

COVID-19 Short-Term Telecommuting Guidance

Determining Essential Employees for COVID-19

Overview

As the health and well-being of the UCI community continues to be the University's number one priority, effective immediately, UCI departments are strongly urged to implement temporary telecommuting arrangements for employees in non-essential positions, performing non-critical business functions in response to the current COVID-19 public health emergency.

The work of some essential positions may be performed remotely and should be considered for telecommuting as well.

Definitions

The term essential and non-essential is a standard emergency response plan term and in no way reflects UCI's value of its employees' contributions to the organization.

Management, with the approval of the appropriate dean, vice chancellor, associate chancellor or chief, makes determinations on which positions are critical or essential by reviewing the job functions, duties, and responsibilities of each position. These determinations are not made based on specific employees. These determinations are similar to those for the regular campus closure during winter administrative recess. Given the fluidity of this issue, the definition of essential may change from week to week.

Essential Employees. An essential employee is one whose job functions are absolutely necessary in order to ensure departmental operations continue uninterrupted or are needed in response to the current public health emergency. Therefore, these individuals are required to come into work during any period of restricted or suspended campus operation. Most work in essential positions cannot be completed remotely.

Considerations

When managers, in collaboration with their appropriate dean, vice chancellor, associate chancellor or chief, make determinations on which positions are essential, they should consider the following:

- **Non-deferrable services or operations.** A position is essential because its responsibilities include non-deferrable services that must be performed despite an emergency. Non-deferrable services or operations are those necessary to maintain or protect the health, safety, or physical well-being of the University's personnel (students, staff, and faculty), critical administrative functions, academic mission, facilities and/or assets (including research projects).
- **Healthcare services.** Positions in clinical operations are determined essential, performing critical healthcare functions.
- **Coverage for Absenteeism.** If an employee performs work of an essential position, but is absent and not able to report to work, the manager may designate another position as essential where the employee in that position has been cross-trained or is capable of performing the critical work.
- **Risk of non-performance.** A manager should consider what the risk to UCI or the UCI community is if the work of the position is not performed.