People and Culture

Protocol: Working from Home for Managers/Heads and Staff specifically in relation to COVID-19

Introduction

The purpose of this Protocol is to provide information and guidance for Managers/Heads and UC staff in relation to temporary working from home arrangements.

This Protocol is subject to official NZ Government instructions and advice on the COVID-19 situation.

Scope

This Protocol covers all academic staff and those general staff whose duties include the types of work conducive to working from home.

General Protocol for Working from Home

Approval

All working from home arrangements will be considered and approved on a case-by-case basis by the staff member's Manager/Head. See the **Questions and Answers** section below for the considerations.

Contact Details

Staff working from home must ensure their contact details are up to date (e.g. location, home telephone number and mobile telephone number) in UCPeople Self-Service. Further, staff must ensure that their emergency contact details are also up to date and accurate.

Terms and Conditions

A working from home arrangement:

- does not change a staff member's terms and conditions of employment and does not change the application of the University's policies and procedures (including the Staff Code of Conduct);
- will not attract additional pay or other compensation;
- means the staff member will continue to undertake their normal work (including any agreed variation of duties);
- is subject to the staff being called into work (on campus), should the University consider it necessary to do so;
- is subject to the Manager/Head being able to review the effectiveness of, and/or cancel working from home arrangements at any time;

- does mean the University will provide essential equipment on a case by case basis, as approved by the Manager/Head. This provision will not normally extend to furniture, or new or additional IT equipment for the purposes of working from home, and staff will be required to use the usual University mobile IT equipment (as approved and paid for by the staff member's work unit) and portable office supplies.

*Note that specifically for the COVID-19 situation, furniture may be offered if needed and logistically possible – please talk to your Manager/Head about this.

Equipment and Costs	All equipment provided for work purposes (e.g. desktop or laptop computer, tablet, mobile phone, etc) remains the property of the University.
	Home data usage broadband thresholds are increasingly becoming higher or unlimited; therefore the University usually does not subsidise or reimburse staff for home-based data use.
	Staff should talk to their Manager/Head if they have any concerns about costs.
Communication	Staff must be available to their Manager/Head, teams and students during regular working hours.
	Staff are expected to log in to Skype for Business and update their availability status regularly.
	Staff must also be available at the workplace (on campus) if necessary.
	Managers/Heads should maintain regular contact (i.e. every couple days) with staff to ensure the home arrangement is effective and safe.
	Staff should use other technology tools such as video conferencing and teleconferencing (and not just email) to ensure sufficient connection and guidance. Communications should primarily occur over UC approved channels and platforms.
Workspace and Health and Safety	Work from home must be in a space appropriate to the nature of the work and meet health and safety requirements given the home working environment is subject to the same health and safety legislation as the University campus.
	In agreeing to a work from home arrangement, the staff member also agrees to take responsibility for contributing to the maintenance of a healthy and safe work environment, and, if necessary, to request and/or allow the University to assist by conducting a health and safety assessment of the work environment at home.
	Staff should ensure they take breaks, both from the computer and to have meals. Working on the University's premises can often require a certain amount of energy, moving between rooms, liaising with others, walking up and down stairs and of course the journey to and from work, so staff should attempt to replicate this amount of activity in a working from home arrangement.
	Given the current circumstances with COVID-19 and recommendation around physical distancing, staff are strongly advised not to meet face to face with colleagues in their homes or other off campus venues.

Most work undertaken at home will be on a computer. Please complete the Online Ergonomic Self-Assessment. If specific ergonomic equipment is required, the University will do its best to provide it, however this is subject to availability and practicality.

Staff should ensure they are mindful about their mental health when working from home. Establishing a workspace, a daily work routine, setting boundaries and phone or video chatting with colleagues can help. Mental health resources and tips can be found at UC & Me.

If a staff member has an accident or "near miss" they should follow the normal health and safety reporting procedures to Report an Event.

For the avoidance of doubt, staff are prohibited from taking hazardous substances (solvents, chemicals, biological agents, samples, etc) from the workplace to home or another work location.

Privacy and IT Security

Staff working from home must have read and comply with the University's IT policies.

Staff must be mindful of safeguarding confidential information. When not in use, documents should be placed in folders and put away so that they cannot be easily viewed by others.

Staff should minimise the use of paper at home. Staff are not permitted to put work-related confidential information into their home recycling and rubbish bins.

If the machine in use is the staff member's, then the responsibility of installing an up-to-date virus detection programme lies with the staff member.

Also, while the University will provide maintenance for University technology used for working from home, it is not able to do so for any equipment owned by the staff member.

Further Information

If staff have any questions or are unsure of how to proceed in respect of any particular matter, they should contact their People and Culture Business Partner or their Manager/Head.

Considerations for Managers/Heads

Effective remote working is about maintaining connections, establishing a framework for mutual support and being intentional about where, when and how work is performed. Staff will be looking to you for leadership and it is important to move quickly on decisions, empower your team and communicate every step of the way.

This section provides a quick checklist for Managers/Heads:

- Ensure staff have updated their contact details and emergency contact details in UCPeople Self-Service

- Maintain a list of all UC equipment that employees require or have taken home, record asset tags on equipment such as laptops

- Gain an understanding of each staff member's family needs, be compassionate and flexible with accommodations

- Establish working hours with each staff member and diarise regular check-ins (at least every couple days) to provide guidance, expectations and connection

- Don't just rely on email communication, try to connect regularly by phone and video

- Confirm with staff that their intended remote workspace and set up are appropriate according to health and safety requirements including suitable ergonomics, lighting and electrical safety, free from hazards and emergency procedures in place

- Resolve any issues that are raised in relation to remote working needs

- Empower your team to shape how their remote working environment is established and can be regularly improved as issues and challenges come up

- Ensure staff are managing stress and anxiety and are aware of the mental health resources available at UC & Me.

Tips and Best Practices for Staff

Working from home requires staff and their Managers/Heads to work in a different way, communicate closely and connect regularly.

This section provides some tips and best practices for staff:

- Ensure you have updated your contact details and emergency contact details in UCPeople Self-Service

- Designate a suitable environment for your work and ensure you have the appropriate computer equipment, network connection, phone and electronic or paper files you need for your work

- Let your Manager/Head know about any additional resources you might need

- Set clear expectations with the people around you to help avoid interruptions during your working hours and plan for how you will manage distractions when they happen

- Create a routine around your designated space and working hours, including time for meals or breaks. Ensure your Manager/Head and team members are aware of your routine

- Maintain regular contact with your Manager/Head. Be as responsive as you can to their communications and be deliberate about providing them with updates on your work, as appropriate.

- Let your Manager/Head know about anything that impacts your work schedule (e.g. if you are sick and need to use sick leave, if you need to be away to attend an appointment, etc)

- Pencil in calls to catch up with your team members and colleagues

- Remember your team members and colleagues are there to support you and they will need your support too

- Make sure you have enough light to work without straining your eyes and get up to move around and stretch to avoid sitting for extended hours or repeating motions

- Install and set up all your furniture securely and adjust you work station properly so that you are comfortable and prevent strain or injury. Complete the online ergonomic self-assessment.

- Arrange electrical cords carefully so that they are not a tripping hazard, in a safe outlet that is not overloaded

- Make sure your home has clear and unobstructed hallways, walkways, stairs and exits

- Ensure your smoke detector is working, that you have appropriate ventilation in your workspace and keep items away from any heat sources

- Have first aid supplies on hand, communicate any safety concerns or injuries to your Manager/Head

- Importantly, ensure you are looking after your mental health and raise any issues with your Manager/Head. See UC & Me for support information.

Common Questions and Answers*

How do I know if I can work from home?	Talk to your Manager/Head to see if working from home is possible. The Manager or Head determines: • If it is practical given the nature of the staff member's job duties; • The level of on-campus service required to limit service disruptions; and • If the University has the technology and equipment to enable the staff member to work from home effectively and safely. Managers and Heads will work with staff members to determine if and how they can work from home.
Can staff members work flexible hours when working from home?	Yes. There is flexibility for a staff member's hours of work. Upon mutual agreement between a Manager/Head and the staff member, the staff member may be allowed to adjust their start and stop times throughout the day, to facilitate working from home, where operationally possible. For example, staff member who normally works 8am to 4pm may work sporadically throughout the day, before 8am and after 5pm to balance childcare and get their contractual hours done. Staff members must continue to perform their usual number of hours. Arrangements must be approved by the Manager/Head and meet operational needs. Staff will not be paid overtime or premiums on these flexible hours.
I have specialised equipment in my office. Can I take it home?	Staff must consult with their Manager/Head if they have specific equipment in their office that they need when working from home. Decisions on equipment will be made on a case-by-case basis. The goal is to ensure the health and safety of staff while minimising cost.

*As more questions arise, we will endeavour to update this section. However, please contact your People and Culture Business Partner if you have any questions in the meantime.