UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

REMOTE WORKING FRAMEWORK

May 2021

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1. OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

1.1 Introduction by the Vice-Chancellor

Throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic, a greater proportion of roles at the University have been successfully performed remotely.

Building on Flexible Sussex, launched in 2018, the Remote Working Framework (RWF) sets out to further promote and encourage the practice of remote working as allowed by an individual's role, team/departmental requirements, personal circumstances and preferences.

We truly want Sussex to be a great place to work and the RWF further builds on more staff having a wider range flexible working options.

Like many of our longer term strategic ambitions these are changes that won't happen overnight and are dependent on the much needed investment in ITS and Estates.

We are also aware that before new ways of working can be embedded, a broader culture change needs to happen, for staff and managers.

But it sets out a clear vision of what we want Sussex to be like as a place to work, an inclusive employer who invests in its people and can allow a better work-life balance.

This framework shows our commitment to support remote working where possible, whilst ensuring the efficient and effective running of the University and the research and education we provide our students.

We are aware that staff have personal preferences, so please use this framework as a starting point to have conversations with your line managers and your teams.

Professor Adam Tickell
Vice-Chancellor

2. SCOPE

2.1 This framework applies to all individuals carrying out University business remotely:

- Senior managers, Heads, officers, and directors;
- Employees (whether permanent, fixed-term, temporary, or casual);
- Contract, seconded, and agency staff; and
- Volunteers, apprentices, and interns

2.2 This framework is non-contractual and may be withdrawn, updated or amended at any time.

3. FRAMEWORK

3.1 What is Remote Working?

3.1.1   Remote working the practice of an individual performing all or part of their role from home or another suitable non-University workplace. It is one of a number of forms of flexible working, and can be practiced in isolation of, or conjunction with, other forms of flexible working outlined in the [Flexible Sussex Handbook and Procedure](#).

Remote working can be beneficial for staff for a variety of reasons, including work-life balance and wellbeing. The University seeks to accommodate remote working where possible, provided it doesn't hinder the effective performance of an individual, team, or the University and it's not to the detriment of our students' experience.

3.1.2   University contractual terms, duties, responsibilities, policies and procedures apply to all staff, including remote workers.

3.1.3   At times the terms 'remote working' and 'homeworking' may be used within the University interchangeably, to all intents and purposes they mean the same thing. This framework favors the term 'remote working' in acknowledgement that, for some staff, their home may not be a conducive, appropriate or safe working environment. In these instances staff will agree a remote working location that is fitting to the requirements of their role with their manager, examples of this could be a co-working space, a local library etc.

4.   REMOTE WORKING ELIGIBILITY

4.1   The University identifies three categories of worker, determining them eligible for remote working by role as follows:

4.1.1   **1. Campus Workers - staff roles required on campus or a University site 80%-100% of the time -** these roles need to be carried out on campus e.g. teaching, lab based roles and student support facilities or technology servicing, the running of sports facilities or the library. Campus Workers' contractual place of work is the University.

4.1.2   **2. Permanent Remote Workers – staff roles which permit 80%-100% of the role to be performed remotely** – individuals in these roles would normally be lone workers, their role has little need for collaboration or face to face interaction with students or other staff. Permanent remote workers' contractual place of work will be their home address, unless agreed otherwise

4.1.3   **3. Hybrid Workers – staff roles which permit up to 50% of the role to be performed remotely, and the remainder on campus** – these roles can be performed through a blend of on and off campus working without detriment to the outputs or significant increase in workload on colleagues. Hybrid Workers contractual place of work is the University.

4.1.4   Staff have the option to work remotely up to the maximum remote working percentage permitted by their role/s, their grant funder (where applicable) and as agreed with their manager. For roles that entail a split of remote and campus based working, remote working days are to be agreed with an employee's line manager, in consultation with the relevant Head of School or Director of Professional Service, to ensure service delivery based on the needs of the role, team and university.

4.1.5   All staff, irrespective of their remote working category, will/may from time to time, with reasonable notice, be required to attend campus for meetings at the request of management.

5.   FLEXIBILITY

5.1   The University understands that not everyone may be able or wish to work remotely and that some staff may hold an alternative preference to their role category. Remote working is optional and agreed in consultation with the line manager.

5.2   **Scenarios:**

5.2.1   Where a Permanent Remote Worker wishes to work at the University rather than remotely their request will be considered at the point of appointment to post (for new staff) or through a flexible working request (for existing staff), the individuals contractual place of work will be amended accordingly.

5.2.2   Where an employee wishes to work remotely in excess of what is permitted by their role categorisation and line manager, they can apply to do so through a flexible working request, which will be considered in line with the University's Flexible Working procedures.

5.2.3   Remote working is one of a range of potential reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities practiced by the University. Disabled staff who wish to explore alternative working arrangements should discuss these with their manager.

6.   REMOTE WORKING PRACTICES AND PRACTICALITIES

6.1.   Remote connectivity

6.1.1   Remote working staff are required to have a reliable internet connection and phone signal (where applicable) to perform their roles. This is essential to permit effective communication with colleagues, students and key stakeholders and the accessing of relevant information and systems that permit the effective performance of roles.

6.2.   Accessibility, collaboration and inclusion

6.2.1   Virtual accessibility is an important aspect of effective remote working, for both the remote worker and those with whom they work. Staff should remain 'visible' and 'accessible', letting others know where and when they are working, within University core hours, and how they can be reached, whether working on or off campus.

6.2.2.   Shared calendars, schedules, intranet staff profiles and email signature strips are just some of the methods of promoting accessibility.

6.2.3   Managers are expected to include Remote, Hybrid and On Campus Workers in team activities and manage hybrid teams inclusively.

6.2.4   Remote and Hybrid Workers should remain as engaged and involved with the University as Campus Workers. The University will provide equal access to relevant information and opportunities, such as news, meetings and events, benefits and

development and promotion opportunities so as not to disadvantage a particular category of worker.

6.2.5   All staff should utilise the suite of available and relevant University recommended equipment and technology to engage effectively with colleagues and other stakeholders in hybrid working scenarios.

6.3.   Suitability of the remote working environment

6.3.1   **Remote working environments should be:**

- safe and secure
- adequate in terms of space, lighting, layout and conditions
- appropriate to the nature of the work being conducted and free of distractions; remote working is not a substitute for suitable care arrangements for dependents, dependents should be cared for by someone other than the member of staff during their working hours.

6.4   Remote working outside of the UK

6.4.1   Requests to perform role-related duties and work either partly or wholly outside of the United Kingdom will not be allowed other than in exceptional circumstances. This is due to the potential significant tax compliance risk and cost implications to the University and/or the individual. Requests which are thought to be exceptional must be discussed with the respective Head of School or Director of Professional Service, HR Business Partner and Finance Business partner and will require the approval of the Director of Finance before any overseas working agreement is implemented.

6.5   Maintaining safe and healthy remote working practices

6.5.1   Whilst there are many benefits to remote working, there are also challenges staff and managers should remain vigilant to. At times remote workers could feel more isolated, they may experience boundaries between work and personal life become blurred or find they are more sedentary. The university encourages individuals to take steps to ensure healthy remote working. More information on good remote working practices can be found on the University of Sussex OD Webpages. Staff are encouraged to speak to their managers if they encounter challenges with their remote working arrangement.

6.5.2   Carrying out computer or paper-based work remotely is generally deemed low risk, however, to ensure staff have safe remote working arrangements, remote working staff will be required to carry out relevant assessments by the University, including but not limited to, Display Screen Equipment (DSE). The University's [Health, Safety and Wellbeing policies](#) apply to remote workers, and staff should refer to these policies for further details.

6.5.3   Remote working employees who become pregnant, develop an injury or illness or change address should notify their line manager of their as soon as possible, so new and/or specific risk assessment can be conducted.

6.6   Information and communication technology

6.6.1 The University is committed to enabling and facilitating effective remote working via ITS solutions. Policies are in place that detail both provision and requirements of remote working staff in relation to mitigation of associated risks, information security and adherence to data protection legislation. Please refer to Annex 1, The IT Services Remote Working Policy, for full details.

6.7 Non-technical Equipment

6.7.1 The University will provide staff with appropriate working equipment (such as a chair and desk etc.) to conduct their role at their contractual place of work. This provision will be in either the form of a designated work location and work station or a shared working space or 'hot desk'. This will be determined by the frequency and regularity of the staff members' on campus working and the requirements of their role.

6.7.2 Permanent Remote Workers, contracted to work remotely, will have equipment provided on loan to their home address for the duration of their employment. The University will provide Campus Workers and Hybrid Workers with equipment for use on University premises.

6.7.3 If equipment has been provided by the University for a workstation on campus, and an employee chooses to work remotely, rather than their contractual place of work, the employee is responsible for providing or purchasing and maintaining suitable equipment for use when remote working.

6.8 Access to remote working locations

6.8.1 There may be, on occasion, an unavoidable reason for the University to need to access a staff members remote working location. This could be to:

- install, inspect, replace, repair, maintain, service or retrieve University property during the course of employment, where it is not possible or appropriate to do so on campus;

- inspect or investigate significant health and safety concerns

6.8.2 By choosing to work remotely, staff consent to the University or it's representatives, at reasonable times and on reasonable notice, accessing their remote workplace. The University will only do so where it deems it absolutely necessary, and where there are not suitable alternative methods of achieving the required outcomes.

6.9 Contractual implications

6.9.1 Contractual obligations and University policies apply to all three categories of worker. Employees are required to comply with all University policies and procedures, including but not limited to, data protection, IT acceptable use, holiday, performance targets, sickness, absence etc. whether working remotely or from a University workplace.

6.9.2 A contractual place of work will be listed as a staff member's home address for Permanent Remote Workers only. All other Hybrid and Campus Workers contractual places of work will be the University premises where their role is located, unless a

permanent alternative workplace is agreed formally through a flexible working request.

6.10   Personal security

6.10.1   Necessary meetings should take place virtually, by phone, or face to face on University premises where possible. For reasons of personal security, face to face work meetings at individuals' homes are not permitted, unless approved in advance by the relevant line manager and relevant safety assessments have been conducted.

6.10.2   For the employee's own security it is also recommended that employees who are remote working should:

a.   not release personal data or information to external contacts, colleagues or students, such as home address or personal telephone number
b.   use ITS approved technology, as outlined in the ITS Remote Working Policy
c.   ensure that colleagues are aware of the remote workers whereabouts and how to contact them

6.11   Insurance and other considerations

6.11.1   Individuals working remotely are responsible for assessing the personal implications of home working in respect of insurance, taxation, mortgage, utilities provision and any leasing and landlord agreements.

6.11.2   The University holds liability insurance that provides cover for legal liabilities of the University and its members of staff whenever they are engaged in University business. This cover applies irrespective of where the activity is taking place.

6.11.3   All individuals are responsible for the security of the University's property within their control and for avoiding loss. Heads of School, Directors of Professional Services, Managers and remote workers must ensure reasonable steps are taken to ensure the care, custody and security of University owned assets within their control, in line with the University's Financial Regulations. In the event of an insurance claim being made for damage/loss or theft of laptops, there is a £500/£1000 excess respectively, which will be payable by the School or Division.

6.12   Associated costs/expenses

6.12.1   The University does not make financial contributions to those working remotely for normal household expenses such as heating, lighting, internet and phone lines or council tax costs. However, staff may be able to claim Income Tax relief for employment expenses via the P87 form.

6.12.2   The rationale for this is that:

- remote working is optional, all Campus Workers and Hybrid Workers have the right to work from a university workplace full time should they wish to; and
- any saving in travel to work will go towards assisting the mitigation of additional costs.

6.12.3 Remote workers will not be reimbursed for travel to and from campus and/or their remote workplace.

6.13   The right to withdraw remote working privilege

6.13.1   The University reserves the right to terminate non-contractual remote working agreements for business reasons at any time on reasonable notice to fulfil organisational requirements.

6.13.2   In relevant performance or disciplinary cases, an employee may no longer be permitted to work remotely.

7.   RELATED GUIDANCE AND GOOD PRACTICE

1. Remote Working FAQs
2. IT Services Remote Working Policy
3. Organisational Development guidance on managing hybrid teams
4. Organisational Development guidance for remote and hybrid workers
5. Flexible Sussex - Embracing the university's flexible working practices
6. Data Protection Policy