

**REMOTE (BLENDED) WORKING PROCEDURE**

**Approved by Executive Committee**

**20 July 2021**

# Purpose

# The purpose of this procedure is to outline the interim arrangements for the administration of Remote Working for staff at the University of Limerick and to provide guidance and support. In circumstances where remote working is appropriate, a blended model comprising of remote working and onsite work may be permitted provided that the needs and objectives of both the University and staff can be met. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is committed to developing the longer term approach to remote working in the Public Sector and to ensuring consistency of approach across the sector.

# The University of Limerick is committed to supporting blended working arrangements and is committed to flexibility with the aim of meeting both the needs of the service and those of staff. The University recognises that such flexibility can promote equality of opportunity, improve employee motivation, performance and productivity, and reduce stress. UL wants to support its staff where possible to achieve a better work/life balance and it is acknowledged that blended working can support improved use of our physical estate as well as attracting talent to the University.

# Scope

# This procedure will apply to all University Staff.

# For the purpose of this procedure, remote working refers to the carrying out of day-to-day functions and tasks associated with your role and other tasks as assigned by your Line Manager, away from the University Campus.

# This procedure may be revised and amended as appropriate in line with legislation, public health advice and Government circulars, including Return to Work Protocols.

# Management Considerations

# There is not an automatic entitlement to choose to work exclusively onsite or remotely. The University reserves the right to refuse requests to work onsite/remotely and to cease remote working arrangements in place, based on the requirements of the University.

# Managers should assess their operational requirements to determine the feasibility of remote working for their staff. Consideration should also be given to the information provided by staff via the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Remote Work Questionnaire (Appendix 1).

# Principles

# Decisions in relation to remote working will be guided by:

# Government, Public Health and Sectoral advice;

# the nature of the work carried out;

# the availability of the necessary equipment to facilitate remote working;

# the physical workspace available within the division /department /school /unit;

# consideration of the individual’s personal circumstances;

# the ongoing effectiveness and normal performance expectations of roles.

# It is expected that staff will work during the normal University hours of business in line with their contract of employment. Managers are encouraged to be flexible and where flexibility is requested, managers should exercise discretion.

# Staff must ensure regular contracted working hours are maintained and ensure adequate rest breaks are taken in accordance with the [Organisation of Working Time Act](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1997/act/20/enacted/en/html).

# Staff must be available to attend work onsite where required. Requests to work on site will be made to the member of staff by the Line Manager (or the next level of management if appropriate).

# If a member of staff who wishes to work remotely cannot access the necessary equipment and facilities to enable them to do so in a safe manner, then they are not a suitable candidate for remote working. In such circumstances UL will provide staff required to work on campus with a safe location to work.

# In order to work remotely staff must ensure they have an appropriate working environment and must have the following basic equipment:

# A broadband internet connection capable of using video-based conferencing systems and accessing University systems.

# Access to a University computer

# A suitable work station including a suitable chair.

# The staff member must complete the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Remote Work Questionnaire (see Appendix 1) and return it to their Line Manager.

# Staff must undergo an online ergonomic risk assessment for their work station. Where appropriate this will be facilitated through use of video calls to make sure that the workspace is set up correctly. Online ergonomic risk assessments will take place over a phased time period and priority will be given to those members of staff who have reported musculoskeletal discomfort through the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Remote Work Questionnaire (Appendix 1).

# Arrangements for remote working are subject to regular review by the relevant Line Manager/Head of Department/School/Dean/Divisional Director as appropriate.

# Responsibilities of Line Managers

# The Line Manager/Head of Department/School/Dean/Divisional Director has a critical role in supporting remote working arrangements. Line Managers/HoD’s/HoS’s/Deans/Divisional Directors have responsibility to:

# Ensure that staff have pre-arranged/agreed means of contact with team members to enable ongoing communication as required;

# Maintain regular contact with staff/teams;

# Continue to have regular planned team meetings, and one to one meetings with staff remotely;

# Check in with staff/teams to see how they are coping and identify where challenges are being experienced;

# Agree the work to be carried out while staff are working remotely;

# Ensure that staff are managed through the normal University Performance Management systems;

# Ensure that staff are complying with data protection obligations, and taking regular breaks in line with the Organisation of Working Time Act;

# Ensure that staff are aware that the provisions of all University policies and procedures remain in place.

# Provide regular updates from senior management on work related developments;

# Responsibilities of Staff

# All staff who are working remotely have responsibility to:

# Maintain regular contact with their line manager regarding work.

# Make your Line Manager/Head of Department/School/Dean/Divisional Director aware of any challenges or issues associated with remote working with a view to early resolution;

# Maintain regular contact with team colleagues;

# Agree work to be carried out and deliverables with their line manager;

# Ensure compliance with the Data Protection policy and adhere to ITD advice for remote working (see Section 8);

# Be aware that the provisions of all University policies and procedures remain in place along with normal reporting requirements;

# Take reasonable care for their Health & Safety and ensure that they do not place themselves or others at risk whilst working remotely.

# Record leave and ensure adequate rest breaks are taken in accordance with the Organisation of Working Time Act.

# Additional Costs

# The University will not be liable for any additional costs or claims related to remote working including insurance, utility bills, office furniture.

# In line with Revenue guidelines, UL staff working remotely may be entitled to make a claim on their personal tax return in respect of for expenses incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the performance of the duties of the employment. The current revenue information in relation to this is available at the following link: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/tax-professionals/tdm/income-tax-capital-gains-tax-corporation-tax/part-05/05-02-13.pdf>

# GDPR/Security of Information and Data

# Staff must take appropriate measures to ensure that all data held by them is maintained confidentially and that no unauthorised person can access the information, e.g. a locked cabinet should be used where possible and computer files should be stored on a UL storage solution (e.g. Sharepoint) rather than locally on the laptop. Laptops should be encrypted. It is advised that staff do not hold confidential paper files wherever possible while working remotely. At all times staff should adhere to by the [University of Limerick Data Protection Policy](https://www.ul.ie/policy-hub/sites/policyhub/files/user_media/documents/policies/Data%20Protection%20Policy.pdf) and [GDPR](https://ulcampus.sharepoint.com/sites/CSCPLDataProtection) advice while working remotely.

# Staff must adhere to the [University of Limerick IT Security Policy](https://www.ul.ie/policy-hub/sites/policyhub/files/user_media/documents/IT%20Security%20Policy_0.pdf) and the [University of Limerick Acceptable Usage Policy](https://www.ul.ie/policy-hub/sites/policyhub/files/user_media/documents/University%20of%20Limerick%20Acceptable%20Usage%20Policy%20%282%29.pdf) and all related ITD procedures in relation to usage of University computer systems while working remotely.

# Health and Safety

# All staff have a responsibility to ensure that they do not place themselves or others at risk whilst working remotely. Where staff have concerns about their safety, health & welfare while working remotely, these concerns should be immediately raised with their Line Manager/Head of Department /School /Dean /Divisional Director as appropriate.

# The independent and confidential Employee Support Service remains available to staff at all times (see [www.ul.ie/hr/current-staff/employee-relations/employee-support-service](http://www.ul.ie/hr/current-staff/employee-relations/employee-support-service) for details).

# Document Control

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**Appendix 1:**

**Display Screen Equiptment (DSE): Remote Work Questionnaire**

To be completed by the Employee and returned to their line manager:

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| --- | --- |
| **Name of Employee:** |  |
| **Date:** |  |
| **Job Title:** |  |
| **Employee Job Description /key tasks to be completed:** | |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Question** | **YES/NO** | **Comments** |
| I have a keyboard, mouse and separate monitor connected to my laptop. |  |  |
| My workspace is set up to allow me to view the monitor at a height, which avoids bending of the neck for sustained periods? |  |  |
| I have access to other suitable accessories such as a laptop stand, which allows the laptop to be connected to the keyboard and positioned at a suitable height? |  |  |
| I take regular short breaks from sitting by standing up and moving about for 1-2 minutes every thirty minutes. |  |  |
| My workspace is set up to allow space in front of the keyboard to provide support for the hands and the arms. |  |  |
| My chair is adjustable in height. |  |  |
| My chair has a backrest that is adjustable in height and tilt. |  |  |
| My chair has back support (for example a backrest or cushion). |  |  |
| There is adequate lighting to allow comfortable working. |  |  |
| Am I experiencing any musculoskeletal discomfort? |  |  |

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| To Be Completed by Employee:  **Summary of Findings:** |
| To Be Completed by Line Manager:  **Corrective Actions Required:** |

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| **Line Manager Responsibilities:**  The Line Manager must ensure the employee’s workstation is adequately equipped. Staff may request a loan of office equipment from UL to support their home working arrangement, where such equipment is identified as necessary following completion of this questionnaire. The available equipment will in the norm be limited to a keyboard, mouse, monitor, laptop stand and office chair. Staff will be required to sign for receipt of the equipment and where equipment is not returned in an appropriate condition to UL the staff member will be liable for the replacement costs. Staff will be required to return the equipment to UL as soon as they return to the work environment even if this is on a phased return basis.  The Line Manager must inform the Health & Safety Department at UL if the employee is experiencing any musculoskeletal discomfort. |

Employee Signature: Date:

Line Manager Signature: Date: