email address for you to send in your questions and queries. This is: studentflexibleworking@gstt.nhs.uk.

This email address is monitored on Fridays only so please do not send through urgent emails.

Introduction to flexible working:

Flexible working consists of a wide range of flexible working practices, incorporating flexible work patterns. By encouraging staff to discuss it openly, it is hoped that the our organisation will retain employees who desire more flexibility.

By enrolling on a professional nursing or midwifery course, you have entered into an agreement with your HEI and the Trust that you are able to undertake all shifts that reflect the normal work pattern of our nursing and midwifery staff (including days, nights, weekends and bank holidays if applicable).

Please bear in mind that when you are not on a flexible working agreement you must be able to complete all hours as stated in your rota.

Filling in the form:

Please ensure that you complete all aspects of the form. Failure to answer all questions will result in your application being denied.

Applications cannot be processed without evidence that a discussion has taken place between you and the relevant HEI faculty member. This is to ensure partnership with all involved in this process. Please do not add a GSTT member of staff in this section as we will not be able to proceed with the application. This discussion must take place each time you wish to submit a flexible working application; we are unable to accept applications using historical conversations and applications. This discussion must be used to look at your specific request, the hours you have worked already (if applicable), and where you are in your training journey; this discussion cannot be part of a wider induction/discussion about training at GSTT.

The application form is sent out as a Typeform survey. You must ensure that you only use the link sent directly to you by studentflexibleworking@gstt.nhs.uk and do not share links with colleagues or friends.

Choosing the right flexible working options:

You are required, by the Nursing and Midwifery Council, to have experienced days, nights and weekends during your training. For this reason, we may be unable to facilitate your request if it would impact on your ability to meet these requirements. This is especially pertinent to our final year students.

Summary of flexible working options:

Option	Example
No nights	All shifts for placement will be long days, or early and late shifts (depending on clinical area). Please note that this would still encompass both weekdays and weekends.
No weekends	All shifts will take place between Monday and Friday. Please note that this would still encompass both day and night shifts during the week.
Set shift Patterns	This would allow you to select patterns of shifts each week (i.e. every Monday, Thursday and Friday and 1 Saturday per month). You will need to ensure that you indicate whether you are asking for a day or night shift

	and you will need to ensure that you will be able to complete the required number of shifts per month.
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Please note that you should only request **one** form of flexible working at a time, as requesting more than one may result in you being unable to complete your relevant placement hours.

You may still be required to undertake a certain number of unsocial (weekend and night) shifts during your programme, as outlined by your relevant HEI.

Hours:

Most placement shifts within the Trust will be 11.5 hours long (07:30-20:00 or 19:30-08:00). Unless stated in your HEI course plan, if you are undertaking long shifts you will be required to undertake 13 long shifts (150 hours) per month. If you are requesting set shifts, you need to take in to consideration that you will have to do a four-day week during your rota.

Please **do not** request less than full-time hours on your form as these requests will not be accommodated. The hours required for your placement will be available on your HEI course plan.

Please **do not** request to change the length of shifts regularly worked in the placement area. If your placement area only works long days/nights, then we are unable to accept applications for short shifts.

Regardless of flexible working application, you must ensure that you are not in breach of the UK Working Time Directive (2003).

Some placement areas (i.e. certain community and outpatient areas) work Monday-Friday 09:00-17:00. If you are allocated to one of these placement areas, you would not be eligible to request set shifts; this is because you would be unable to complete all hours for your placement if you do.

Requests

Students are normally allowed five requests per four-week rota. If you have been successful in applying for Flexible Working, any of these additional requests are at the discretion of the Link Student Nurse or Midwife and will take in to consideration the capacity of the clinical area. If the Link Student Nurse or Midwife is unable to comply with your requests, they will inform you of this.

You are not able to use your flexible working agreement and requests to reduce your placement hours. Please refer to your course plan to ensure that you are aware of your required placement hours. Requests are not guaranteed until the rota is released.

Please note:

Flexible working provision is not guaranteed at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. We offer this as an additional aspect to supporting you in practice. Failure to comply with all aspects of the process will result in your application being rejected. If you have had your application agreed then this agreement may be revoked.

Appendix 3– Flexible Working Application Form

Pre-Registration Student Nurse and Midwife Flexible Working Application Form

Student Name:	Date of request:
HEI:	Branch (Adult/Child/Midwifery/LD):
Cohort:	BSc/MSc/PG Dip:
HEI email address	

NB. If you require assistance in completing this form, please contact
studentflexibleworking@gstt.nhs.uk
 Please ensure that you have read the accompanying guidance

PART ONE
<p>Please confirm that you have had a discussion regarding your flexible working application with a member of your HEI's faculty:</p> <p>Name of person contacted: _____</p> <p>Are they Cohort Lead/Personal Tutor/Academic Assessor? <i>(please delete as appropriate)</i></p> <p>Email of person contacted: _____</p> <p>Date discussion took place _____</p>
<p>Please confirm the following <i>(please note that these hours should be your overall hours from all placements already completed):</i></p> <p>How many hours you have already completed: _____</p> <p>How many nights, if any, you have worked: _____</p> <p>How many weekends, if any, you have worked: _____</p> <p>How many bank holidays, if any, you have worked: _____</p>

PART TWO
<p>What flexible working arrangement are you requesting?</p> <p>No nights:</p> <p>No weekends:</p> <p>Set shifts (please indicate which shifts you are requesting to work):</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>Please note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are only to request one aspect of flexible working at a time. • You are unable to request working a reduced number of clinical placement hours, as your overall placement hours are an NMC requirement. This information is

on your Course Plan.

- Some areas work Monday-Friday 09:00-17:00, on these areas you are unable to request flexible working as this would impede your ability to complete all placement hours.
- You are unable to request to work shortened hours; a Long Day/Night is 11.5 hours and a Short Day is 7.5 hours.
- You have a requirement to experience 24/7 care, so must have completed nights and weekends, as well as weekdays.

What is the reason for your request?

.....
.....
.....

Please note:

- If your request is under the grounds of health and wellbeing, you should request an Occupational Health or Wellbeing Service referral from your HEI before applying for flexible working as we cannot accept health-related requests.
- All other requests will be considered.

PART THREE

Do you understand the arrangement that is being made between yourself and the placement area and any potential impacts there may be on the service your placement area provides? Please provide details below.

.....
.....
.....

Do you know who you can contact regarding changing your flexible working arrangements? Please provide details below.

.....
.....

Do you know who can support you with any negative impacts that arise from your flexible working arrangements? Please provide details below.

.....
.....

If your flexible working arrangement has made you concerned about your ability to complete your PAD or MORA, are you aware of who to contact and how you can make arrangements to overcome this? Please provide details below.

.....
.....

☐ I confirm that I have answered all questions above.

☐ I confirm all the above information is true to the best of my knowledge, and am aware that if I have provided fraudulent information that this will be escalated to my Academic Assessor.

☐ I understand this form is not a guarantee of flexible working arrangements, until confirmed by the relevant Education Team and my HEI.

☐ I understand if at any point, the arrangement is not reciprocal and beneficial, the flexible working arrangement will be cancelled and a discussion will take place between myself and relevant Education Team/HEI staff.

☐ I understand by completing and submitting this form, I am agreeing to the sharing of the above information between the Education Team and relevant HEI staff.

Signed by StudentDate.....

We have created a separate email address for you to send in your forms, questions and queries.

studentflexibleworking@gstt.nhs.uk

This email address is being monitored on Fridays only so please do not send through urgent emails.

Appendix 4 - Email Templates

Successful Application Letter/Email:

Dear XXXX

I am pleased to inform you that we have accepted your flexible working request of set shifts – for your placements for the academic year 202x/2x.

Please note that as this application has been agreed any other requests made for your rota will be at the discretion of placement area and are not guaranteed until the rota is released.

We are unable to agree set shifts in areas that work Monday-Friday short shifts as you will not be able to meet your clinical placement hours (e.g. Community /Outpatient areas). During these placements you are required to work as per the rota.

It is recommended that you keep a copy of this email for your records and send to your future placements.

This flexible working agreement is for this academic year only and you must reapply for next year.

Best wishes,

Unsuccessful Application Letter/Email:

Dear XXXX

I am sorry to inform you that we have been unable to agree to your flexible working request. You did not complete all questions in the form as necessary, this means that we are unable to facilitate your request.

This decision was made in conjunction with (*Higher Education Institute*)

Please note that it is a mandatory requirement that you consider all the implications of your application on the clinical area and staff/students, without this we would be unable to accept future applications. If you require any additional support please contact your personal tutor or studentflexibleworking@gstt.nhs.uk prior to the next application window.

If you feel you meet the original criteria set out within the guidance sent to you and you wish to appeal this decision, please arrange a meeting with your personal tutor within 14 days of receipt of this email. A meeting will be arranged between yourself, the HEI and a member of the Education team to review this decision.

This flexible working agreement is for this academic year only and you must reapply for next year.

Best wishes,

Appendix 5 - Marking Criteria

Mandatory elements for marking applications in line with substantive staff applications:
These include:

- 1 Flexible working request.
 - Must be clear and explicit.
 - Must not request to change hours of shift start/end time.
 - Must be able to achieve all placement hours (i.e. ensuring requests cover all 13 long shifts per month).
- 2 Discussion with HEI faculty member?
 - Must have discussed request with relevant staff.
- 3 Concerns about NMC requirement?
 - Evidence that a wide range of shifts have already been worked (nights, days, weekends) during the course in accordance with NMC standards.
- 4 Health-related request.
 - Must not be linked to health- these go to OH.
- 5 Attempted to answer the questions about possible implications.
 - Must have given thought relevant to stage of training.

All information inputted into a panel discussion spreadsheet, which will be securely stored on the Pre-Registration Education Teams Trust computer network drive:

Student Name	Cohort	Received by Deadline?	Flexible Working Request (clear and explicit)	HEI faculty member discussion?	Concerns about NMC requirement	Health related request?	Thought about possible implications?	GSTT decision 1	GSTT decision 2	HEI decision	Final decision	Comments	Decision Emailed