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Remote Work Eligibility

1. How are decisions made about a position being eligible for remote work?

   Decisions on which positions are eligible for remote work are based on operational and business needs and made without bias or favoritism. Unit leadership will first consider the unit’s mission, objectives, services, work culture, and service hours, and then considers each staff member’s job duties to determine if that position can be done partially or fully remote.

   Not all positions and staff are suitable for remote (partially or fully) work; however, each new or modified remote work arrangement is evaluated objectively and fairly to ensure an equitable process.

2. Are all staff eligible for remote work?

   Staff members who are Career, contract, limited or casual/restricted staff are eligible. However, leaders first consider a unit’s mission, goals, services, and service hours, and then review the position to determine if the responsibilities and duties may be performed partially or fully remote. Not all staff in positions deemed eligible for remote work may be approved for remote work. Additional considerations which may limit a staff member’s eligibility for remote work include, but are not limited to, recent performance concerns where the supervisor requires direct observation of an employee, access to offsite space that is a safe workspace and conducive to performing duties, or access to appropriate equipment to perform duties.

3. Can a remote work arrangement for the same position in different units or schools be handled differently? Can one be approved and the other denied?

   Yes. Since every job, staff member and situation are different, it cannot be assumed that the same decision is appropriate for similar positions. Supervisors know the operations of their department/unit(s) best and are responsible for recommending decisions on how to get the work accomplished. Unit/department senior leadership is accountable for the final decision. But keep in mind that supervisors have the authority to say yes or no to a remote work arrangement, or to postpone consideration of a remote work arrangement to another time.
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4. How should a supervisor handle a situation where it may be appropriate to approve one person’s remote work agreement and deny another?

All decisions should be focused on organizational needs and objective criteria related to work performance and job demands. A consistent approach to analyzing the situation should be applied. See the Staff Remote-Work Criteria Checklist, which must be completed by each supervisor for each staff member when considering a remote work decision. Documenting the basis for these decisions is strongly recommended in case questions arise later. It is also important to communicate to each staff member the decision and its rationale. Your HR Business Partner can help you develop a strategy for ensuring equitable treatment and communicating your decision.

5. Can a supervisor mandate a remote work arrangement for an entire unit or department?

It is in the supervisor’s interest to consider individual applicability to avoid reduced productivity or the challenges and costs of turnover. However, a supervisor may decide that a remote working arrangement for an entire unit or department is best to meet organizational needs. As we move forward into a new way of working, units may find that onsite workspaces may not be needed and opt for a virtual environment. Units at UCI will be exploring this and determining what is best for their unit.

6. What if someone disagrees about their position’s eligibility for or denial of remote work?

Staff who disagree with the remote work eligibility decision may ask for a review of the decision. Contact your unit leadership to request a review of the decision.

7. Are staff in non-exempt positions eligible for remote work arrangements?

Yes, remote work opportunities will be the same for non-exempt and exempt staff. For non-exempt staff, supervisor must ensure that appropriate breaks are taken, that all hours worked are reflected as time worked and that overtime has advance approval by the supervisor. See Remote Work Guidelines.

8. Are represented staff eligible for remote work arrangements?

Yes, the collective bargaining agreements have language giving management the right to determine the location of work. As such, considerations for work location eligibility or decisions will be the same for represented and non-represented staff.
Remote Work Arrangements

9. Can staff work remotely outside of California, within the United States?

If the staff member’s position has been approved by unit leadership for fully remote status, working outside of California, within the United States, is allowed. However, there are several considerations that the employee and leader must review before proceeding. Some of these considerations are Health and Welfare Benefits, Payroll and Tax, Compensation, and Workers Compensation Benefits. Contact your HR Business Partner, the Employee Experience Center, Payroll and Benefits professionals for guidance.

10. Can staff work remotely outside of the United States?

No, UCI staff are not permitted to work remotely in other countries. Consult your HR Business Partner should there be a short-term situation with exceptional circumstances.

11. Is there any time when a supervisor can terminate or vary the remote work arrangement?

Yes, remote work agreements are subject to ongoing review by supervisors and staff and may be modified or rescinded with reasonable notice in accordance with local procedures: **UCI Remote Work Procedures**. A supervisor can terminate or amend the agreement based on a number or reasons, including operational changes, staffing changes, leadership changes, performance, etc. If the termination or amendment to the arrangement is not a mutual agreement, the supervisor must provide at least 30 days of notice in writing to the staff member.

12. Must all staff sign a remote work agreement?

Yes, a remote work agreement must be completed before the staff member begins a remote work arrangement.

13. Are newly hired staff eligible to participate in remote work?

Yes, and typically a pilot period is recommended to ensure the arrangement if successful. A remote work agreement must be completed before the newly hired staff member begins a remote work arrangement.

14. What happens if a staff member who is working remotely wants to return to work primarily on-site?

The staff member should discuss this with their supervisor at least two weeks prior to the change date. The supervisor will evaluate the request based on the needs of the business unit. Any changes to an agreed upon remote work arrangement will be in writing if arrangement is rescinded or have an updated remote work agreement completed.
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15. What happens if a staff member with a remote work arrangement transfers to another unit or department?

The staff member and the staff member’s new supervisor should discuss the situation and determine if the staff member's current remote work arrangement is appropriate for the new position and department. The staff member may have to complete a new remote work agreement.

16. Are remote work arrangements appropriate as alternatives for childcare and/or care of other individuals?

Remote work is not a substitution for child or dependent care. Although an employee’s schedule may be modified to complement child or dependent care needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on maintaining job performance and meeting business demands.

17. How do we handle employee requests for disability accommodations in a remote work arrangement?

Requests for disability accommodation should be handled in accordance with Personnel Policies for Staff (Reasonable Accommodation) or the applicable CBA. This includes situations where an employee with a disability requests a hybrid work arrangement as a reasonable accommodation. It also includes situations where a remote employee with a disability or a hybrid remote employee with a disability may need a reasonable accommodation to perform the essential functions of their position. Staff requesting reasonable accommodations should contact their supervisors, or one of the following UCI HR specialists:

   Campus: Wendy Pawling, Disability Management Specialist, (949) 824-9756, wpawling@uci.edu
   Health: Jack Fitzgerald, Disability Management Specialist, (714) 456-8667, jackf@hs.uci.edu

18. What are the benefits to my department/unit of a remote work arrangement?

There may be a strong business case for remote work arrangements. The benefits include:

- Increased productivity and reduction in absenteeism: recent studies indicate that productivity of staff working remotely was as high or higher than working on-site before the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff cite fewer interruptions, more focused time, quieter work environment, more comfortable workplace, and avoiding office politics in achieving great productivity while working remote.

- Improved retention and staff commitment: flexible work arrangements build loyalty. Staff are more likely to remain with an employer longer and have a higher level of commitment when an organization provides access to remote work arrangements.

- Cost savings: reduced staff turnover and associated costs (recruitment, training, temporary staff), onsite meeting costs (catering, room rentals, etc.) and facilities costs (utilities, leases, maintenance).
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- Improved recruitment: more flexibility can attract potential staff members when vacancies arise, especially in a situation where applicants can make comparative evaluations of job offers. Additionally, organizations can widen their talent pool by not being restricted to need to relocate potential hires.

- Positive environmental impacts: according to a 2020 KPMG study, when 3.9 million employees work from home at least half time, they reduce greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of taking more than 600,000 cars off the road for an entire year. And by making environmentally sound choices—like opting to use less paper and monitoring their air conditioning, heating, and lighting—these remote employees have the same potential impact on air quality as planting an entire forest of 91 million trees.

Expense Eligibility and Reimbursement

19. Are a remote staff’s personal internet data plan, home Wi-Fi and/or personal cell phone reimbursed?

Typically, no. Expenses related to work needs, such as internet connectivity or phone usage, are governed by Business and Finance Bulletin G:-46 Guidelines for the Purchase of Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices. Only business-related equipment that can be returned to the office at the end of the remote work arrangement should be reimbursed. If any item needs to be installed, charges related to the installation are the responsibility of the employee. UCI will evaluate on a case-by-case basis where reimbursement is necessary for staff with specific needs not already met with existing resources.

20. What is reimbursed for remote office and technology equipment?

The university will provide staff with standard IT equipment needed to perform their job duties. Staff members who work remotely should not expect to have two workspaces equipped for them and should coordinate with their unit on sharing equipment when onsite or bringing equipment with them.

Additional equipment may be provided for accommodation needs, as identified through the interactive process. The staff member is responsible for supplying any additional equipment needed for their workspace not provided by the university. Any university-owned equipment must be properly returned prior to separating from university employment. The staff member is responsible for working with the appropriate department to arrange timely return of equipment.

The university provides a wide range of tools that aid effective and productive teamwork, including but not limited to virtual private network (VPN) software, single sign on (SSO) & two-factor authentication, email and calendar, soft phone dialer, video and audio conferencing, electronic document storage, and other corporate technology tools such as financial, collaboration and productivity applications. The staff and the unit are responsible for maintaining the compliance of the device and associated programs.
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21. How do I ensure ergonomic safety while working remotely and what expenses are reimbursed for remote ergonomic equipment?

The university is responsible for ensuring that that work assigned to the employee can be performed safely offsite and for providing the employee with ergonomic equipment in accordance with local procedures. Campus EH&S Ergonomic resources for working remotely can be found here: Campus Ergonomics for remote work. Medical Center ergonomic resources can be found here: Medical Center Ergonomics.

When performing work for the university, the staff member is responsible for maintaining a safe and secure work environment and for arranging the remote worksite in an ergonomically sound manner. Managers should direct staff members to Environment Health and Safety for assistance in setting up an ergonomically correct non-University worksite.

Staff who wish to request ergonomic furniture for their homes as reasonable accommodations through an interactive process, should contact their supervisors, or one of the following UCI HR specialists:

- Campus: Wendy Pawling, Disability Management Specialist, (949) 824-9756, wpawling@uci.edu
- Health: Jack Fitzgerald, Disability Management Specialist, (714) 456-8667, jackf@hs.uci.edu

22. Are staff who work remotely eligible to be reimbursed for mileage or parking to come to campus for occasional on-site meetings?

No. If a staff member (primarily remote or not) must travel to their job location, that is considered a non-reimbursable commuting expense. Staff who are working outside of the job location at their own convenience are not on travel status as defined in Business and Finance Bulletin G-28, Travel Regulations, as “the period during which a traveler is traveling on official University business outside the vicinity of their headquarters or residence.”

23. Are staff who work remotely eligible to be reimbursed for travel costs associated with business meetings not at UCI, professional conferences, or other university-related business purposes?

Yes. Staff that travel from their home to a non-UCI location for business purposes, may be reimbursed in accordance with Business and Finance Bulletin G-28, Travel Regulations. In certain circumstances, and estimate of normal commuter costs from their home to their unit’s UCI location may be deducted from their total travel costs.

24. What is reimbursed for office supplies for staff remote work location?

Staff should work with their departments for regular office supply needs. Such supplies may be shipped to remote staff if needed. As with equipment, all supplies and materials shall be returned to the unit upon the end of employment or transfer.
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25. What is reimbursed for printing costs for staff remote work location?

Staff should work with their departments to determine the true need for printing supplies. As we adopt greener practices and workflows that are primarily electronic, the use of printers and printer supplies should be minimized.

26. How can staff borrow University-owned equipment for remote-work use?

Refer to Procurement Services policy on Borrowing University-Owned Equipment for details in the process, approval and types of equipment permitted to borrow.

Represented Staff

27. Will supervisors be able to determine the work schedule for each represented staff on an individual basis, based on the needs of their respective department/unit?

Yes, the collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) give UCI the right to schedule to meet operational needs. Depending on the schedule and the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, management might be required to provide notice to the union prior to changing a schedule. Consult your HR Business Partner or Enterprise Workforce Relations consultant for assistance or if you have questions about the ability to change a work schedule pursuant to a remote work agreement.

28. Will any kind of vote by represented staff in the same classification be required when adjusting work locations?

No vote is required when adjusting work location.

29. For represented staff, will each arrangement need to go through the Union for review, or will there be a blanket approval provided?

While it is a management right to determine which classifications will work remotely, we are actively engaged in discussions with the various unions to review the university’s plans for remote work. The unions do not need to be consulted nor provide approval regarding remote work agreements with staff.

While Working Remotely

30. How do we handle workers’ compensation claims for remote workers?

Work-related injuries incurred in the non-university worksite should be reported promptly to the supervisor. Such reports of injuries will be handled in the same manner as reports of injuries in the normal workplace.

Staff working in California should follow the Workers’ Compensation procedures: Workers Compensation Website. Workers’ compensation laws vary by state. Staff working outside California should address any questions to the UCI Workers Compensation Contacts.
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31. What should a staff member do if they have connection issues while working?
   
   If a staff member experiences internet, phone, or power outages, they should get in touch with their supervisor as soon as possible. The supervisor will work with the staff employee to determine what work can still be performed during the outage and if any makeup time will be required. If problems persist, the supervisor will revisit the remote work arrangement to determine if the staff member’s offsite location is suitable for continued remote work.

32. What if a staff member falls or hurts themselves during remote work hours?
   
   They should contact their supervisor immediately and follow the Workers’ Compensation procedures posted here: Workers Compensation Website.

33. What if a staff member is ill when they are to be remote working?
   
   If illness or other issues prevent a staff member from working whether on site or remotely, they will be expected to take appropriate leave (sick, vacation, PTO), and follow the normal process for reporting off work.

34. Will staff be allowed to work remotely while traveling on vacation?
   
   Vacation and paid time off (PTO) are opportunities for individuals to rest and recharge. If an individual is working than they are not on vacation or PTO. However, staff members may request from their supervisor to work remotely at an alternate location, within the United States. The supervisor may consider the request and set expectations for hours to be worked and work outcomes to be achieved. The supervisor should always know where their staff members are located.

35. What are the emergency procedures for when a disaster occurs at either UCI or at the remote work location?
   
   Staff members should reference the emergency procedures provided by their unit and UCI Emergency Management. Supervisors are encouraged to set up a telephone tree or other communication method to check on the safety of their employees.

36. How will staff members’ performance be evaluated while remote working?
   
   Supervisors will evaluate staff members’ performance in the same manner as they would if they were onsite. Supervisors should focus on communicating clear expectations, setting goals, and reviewing outcomes. Supervisors should consult their HR Business Partners should they need assistance.