

Shift Swap & Coverage Policy

For Australian Small & Medium Enterprises

Template Version 1.0 | December 2024

Important Notice

This template provides general guidance on shift swaps and coverage arrangements. Ensure your process complies with applicable awards regarding hours, rest periods and record-keeping requirements.

1. Purpose

This policy establishes the framework for employees to swap shifts or arrange coverage at [Company Name]. It provides flexibility for employees while ensuring operational needs are met.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All rostered employees
- Shift swaps between employees
- Coverage arrangements for absences

3. Definitions

3.1 Shift Swap

When two employees exchange their rostered shifts, each working the other's original shift.

3.2 Shift Coverage

When one employee takes over another's shift without a reciprocal exchange (the covering employee works additional hours).

3.3 Shift Release

When an employee relinquishes their shift and another employee (or the employer) finds coverage.

4. Eligibility for Swaps

4.1 Employee Requirements

- Both employees must be qualified for the shift
- Both must have appropriate skills and training
- Both must be able to work the swapped shift legally

4.2 Restrictions

Swaps may not be approved if they result in:

- Inadequate rest periods
- Excessive hours for either employee
- Award or agreement breaches
- Skill gaps on the shift

5. Requesting a Swap

5.1 Process

- Find a colleague willing to swap
- Both agree to the arrangement
- Submit request via [system/form/manager]
- Await manager approval

5.2 Timing

- Requests submitted at least [24/48/72] hours before shift
- Earlier requests more likely to be approved
- Last-minute requests considered on case-by-case basis

5.3 Information Required

- Names of both employees
- Original shifts and proposed swapped shifts
- Reason for swap (optional)
- Confirmation both parties agree

6. Manager Approval

6.1 Considerations

Managers will consider:

- Qualifications and skills of both employees
- Impact on coverage and operations
- Rest period compliance
- Hours worked by both employees

6.2 Response Time

- Requests responded to within [24] hours
- Approval or decline with reasons

6.3 Declining Requests

Swaps may be declined if:

- Coverage would be inadequate
- Employee not qualified
- Would breach award or policy
- Operational concerns

7. Shift Coverage

7.1 Requesting Coverage

- Identify need for coverage
- Attempt to find replacement
- Submit request if unable to find cover

7.2 Employer Assistance

If employee cannot find coverage:

- Notify manager as early as possible
- Manager may assist in finding cover
- Outcome depends on circumstances

7.3 Payment

- Covering employee paid for hours worked
- Original employee not paid for covered shift
- Overtime rates may apply to covering employee

8. Open Shifts

- Uncovered shifts may be offered to available staff
- Offered via [system/communication method]
- Accepted on first-come basis or as determined

9. Record Keeping

- All swaps recorded in roster system
- Original and updated roster maintained
- Approval records retained

10. Responsibilities

10.1 Employees

- Find swap partners proactively
- Submit requests with adequate notice

- Honour approved swaps
- Attend the swapped shift

10.2 Managers

- Process requests promptly
- Apply policy consistently
- Update rosters accurately

11. Non-Compliance

- Unapproved swaps not permitted
- Failure to attend swapped shift treated as absence
- May affect future swap approvals

12. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or when swap practices change.

Employee Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have read and understood [Company Name]'s Shift Swap & Coverage Policy.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____