

PRINCIPLES OF BLENDED AND REMOTE WORKING

This document outlines the University's approach to blended working and includes guidance for any colleagues who are working remotely.

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1 Purpose and scope

- 1.1 Our key priority is to provide an excellent on-campus experience for our students and to ensure the delivery of a high-quality learning experience, whilst seeking to foster some choice and flexibility for staff where operationally possible to do so.
- 1.2 The principles and arrangements for blended and remote working at the University are detailed below and will be subject to review as and when necessary. The principles are applicable to all members of staff employed by the University of Worcester and any of its subsidiaries. References to 'the University' in this document apply to the University of Worcester or its subsidiaries.
- 1.3 It is expected that all academic colleagues will attend campus for the majority of their working time to ensure that students benefit from in-person teaching and can easily access support and advice. All teaching should be delivered in-person and on campus, unless online teaching has been approved as part of the agreed course delivery by the Head of School/Institute and the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic. When delivering online teaching, colleagues should ensure that they have access to suitable equipment, meaning that it may be more appropriate to deliver online teaching on campus using the University's facilities.
- 1.4 In the event of exceptional circumstances where a colleague is unable to attend campus to deliver their teaching, they should seek approval from the Head of School/Institute to deliver the teaching from home, if this is appropriate.
- 1.5 For any other student-facing activities (e.g. tutorials, meetings with students etc.) it is expected that students should be given the choice of either in-person support or online if they would prefer.
- 1.6 Sections 2, 3 and 5 of this document are therefore only applicable for professional services staff, unless exceptions apply as detailed in 1.3 and 1.4. All staff (professional services and academic) should familiarise themselves with, and ensure they adhere to, the guidance contained in Section 4 on any occasion when they are working remotely.
- 1.7 This document is not contractual, and the University reserves the right to amend this document as necessary to meet any changing requirements or where it is appropriate.

2 Definition of blended working for professional services staff

- 2.1 Blended working is an informal arrangement which enables professional services colleagues to have a mix of campus-based working and working remotely.
- 2.2 The split between campus and remote working will depend on the role and the team, however all professional services colleagues should be working on campus more than they are off campus (i.e. with a minimum of 50-60% or more of their working time spent on campus).

- 2.3 The University campus remains the primary and contractual place of work for all employees (unless otherwise agreed on an individual basis and in exceptional circumstances).

3 Arrangements for blended working for professional staff

- 3.1 Professional services roles for which blended working is operationally feasible will be determined at departmental level and approved by the Director/Head of Professional Service. All decisions on whether blended working is suitable for an individual's role and, if so, what that arrangement involves, must be led by the business needs of the University.
- 3.2 Individuals in roles that are suitable for a mixture of campus and remote working will work the majority of the week (i.e. a minimum of 50-60% of an individual's normal working week) on campus and the remainder remotely.
- 3.3 Blended working is an informal arrangement which does not guarantee a permanent pattern or location of work as the work location and time will be determined by where and when a task or activity can most effectively be delivered. Colleagues may be required to alter their blending working arrangements at any time based on operational priorities and needs, for example they may be required to come onto campus at short notice to cover a colleague's absence.
- 3.4 Guaranteed working patterns can only be agreed if a formal flexible working request is submitted and agreed – thereby leading to a change in contract.
- 3.5 Blended working must not negatively impact on the service provided by any team and all departments are expected to have an appropriate level of on-site presence on each normal working day.
- 3.6 For colleagues with dependents, they should ensure that whilst they are working remotely, they have adequate care arrangements in place to enable them to undertake their duties effectively. In the situation where a colleague is seeking to agree a set pattern of work for caring responsibilities (e.g. if they require guaranteed days to collect their child from school), they should submit a formal flexible working request (see Section 5 for further details).
- 3.7 If a manager has a concern about an individual's level of performance or conduct whilst they are working from home, if there are concerns about the health, safety or wellbeing of an individual working remotely, or if operational needs change on campus, an individual could be required to amend or cease any blended working arrangement that is in place.
- 3.8 Any concerns or disputes regarding such arrangements should be managed locally and through the relevant management chain as necessary.

4 Practical considerations of remote working (applicable for all staff)

4.1 Health, safety and wellbeing when working from home

- 4.1.1 Individuals will be responsible for ensuring that they have a suitable space to work at home and sufficient broadband provision. Home working environments must be safe and secure. They should also be adequate in terms of space, lighting, layout, and conditions. They should be appropriate to the nature of the work being conducted and free of distractions.
- 4.1.2 The University will provide colleagues with IT equipment (laptop, headset and, if required, an additional screen) to allow them to work remotely wherever appropriate for them to do so. A Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Assessment should be carried out, and where any additional office equipment is identified as required, for example chairs, because there is a specific requirement due to a disability related reasonable adjustment, such equipment will also usually be provided, depending on the working arrangements for the role. Further information on the DSE Assessment and a Home Working Self-Assessment Checklist is available on the Health and Safety [portal](#).
- 4.1.3 In the event that the home working environment is deemed as unsuitable through the DSE assessment or if any issues arising from the assessment may result in the need for additional work equipment at a significant cost, an individual should work on campus.
- 4.1.4 There will be no reimbursement of any expenses for working from home such as broadband or heating costs. Individuals are unable to claim tax relief for working from home if their employer has premises from which they are can work from: [Claim tax relief for your job expenses: Working from home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).
- 4.1.5 Working at or from home more regularly may affect home and contents insurance policies, mortgage, leases, or rental agreements. It is the individual's responsibility to make any necessary arrangements with their providers. Colleagues are not required to take out insurance to cover any University equipment, as this is covered under the University's insurance policies. The University will not cover any additional costs related to insurance premiums.
- 4.1.6 If an individual is unwell when working remotely then they should continue to follow the normal sickness reporting procedures. They should keep their manager informed but if they are unfit to work this should normally mean they are unfit to work whether working on site or from home.

4.2 Data protection and compliance

- 4.2.1 Sensitive and confidential information can easily be compromised through unsafe working practices or insufficient home network security. Guidance on ensuring your working arrangements at home are secure can be found at <https://it.wp.worc.ac.uk/staff/work-from-anywhere/>.

4.2.2 All University equipment and information must be kept securely at all times. Confidential or sensitive paperwork should not be taken home unless it is vital to do so and where it is taken home it must be kept in a secure location (e.g. a lockable cupboard or drawer). When transporting equipment between campus and home, individuals must ensure that they never leave it unattended.

4.2.3 Individuals should also familiarise themselves with the University's Data Protection Policy and Information Security Policy which are located on the University's [website](#).

4.3 Working from outside of the UK

4.3.1 Any remote working should take place within the UK or there may be an impact on tax, healthcare and pension arrangements, as well as other legal considerations both for the individual and for the University. Requests to work wholly or partly outside of the UK will not be permitted other than in exceptional circumstances.

4.4 In the event that an employee makes a request to work overseas due to exceptional circumstances, the Head of School/Institute/Professional Service must take advice from HR and Finance so that the University can identify any additional employer costs that will be incurred (e.g. tax, social security, healthcare, pension) before a decision is made regarding the request. There may also be additional costs in relation to tax, social security, healthcare and pension which may fall on the employee. Staff should not commence working overseas without written approval from their Head of School/Institute/Professional Service and advice from the HR Business Partner.

5 Link between blended working and flexible working

5.1 Blended working is predominantly about where an individual works, not how much or how flexibly they work. The University's Flexible Working Policy outlines the statutory right to request changes relating to hours of work, the times when work is carried out and the work location. Given the support for blended working in professional services departments, the expectation is that the statutory right to request a change in work location will not need to be used regularly. If, however, an employee requires fixed or reduced hours or a fixed pattern of work in terms of location, then employees may, if they wish, submit a formal flexible working request which will be dealt with in accordance with the University's Flexible Working Policy.

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Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates	Flexible Working Policy
Policy/Policies Superseded by this document	Principles of Blended and Remote Working 2023, 2024.