

Telework/Flexwork – Temporary Policy to Address COVID—19

Updated July 2020

Policy statements

The University of New England leadership continues to monitor developments regarding the coronavirus, known as COVID-19. In an effort to continue operations, serve our students and address the needs of our employees during the pandemic, UNE is instituting this temporary policy on telework/flexwork. This policy may be discontinued at any time at the sole discretion of UNE and shall be discontinued when the acute pandemic risk is determined to have diminished. This policy is administered by the Office of Human Resources. Employees who have student-facing positions or whose work cannot be completed remotely are expected to conduct their work on campus, as appropriate, following all applicable COVID-19 protocols and guidelines. Generally, appearance at work and performance of most if not all duties at work are an essential function of a person's work at UNE. Any arrangement that alters or adjusts that essential function is temporary due to the present circumstances and will not eliminate such an essential function. This policy does not apply to requests for alternative work arrangements due to a medical condition as those requests will be addressed through other policies.

Employees Eligible for this Policy

Faculty and professional staff ("employees") are eligible to request telework/flexwork, provided they meet one or more of the criteria specified below (student employees and independent contractors are not eligible for this policy). Approval of telework/flexwork arrangements will be made on a case-by-case basis by the department manager, senior administrator, and the Office of Human Resources, considering the nature and responsibilities of the employee's position and any other relevant factors.

Telework and flexwork requests will be considered only in the following circumstances (subject to change based on current federal and state guidance):

- The employee is responsible for the care of a household member with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and thus has been exposed to the virus.
- The employee has one or more children whose school or childcare center is closed and another suitable person is not available to care for the child(ren).
- The employee has been advised by the Office of Human Resources (based upon guidance from medical professionals), public health officer or medical advisor to refrain from attending work, but the employee is still able to perform work.

Depending on the employee's particular circumstances and the particular work environment, it may be determined that options other than telework/flextime are appropriate and sufficient, such as moving the employee's work location or engaging in more significant "social distancing" in the workplace.

Definitions

Flexwork is any variation in work hours or work week from the standard schedule of the department in which the employee works, approved by the department manager and the Office of Human Resources. Flexwork may include options such as the following:

- Flex time – Start and departure times that differ from the standard schedule for the department, either on a day to day or fixed schedule.
- Compressed work week – Regularly scheduled hours worked are fixed over fewer than five days a week.
- Reduced work schedule and/or responsibilities – Reduction of hours worked and/or responsibilities per week for a period of time (with commensurate reduction in pay).
- Core office hours – Block(s) of time within the work day or work week, determined by the department based on business needs and student needs, during which all employees are expected to be at work and/or available for meetings and other departmental activities and student needs.

Telework is an arrangement for an employee to perform their job duties at an alternate location, such as a home office. Telework may also include flexing an employee's work schedule based on the particular circumstances and as approved by the department manager and the Office of Human Resources. Telework is not practical or possible for all types of work or for all positions. The telework provision of this policy does not apply to positions that are not amenable to working remotely.

Requests for Telework/Flexwork

Employees are expected to discuss their request with their department manager, and then to submit a Temporary Telework/Flexwork Request Form to their manager who will then submit it to the Office of Human Resources for consideration. The decision as to whether to approve telework/flexwork is at the complete discretion of UNE. The employee and manager will develop an individualized telework/flexwork plan. All individual plans must be approved by the employee's manager and senior administrator. A copy of the plan, along with the Telework-Flexwork Agreement, will be sent to HR. The duration of each agreement is subject to periodic review by Human Resources.

In addition to any other relevant issues pertaining to the particular department, managers will consider the following in assessing telework/flexwork requests:

- Identify the technology tools that the team will use to communicate with each other and ensure everyone is trained on how to use the technology. Information regarding available tools (Zoom, phone conference calls) and training on how to use the tools can be found on the UNE IT website <https://une1.sharepoint.com/sites/CTR>.
- Establish preferred methods and frequency of communication, as well as expected response times.
- Establish regular team check in and meeting times. During this time, it will be important to communicate regularly. Consider setting up a regular morning team check and also daily productivity reports to be submitted at day's end.

- Social Connections: During this time in which teams might be dispersed, with some working from home, some working in the office and working in other parts of the campus, it is Important to remember to maintain social connections. Make sure each team member feels valued as an individual and is included in the team.

The General Requirements for Telework are included in the Telework-Flexwork Agreement

Responsibilities

Human Resources

- Approval of telework and flexwork requests
- Maintenance of telework and flexwork request forms

Department Supervisors

- Completion and submission of flexwork and flextime request forms

Related Documents and Forms

Flexwork and Flextime Request Form

Contacts

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Appendix

General Requirements for Telework.