

Temporary Work from Home Guidelines – COVID 19

The University is continuing to closely monitor and adapt to the COVID-19 situation. This Temporary Work from Home Guideline has been designed to assist employees and their supervisors in assessing the suitability and expectations of a temporary work from home arrangement where the employee has been impacted by COVID-19.

Working from Home

Working from home is defined by the University as performing work from a remote, non-University location (i.e. a home office) for one or more days per week, for a fixed period of time.

Work from home arrangements may be established at the request of the employee, in collaboration with their supervisor, where such an arrangement is appropriate. Working from home is not a right or entitlement and may not be suitable for all positions or circumstances. Employees may request a work from home arrangement; however, approval of the request is not a guarantee, will be based upon several factors, and may be discontinued at any time.

A work from home arrangement is not meant to be a substitute for an accommodation for those employees who may require an accommodation in the workplace, nor are they meant to be a substitute for child or eldercare arrangements. It is expected that the accommodation process will be administered in accordance with the Accommodation Partnership Program and that employees who require an accommodation will advise and work with their immediate supervisor with respect to their individual needs. Employees who are sick with COVID-19 should follow the University's Guidelines regarding COVID-19 as outlined here: <https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/faq-employees/>

General Parameters

- The work from home arrangement must be reasonable and include a rationale linked to COVID-19.
- The type of work performed by the employee must be conducive to a work from home arrangement.
- The work from home arrangement must be approved by the employee's supervisor. Complete discretion to approve, not approve, and discontinue work from home arrangements lies with the employee's supervisor.
- Employees and Supervisors are encouraged to utilize the work from home Self-Assessment Checklist when developing a work from home arrangement (Appendix "A")
- The work from home arrangement should maintain the regular weekly scheduled hours the employee normally works, recognizing that those hours may not always coincide with the normal operating hours of the University. These details are to be discussed and agreed to between the Supervisor and the Employee. Both supervisors and employees are encouraged to be flexible in this regard.

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- Approved work from home arrangements do not alter the employee's basic terms and conditions of employment with the University. Applicable collective agreement/employment agreement, laws, and University policies and procedures will continue to apply.
- While the work from home arrangement may be for a specific length of time, this does not represent a guarantee of employment during that time. The University retains all contractual rights to assign work, organize and reorganize the workforce, and/or terminate employment pursuant to the applicable collective agreement, contract and laws.
- Employees will be expected to maintain contact and communicate regularly with their departments and supervisors, keeping them up to date on the work being performed remotely. This includes participating in regular scheduled meetings, conference calls, team meetings, etc.
- Employees will typically be responsible for the cost of their remote workspace and necessary equipment and supplies. Employee requests related to supplies and equipment they require must be directed to their supervisor, who will consider requests for reasonable reimbursement costs, on a case-by-case basis and consistent with University policies and procedures.
- Due to these extraordinary circumstances, the approval of a work from home arrangement under this Temporary Guideline related to COVID-19 is not a guarantee that such an arrangement will continue or be approved again in the future once the COVID-19 situation is resolved. Each work from home request will be department-specific and reviewed in consultation with the employee's supervisor who will consider all relevant factors and University policy.
- Work from home arrangements established under this Temporary Guideline are expected to remain in place until the current COVID-19 issue has been resolved, however may be also be terminated earlier at the discretion of the department should operational needs change or as the COVID-19 evolves. Notice of the end of the work from home arrangement should be provided to employees as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Termination of a work from home arrangement does not constitute termination of the employment relationship, constructive or otherwise.

Duties and Obligations of Employees during the Work from Home Arrangement

In order for the work from home arrangement to proceed, several considerations must be taken into account. Employees approved to work under a work from home arrangement must be aware of the following:

- Employees are *generally* expected to perform their regular work duties or assigned project(s) and tasks. **In certain circumstances employees may be assigned other duties to provide assistance or support to other employees or areas, based on departmental or University priorities.** These arrangements will be discussed with the supervisor.

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- Employees **must be available and accessible** during the hours arranged with their supervisor. This includes but is not limited to being available telephone, email, and text and the attendance at virtual meetings, conference calls, team meetings, etc.
- While the need for **flexibility is recognized and encouraged** by the University, it is expected that the work from home arrangement **is not a substitute** to provide for extended periods of childcare, eldercare, care for sick relatives or perform other personal obligations during their working hours. Please refer to the existing leave of absence provisions contained in the applicable collective agreement or HR Policy should these obligations arise during the work from home arrangements in a manner that prevents the employee to be able to fulfill their job responsibilities.
- Should an employee require accommodation please refer to the Accommodation Partnership Program and applicable employee group provisions.
- Normal departmental processes will continue to apply should an employee **request approval for overtime, vacation, personal days or other absences that arise during a work from home arrangement**. Any questions regarding the suitability of an absence request in the context of the specific work from home arrangement can be directed to Human Resources or Faculty Academic Staff Relations for clarification. The work from home arrangement itself **does not trigger overtime obligations. Consistent with normal process any overtime needs to first be approved in advance by the Supervisor**.
- Employees are solely responsible for **ensuring the suitability of their remote workspace**, taking into considerations such as safety, ergonomics, privacy and confidentiality.
- Employees must provide their supervisor with contact information where they can be reached at their remote workspace.
- It is expected that **all work will be conducted remotely and virtually**. Employees will not be permitted to host meetings or receive other University staff, students, etc. at their remote work location, to conduct University business except for exceptional circumstances as approved by their Department Head. The University will not be liable for any accidents or loss to third party residents or visitors to the Employee's remote work location.
- Any **University-issued equipment and supplies** must be used solely for the purposes of the employee's duties and remain the property of the University. Employees will be required to return any and all University equipment, supplies, documents and materials at the end of the work from home arrangement, or earlier upon request.
- Normal **reporting obligations** will continue throughout the work from home arrangement. Employees are expected to notify their supervisor as soon as possible in the event of equipment or connectivity concerns. Employees are also expected to follow normal departmental practices with respect to illness or other inability to work during their working hours (i.e. medical appointments or other personal obligations).

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- Employees must immediately report any **injuries or accidents** that occur in the course of their employment to their supervisor as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours after the injury/accident and complete an [Illness of Injury Incident Reporting Form](#). Employees acknowledge and agree that University representatives may be required to visit their remote workspace in order to investigate any such injury or accident and agree to facilitate such visits.
- Employees must take all reasonable steps to protect the **confidentiality** of all University documents and information throughout the course of their work from home arrangement. Employees must immediately report any breach of privacy or confidentiality to their supervisor. Guidelines and policies regarding acceptable use and information technology continue to apply.
- Employees must adhere to all **University policies and procedures**, including any applicable legislation throughout the work from home arrangement.