

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests

For Employers and Employees

1. What is the difference between a formal and non-formal FWA request?

Today, some workplaces are using either formal or non-formal ways to process FWA requests by employees. These could be in either written or verbal form. Such practices should continue if they work well for both employees and employers.

However, if the workplace does not have stipulated requirements or process for making an FWA request, an employee could make a formal FWA request based on the Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests. The request should be made in writing, and include the following information:

- a. The date of the request
- b. The FWA requested for, including its expected frequency and duration
- c. Reason for the request
- d. Requested start date and end date (if relevant)

The employee may use the sample template in **Annex A**.

Formal requests that do not meet the above requirements will be deemed invalid. Examples of formal and non-formal FWA requests are as follow:

Table 5: Examples of formal FWA requests

Formal FWA request
<p><i>Illustration:</i></p> <p><i>An employee sends a text message or email to her supervisor stating: “I would like to request to change my daily work hours from Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm to Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm, so that I can send my five-year-old son to school in the morning. I request for this arrangement to begin on 1 Jan 2025 and end on 31 Dec 2025.”</i></p>

Whether the request above is considered valid depends on whether the employer has a process in place for employees to make formal FWA requests:

Scenario A: The employer has a process for employees to submit formal FWA requests via their HR portal.

Although the request above was made in writing and included the information required under these Guidelines, it is not considered a valid request as the employee did not submit it via the HR portal as stipulated by her employer. The employer may wish to remind the employee of the process for making a formal request and encourage her to resubmit it using the proper channel (HR portal, in this case).

Scenario B: The employer does not have a process for employees to make formal FWA requests.

This is considered a formal FWA request as the employee made the request in writing, and included details on the frequency and duration of requested FWA, as well as the reason for the request. As the request is made via a text message or email, the date of the message is also documented.

Table 6: Examples of non-formal FWA requests

Non-formal FWA request
<p><i>Illustration:</i></p> <p><i>An employee speaks to her supervisor in the office or over the phone: “I would like to request to change my daily work hours from Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm to Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm, so that I can send my five-year-old son to school in the morning. I request for this arrangement to begin on 1 Jan 2025 and end on 31 Dec 2025.”</i></p>

This is considered a non-formal FWA request as it is not made in writing. The employer can choose to process the non-formal request and respond to the employee’s request. However, if the employer does not have an existing process for the employee to submit FWA requests, and the employer does not accept such non-formal requests, the employee can submit a formal FWA request based on these Guidelines.

For Employers

2. Does the employer have to offer FWAs to employees?

The Guidelines do not require employers to offer FWAs to employees. However, employers are encouraged to do so. There are many benefits to FWAs – for instance, employers would be better able to attract and retain talent, and employees on FWAs such as flexi-load can supplement full-time manpower planning.

3. How can employers clearly communicate their process for employees to make formal FWA requests, what FWAs are available to request, and expectations for usage of FWAs?

Employers may refer to www.tafep.sg for a sample FWA policy and customise it according to their own needs.

4. Can employers reject a request on the basis of the reason for requesting an FWA?

Employers should assess requests for FWA and respond to them based on business-related grounds.

For Employees

5. Will an employee's career prospects be affected if he/she takes up FWAs?

It is useful for the employee to have an open discussion with his/her supervisor to understand the latter's expectations on work performance and deliverables before taking up FWAs. Supervisors should continue to abide by the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices and adopt fair and objective appraisal systems. Supervisors should appraise employees on FWAs based on their achieved outcomes and objective performance criteria which are fairly applied.

Nonetheless, certain types of FWA may result in a change in the work scope and responsibilities of the employee. For such instances, the employees are encouraged to have a candid conversation with their supervisor on the feasibility of this option, the expectations and deliverables before embarking on the FWA.

6. Would the employee be eligible for work injury compensation if he/she gets hurt outside the office while working?

The employee may be eligible for compensation if the injuries sustained arose out of and in the course of work. Nonetheless, the employee should be mindful of the hazards that may exist while working outside the office and take reasonable care of his/her own health and safety while doing so. Employers should also take reasonable efforts to educate employees on ensuring their safety when working outside the office.