Human Resources
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

COVID-19 Temporary Remote Work Guidelines

The University of Central Florida's commitment to safely and effectively meet the public health challenge presented by COVID-19 extends to ensuring University employees may work from home, where determined appropriate, or another remote location whenever necessary in the coming weeks. Remote working (also known as telecommuting) arrangements are not new, but because they may be unfamiliar to employees and supervisors who have never done so, this resource will help you and your team navigate potential remote working scenarios. *These arrangements must be approved by the department/college head or designee in collaboration with the respective HR lead of the department/unit or Central HR and may be modified at any time*.

Included in these remote working resource pages, you will find guidance for supervisors, employees, and departments designed to help set up temporary remote work arrangements quickly and successfully.

1. **What is remote work?**
   Remote work is a work arrangement in which some, or all, of the work is performed from home or another off-site location. In general, regular office hours are worked and deviations from that schedule require supervisor approval. Please refer to COVID-19 Remote Work Agreement.

2. **Which factors should departments/units consider when determining if remote work is possible?**

   - Operational requirements

   - Security of work data

   - Technological capabilities and equipment necessary to perform job duties

   - Productivity

   - Accuracy of records reflecting time worked by non-exempt employees

3. **Which jobs are suited for remote work?**
   Remote work is easiest to implement for jobs or tasks that require reading, writing, research, working with data and talking on the phone. In general, and at leadership's discretion, a job is suited to work remotely if the job or some components of it can be done off-site without disruption to the flow of work and communication.

4. **Which jobs are not as well suited for remote work?**
   It is not uncommon to require employees in positions needing in-person contact/customer service or that rely upon specific equipment or supplies to work on site. Management and/or supervisory roles may be excluded from consideration for

remote working arrangements unless a department finds such an arrangement practical in meeting job responsibilities. Some jobs that may not seem appropriate at first may be modified, with your college or division HR lead's approval so that employees can work remotely.

5. **What is most important for starting a productive remote work arrangement?**
Clearly outlined and executed remote work arrangements can prove beneficial to employees and supervisors alike. Supervisors should articulate clear procedures regarding check-in times and hours of availability. With proper planning, communication problems can be minimized.

Supervisor checklist for supporting remote work

Working remotely works best when employees and supervisors communicate clearly about expectations. The following checklist will help you establish a foundation for effective remote working, continued productivity, and service to the University community.

1. **Review technology needs and resources.**
Identify technology tools employees use in their daily work and determine whether the resources will be accessible when working from home. Also, ensure employees know how to access the appropriate technical support, should they need assistance. Refer to the UCF Coronavirus FAQs for additional information.
   o Confirm that employees know how to set up call forwarding and how to access their voicemail from home, if available. The UCF Cell Phone Policy may apply.
   o Determine which platform(s) you will use to communicate as a team, clarify expectations for online availability, test and confirm everyone has access to and proficiency with the technology tool(s). UCF employees have free access to Skype for Business, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and your department may have additional tools or resources.
   o Ensure alternative worksite safety.
   o Consider the following list of potential technology needs:
     High speed internet access
     Laptop/computer
       Set up for Remote Desktop Connection on both ends
       Up-to-date anti-malware software installed
     Multi Factor Authentication set up for more than just one device (especially if only device is work phone)
     Virtual Private Network (VPN) installed and instructions on how to use
     Phone (headset) – set up with Skype for Business
     Files available in secure shared location

2. **Review work schedules.**
Remote working can be confused with flex work. Be clear about your expectations with

employees for maintaining their current work schedule or if you are open to flexible scheduling based on employee needs.

- o For overtime eligible employees, certain activities, such as travel to and from required meetings that occur during scheduled work time, are included as hours worked.
- o OPS employees should continue to work, as long as there is work available, as agreed to by department/college head and HR lead. Refer to university guidelines found on the main COVID-19 FAQs. Timesheets or LAPERS will be managed through email as attachments to ensure employees will be paid for their remote work leave and hours worked. Submit LAPERs and timesheets to your supervisor and payroll processor.

3. **Draft a work plan.**
   Review the questions below with employees and work through answers together.

   - o What routine responsibilities/tasks cannot be fulfilled while working remotely and how will it impact operations or other people? What are ways to reduce any identified impacts?

   - o Are there cross-training opportunities to identify backup employees who can do essential work within and/or interdepartmental? Plan for employee absences.

   - o What key processes have been identified for each area/or department? Will there be specific platform access necessary to fulfill these processes?

   - o What routine responsibilities/tasks require regular communication and collaboration with others? Proactively contact each other to confirm how you will communicate while everyone is working remotely.

   - o Are there critical work activities that are vulnerable to the absence of a small number of key employees?

   - o Identify which teams or individuals have limited or no experience with remote work.

   - o What training will be necessary for remote work tools and technology?

   - o Identify and agree on strategic priorities during this time.

   - o Implement a test exercise to test your plan.

   - o Oftentimes employees experience fewer interruptions while working remotely. Are there any special projects, tasks, or online training that you can advance while working remotely?

   - o What events or meetings are scheduled during the time in which the temporary remote working arrangement is in place? Will they be postponed or canceled, or will they take place using technology?

- What follow-up should to occur due to postponements or cancellations? What circumstances require on-site attendance?

- Identify employees who may need special requirements or currently have work accommodations, and plan accordingly.

- Identify employees who will have access to the building, labs, or facilities.

- Provide resources or the process for technical support.

4. **Make a communication and accountability plan.**
   Supervisors should tell employees how often they should send updates on work plan progress and what those updates should include. Supervisors should also communicate how quickly they expect the employee to respond and the best ways for the employee to contact the supervisor while working remotely. Current performance standards are expected to be maintained by employees.

   - If you normally make daily rounds to visit employees at their desks, you can give them a call during this period. Maintain team meetings and one-to-one check-ins, altering the schedule if needed to accommodate any alternative schedules that have been approved.

   - Conduct regular check-ins. Consider starting each workday with a phone, video, or instant message chat. Your employees will be eager for connection and information during the disruption, and the structure will help everyone create a positive routine. Every other day or weekly check-ins may be fine, so long as you are in contact frequently enough that your employees are in sync with you and/or with one another.

   - Prepare an emergency communication plan. Identify key contacts (with backups), chains of communications for tracking business and employee statuses.

5. **Be positive.**
   A positive attitude and a willingness to trust employees to effectively work remotely is key to making such arrangements successful and productive. Working remotely presents an opportunity for supervisors to become better managers. Instead of focusing on how many hours your employees are working, re-emphasize a focus on measuring results and reaching objectives—regardless of work arrangement. The employee's completed work product is the indicator of success, rather than direct observation. By focusing on the employee's work product, supervisors will improve their organizational abilities and their own skill in managing by objectives.

6. **Debrief after normal operations resume.**
   Employees and supervisors should review work plans when work returns to normal, assess progress on the employee's work plan and prioritize any unresolved or new work that resulted from temporary operational disruption.

Tips for employees working remotely

Employees often learn working remotely is different than they expected, and it requires specific skills and habits. The following tips will help employees get to work while at home:

1. **Define your workspace.**
   Employees who are experienced in working remotely will tell you it is often difficult to stay focused at home. We are creatures of habit and most of us are used to our normal home routines. Establishing a workspace, even if it is your kitchen table, gives your brain a cue that it is time for work. Wearing attire, you may wear to the office even if it is your "casual Friday" attire may cue the brain. You should remain capable of reporting to work if your presence is requested by your supervisor.

2. **Master the basics.**
   - Set up call forwarding and how to access your voicemail from home, if available. The university's <u>cell phone policy</u> may be applicable. Know how to remote into the UCF network and other online tools you use regularly.
   - Use Skype for Business, Zoom or another instant messaging client to stay connected to colleagues. Additional support for campus employees can be found at <u>https://it.ucf.edu/faculty-and-staff-support/</u>.
   - Plan for video calls/meetings by making sure you know how to turn on your computer's camera (if available) and microphone and being aware your colleagues may be able to see the background behind you.
   - Make sure you have the supplies you need: pens, paper, chargers, SOPs, etc.

3. **Set daily goals, track them and share your progress.**
   You may be surprised by how differently the workday passes without the comings and goings of an office to break things up or influence what you do next. Consider starting each day of remote work by writing down what you need to accomplish and then track your progress. Pay attention to how long tasks take you and start adjusting your daily goals to match your current rhythm. Update your email/voicemail/skype location/calendar, etc. to indicate your work situation. Communicate with your supervisor and/or colleagues if you think your telecommuting plan needs to be adjusted.

4. **Eliminate distractions.**
   Home can mean pets, children or a favorite hobby are only a few feet away. Depending on your living arrangement, you may need to hang a "do not disturb" sign so your family members don't interrupt you. Pets often need a closed door to keep them away and you might need headphones to block the noise.

5. **Prioritize privacy.**
   Whether you are in your home or a common area, take five minutes to assess the

privacy of your workspace. Can someone standing behind you read your computer screen? Are your windows open so your neighbor can hear your phone call? What information do you need to secure before grabbing a cup of coffee or heading to the restroom? Your personal privacy matters too, so see if there is anything around you that you would not want visible during a video conference with your boss or colleague.

6. **Remember Public Records Law.**
Keep in mind the work employees do while working remotely, even on their personal devices for University work conducted, remains subject to university Policy 2-100.3, *Florida Public Records Act - Scope and Compliance* and other applicable regulations.

7. **Continue to employ security best practices.**
Situations like these are prime phishing opportunities. Remain vigilant for security concerns and be sure to report suspicious emails as recommended by the UCF Security Incident Response Team (SIRT).

   o It should be noted that caution needs to be taken when dealing with personal health information ("PHI") and HIPAA matters while working from home or another off-site location. If you have questions, contact your department/division HIPAA officer or HR Lead.

   o VPNs can also allow you to safely connect to a remote network of computers as if you are there. If you are dealing with sensitive information and want to explore VPN, you can learn more on the <u>UCF IT UCF Virtual Private Network (VPN) Access page</u>.

   o Additional information can be found within the <u>UCF Faculty and Staff Guide for Working Remotely</u>.

   o You are expected to follow the telecommuting equipment safeguards outlined in the university's ***Telecommuting Manual***.

8. **Stay connected.**
Many people say they do not call or instant message colleagues who are working remotely because they don't want to bother them. Remember, they are working, not vacationing at home! You should feel confident about calling or messaging an employee who is working remotely anytime you would walk to their office or call them if you were working on-site.

Tips for departments with widespread telecommuting

With many teams quickly move to working remotely, departments may want to adapt the following suggestions:

1. **Consider designating a remote work task force.**
Depending on the size of your unit, consider implementing a task force to manage remote working protocols and procedures for your department.

2. **Engage your team.**
   Setting up a group to work remotely is different than setting up an individual employee to work remotely. Effective remote working requires entire units to embrace technology and proactive communication in ways that may be new and challenging to traditional ways of working. Support the success of your team by:

   o Scheduling a conversation about what it may look like for your team to work remotely.

   o Identify needs and tool preferences of team members for remote work.

   o Document and share remote working practices/plans.

3. **Enable and encourage ongoing communication.**
   Ongoing communication is the most important part of effective remote teamwork. Working online can be isolating without regular contact with supervisors and colleagues. By creating the expectation an entire team will communicate regularly with one another, members will feel connected regardless of where they are located.