

# FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS STUDY AND FLEXIBLE WORK



Government of South Australia  
SafeWork SA

*Work Life Balance*

INFORMATION SHEET

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***Juggling a job with external study can be challenging, yet many workers are choosing to study in order to keep their career moving forward. Employers are recognising the benefits to their business from supporting staff to pursue educational qualifications, by providing flexible and accommodating work and study arrangements.***

## WHY STUDY AND WORK?

There are a range of reasons why people may choose to participate in both study and work at different stages in their lives.

For younger students, working part-time may provide a source of personal income and independence, as well as work experience which may enhance future employment opportunities. For people already in the workforce, study can be a way of acquiring new skills or upgrading them in order to remain competitive in the labour market.

Working whilst studying may provide an added incentive to workers to complete their studies, as they come to understand the relevance of the course content to their jobs and advancing their careers.<sup>1</sup> It also benefits business as the individual can immediately apply in the workplace the skills and knowledge they gain through study.

## COMBINING STUDY AND WORK ON THE INCREASE

Between the years 1990 and 2000, the number of Australians combining study and work increased by 333,300. Full-time students working part-time accounted for 64% of this growth.<sup>2</sup>

Most people combining study and work fall into two main groups: full-time students who undertake part-time work, and full-time workers undertaking part-time study. In the year 2000, 42% and 44% of working students respectively fell into these categories.<sup>2</sup>

More than three-quarters of people both studying and working on a part-time basis were women, and close to half had dependent children (compared with 25% of students working full-time and 4% of full-time students working part-time). This suggests that many students in this group were combining part-time work and part-time study with family commitments.

## BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS

The benefits of flexible work and study arrangements for employers and businesses include:

- retaining experienced workers who can apply new knowledge and rejuvenate their engagement with their work
- attracting skilled and motivated workers who are seeking support to extend their skills

**Managing the competing demands of work, family and social life is an issue that affects many South Australians. By promoting a work life balance culture and environment in the workplace, employers can improve their ability to attract and retain workers, in turn enriching our health and wellbeing and building stronger communities.**

The South Australian Government is committed to Work Life Balance through the SA Strategic Plan Target 13 *'Improve the quality of life for all South Australians through the maintenance of a healthy work-life balance.'*

SafeWork SA is the lead agency for the target through the Work Life Balance Strategy.

[www.safework.sa.gov.au/worklifebalance](http://www.safework.sa.gov.au/worklifebalance)

## STUDY COMMITMENTS – ENHANCE YOUR SKILLS BASE

*'Changing from full to part-time work while I study means that I can concentrate on what I am doing at work and feel motivated to achieve... after all, my studies will enhance my work in the end.'*



<sup>1</sup>Outcomes from Combining Work and Study – Cain Polidano Rezida Zakirova – A National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program Report 2011, page 39

<sup>2</sup>ABS April 2006

- increasing worker satisfaction and productivity
- motivating staff and increasing commitment and retention
- improving customer service
- being an employer of choice
- attracting staff for part-time and after-hours positions.

A consistent result for part-time and full-time students is that the longer an individual has been in the job, the greater the chance of completion of their study.

A possible explanation is that the more established an individual is in the job, the more support they may get from their employer in the form of more flexible working hours or in the case of full-time employees, possibly time off work.<sup>3</sup>

## HOW TO MAKE IT WORK

There are various ways in which employers can accommodate staff members who are studying. Some common study leave options in awards and agreements include:

- provision of up to 5 hours per week for approved study commitments which occur during workers' hours of work
- paid study leave blocks at peak study times
- leave without pay for up to 12 months
- sabbaticals – a period of paid leave to complete a research/study project
- payment of course fees.

## WORKERS' STUDY LEAVE

Study leave is designed to support workers to undertake full-time or part-time study to improve their qualifications or performance in their current work.

Workers considering a request for study leave should:

- ensure that support for study leave is approved prior to enrolment
- keep records that adequately verify a claim to support an application to management and payroll
- ensure that they have negotiated with their manager the balance between the amount of study done during work hours and in their own time
- keep everyone informed of work/study demands and completion dates.

## FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

Supporting staff to engage in further study can simply entail a willingness to negotiate flexible start and finish times or shifts around study commitments and exam times.

The provision of flexible work arrangements to enable a combination of work and study supports life-long learning and a motivated and productive workforce.

These flexible work arrangements can be packaged with other work life balance arrangements, as a way of promoting your business as a best practice employer, to attract staff and retain valued workers.

<sup>3</sup>Outcomes from Combining Work and Study – Cain Polidano Rezida Zakirova – A National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program Report 2011, page 9

### DISCLAIMER

This publication contains information regarding occupational health and safety. It includes some of your obligations under the occupational health and safety legislation that SafeWork SA administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate Acts and Regulations. This publication may refer to legislation that has been amended or repealed. When reading this publication always refer to the latest laws.

**SAFEWORK SA**

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