

Telecommuting/Remote Work Guide for Staff and Supervisors

University of Hartford

2021

Objective

The University of Hartford recognizes that, for a variety of reasons, our employees may seek flexibility in terms of where they work. Telecommuting allows employees to work at home, or another off-site location for all, or part, of their workweek or work schedule. Benefits of telecommuting for employees may include reduced commuting expenses, greater flexibility, and a better work-life balance. The University may benefit from a decrease in energy consumption, more available office space, increased performance and productivity, and greater employee satisfaction.

At the same time, the University prides itself on creating a personalized and robust on-campus experience for its students—much of which involves face-to-face interaction with faculty and staff. For this reason, employees are generally required to be on site. However, depending on the job position and employee, the University may consider telecommuting to be a viable, flexible work option. Telecommuting is not an entitlement, nor is it part of the benefits offered by the University—it in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment with the University. By the very nature of the University's student-centered approach, many positions will simply not be conducive to telecommuting.

This policy is intended to provide a general framework for telecommuting arrangements. The policy is not intended to address the individual circumstances of each employee, nor is it intended to permit work arrangements that are inconsistent with the University's policies and business needs. This policy applies to employees offered the option to telecommute. This policy does not apply to requests for reasonable accommodations arising from a disability or other extraordinary circumstances such as incidents of inclement weather.

Procedure

University of Hartford staff members who wish to utilize the opportunity to telecommute should inquire about establishing an arrangement with their supervisor, dean, or department head. A Flexible Work Schedule Form (see page 13) must be completed and approved by the employee's supervisor, then forwarded to HRD for final approval.

Telecommuting arrangements may be discontinued at will and at any time at the request of the employee or the University. The employee or the University shall make every effort to provide written notice 30 days in advance of such a change. However, there may be instances when it is not possible, or practicable, to provide a 30-day notice. In this situation, the employee or the University should provide as much notice as possible.

Flexible telecommuting arrangements must be reviewed by the staff member, supervisor, and HRD every 6 months to ensure that business needs are being met, that the arrangement continues to comply with this policy, and that it aligns with the Flexible Work Schedule process. Under limited circumstances, a position or positions may be identified as a remote work within the job description. These positions will not require flexible work schedule arrangements.

Eligibility

Staff requesting formal telecommuting arrangements must be employed at the University for a minimum of 90 consecutive days and have a satisfactory performance review on file with HRD.

Before entering into any telecommuting arrangement, the employee and supervisor, with the assistance of HRD, will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement, reviewing the following areas:

- Employee Suitability—The employee and supervisor will assess the needs and work habits of the employee and the supervisor, utilizing the Readiness Assessments in this policy. These assessments will help to determine appropriateness for telecommuting arrangements.
- Job Responsibilities—The employee and supervisor will discuss job responsibilities and if the duties are appropriate for telecommuting work.
- Equipment needs, workspace design considerations, and scheduling issues should be discussed as well as physical workspace needs and appropriate locations for telecommuting work.
- Taxes and other legal implications—The employee should consult a tax advisor to determine if there are any tax or legal implications under IRS, state or local government laws, and/or restrictions of working out of a home-based office. Responsibility for fulfilling all tax/legal obligations rests solely with the employee.
- Privacy and regulatory considerations on data protection and asset preservation.

Employees with approved telecommuting arrangements are expected to adhere to all University policies and procedures and comply with all departmental processes. Employees are expected to work agreed-upon hours and to record time worked (if hourly/non-exempt) in accordance with Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations and University policy. Failure to adhere to all agreed-upon arrangements or timely completion of work assignments may result in termination of the telecommuting arrangement.

Deans, department heads, and supervisors should also evaluate business needs to ensure an appropriate level of staffing is maintained within the department. While a specific minimum or maximum number of employees or percentage of required on-site staff will not be identified in this policy, it is important to understand that a “one-size-fits-all” plan will not work for all departments. Supervisors will be responsible for ensuring continuity of on-site business processes understanding that the positive and effective execution of these duties are instrumental to the education of the University’s students.

Equipment

Employees will need to work with their individual department for equipment and software that is deemed necessary (i.e. University issued laptop and headset, etc.) to enable employees to work remotely. University-owned resources must be used only for University business purposes when working remotely. The employee is responsible for ensuring all items are properly used and maintained. In the unforeseen event where the employee uses personal property to complete University work, the University assumes no responsibility for any damage to, wear, or loss of such property.

Security

Consistent with the University's expectations of information security for employees working on campus, telecommuting employees will be expected to ensure the protection of University information accessible from their home office. This includes, but is not limited to, securing files, cabinets, desks, and computers, as well as regular password maintenance and taking other measures appropriate for the job and environment.

Safety

Employees are expected to maintain their home workspace in a safe manner, free from safety hazards. Injuries sustained by employees in a home office location and in conjunction with their regular work duties are normally covered by the University's workers compensation policy. Telecommuting employees are responsible for notifying their supervisor of any such injury in a timely manner. Supervisors must report all injuries to HRD. The employee is liable for any injury sustained by visitors to their home worksite.

Telecommuting is not designed to be a replacement for management of personal, non-work-related issues or responsibilities. Although an individual employee's schedule may be modified to accommodate personal needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain dedicated to job performance and meeting business needs and deliverables.

Hours Worked

Telecommuting employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the FLSA will be required to accurately record all hours using the University's timekeeping system in the Employee Self Service Center (ESS). Failure to comply with this requirement may result in immediate termination of the telecommuting arrangement and/or discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

Temporary arrangements may be approved for such circumstances including, but not limited to, inclement weather, special projects, or other travel. These arrangements may be approved on an as-needed basis only, with no expectation of an ongoing telecommuting arrangement.

Staff Toolkits: The purpose of this guide is to provide employees and supervisors with tools and resources for working remotely. In this guide, you will find:

Readiness Assessments: This information will help you determine if an employee is ready to work remotely. Understanding readiness will assist with conversations with supervisors, colleagues, and other constituents. For supervisors, the readiness assessment will help you understand your capability to successfully manage employees who are working remotely.

Remote Work Best Practices and Principles: As a community, we will abide by these best practices and principles consistent with our mission and vision for serving students.

Role of Employees and Supervisors: Employees and supervisors have shared responsibilities to ensure ongoing business continuity and the successful delivery of customer and student services in the remote environment.

Technology Needs and Expectations: This section outlines the tools and technologies you may need to explore to ensure that you are ready to work remotely.

Readiness Assessment for Staff

Are you ready to work remotely?

Please read each statement. If the statement is true for your key job responsibilities, check the box. This checklist should be used as a resource to guide conversations with your supervisor about whether and how you can work remotely.

- My job duties and responsibilities can be (or are) structured so tasks can be completed remotely.
- My assignments or duties can be delivered or completed electronically.
- Proper security measures are in place to ensure data confidentiality and integrity.
- A remote work arrangement will not impact my ability to maintain my performance.
- Problems can be solved and resolved independently.
- I am prepared to meet the level of availability and responsiveness required to meet the needs of my department and the University.
- I am flexible and adaptable, I understand and can use technology to support remote work.
- I communicate well with my coworkers and supervisor(s) and keep them informed.
- I am organized and manage my time well.
- I work well with limited or no supervision.
- I consistently complete work assignments and meet deadlines.
- I understand the results and deliverables that must be accomplished.
- I regularly seek feedback on my performance.

The more boxes you have checked, the more prepared you are to potentially work remotely. A very low number of checks should encourage you to consider if working remotely is possible or the right fit for you. Please discuss this list with your supervisor.

Readiness Assessment for Supervisors of Staff

Are you ready to lead remotely?

Please read each statement. If the statement is true for you as a leader, check the box. This assessment is meant only as a guide for you to review your ability to lead remotely and have conversations with your employees about how you can best lead remotely.

- I listen and communicate well with my staff.
- My staff know they can contact me for any question.
- I have a good understanding of the key responsibilities for each staff member who I supervise.
- My expectations of my staff for their performance objectives and results are clearly defined and understood.
- I understand what is being said by members of my staff.
- I encourage new ideas from my staff.
- I give credit to others for their ideas and contributions.
- I model the behavior that I seek from the employees I supervise.
- I regularly give constructive feedback in a timely manner, using specific examples.
- I keep my eye on the big picture and create unit and individual goals that relate to those of the University.
- I meet with employees regularly to review progress toward goals and evaluate their performance.
- I know how to manage conflicts successfully.
- I am flexible and adaptable.
- I can work with others who work outside of a traditional work schedule to achieve their goals and objectives.

The more checks you have, the more ready you are to lead remote employees. Reflect on the statements that you did not check and consider a conversation with your own supervisor on how you can strengthen these skills.

Remote Work: Best Practices and Principles

1. Individual Factors for Successful Remote Work: Remote work is most successful when employees:

- Have demonstrated the ability to follow University policies and procedures
- Can manage time and workload
- Have technological proficiency
- Have clear communication skills
- Have a high level of self-management and self-discipline
- Have the desire and flexibility to work independently
- Are results oriented and driven
- Are good problem solvers
- Are dependable
- Have a strong performance record

2. Institutional Factors for Successful Remote Work: Remote work is most successful when:

- There are clear expectations about how and when work is completed
- Tasks can be independently completed
- Employees have appropriate technological solutions to complete work
- There is a supportive culture from supervisors
- There is transparency and communication among team members
- There is opportunity for socialization and mentorship

3. Recommendations for successful remote work (the 7 Cs)

1. **Coordination of tasks:** you must determine what job functions lend themselves to remote work. The ability to identify and coordinate work and tasks that are best suited for remote work is a key to success.
2. **Comfort with technology:** Supervisors need to make clear what technology solutions are needed and employees must make sure that they are comfortable with those technologies.
3. **Conflicts with remote work:** Employees are responsible for ensuring that non-work events (e.g., family demands, personal responsibilities) do not interfere with remote work. Make sure that you have a comfortable and quiet space to work to reduce distractions.
4. **Cohesion, support, and trust:** Supervisors should provide a common understanding with employees about remote work arrangements. It is

important to convey the vision surrounding remote work and the positive benefits. Find opportunities to informally build trust and cohesion within your staff through meetings, conversations, and check-ins.

5. **Calendars, schedule, and structure:** Employees who have more control over their work schedule have less conflict, greater job satisfaction, and higher levels of well-being. However, not all jobs are conducive to flexible work. Therefore, it is critical that supervisor and staff communicate about performance and scheduling expectations. Just because you are working remotely does not mean that you have a flexible work arrangement.
6. **Clear objectives:** Supervisors must be clear about performance expectations and allocation of responsibility while working remotely. Employees should meet their goals by ethical means in a timely fashion without disturbing the workflow of others.
7. **Climate and culture:** Remote work will promote a climate of commitment and trust. Be sure to regularly check in with staff and management about how things are going and what you need to be successful.

Shared Responsibilities of Supervisors and Employees During Remote Work Arrangements

As an employee engaging in remote work, you should commit to the following:

- ✓ Committing to a remote routine with your supervisor
- ✓ Creating a productive work environment in your workspace
- ✓ Communicating frequently with your supervisor and team
- ✓ Completing all of your assigned and required work tasks
- ✓ Avoiding unproductive conflict with team members and supervisors
- ✓ Being respectful of team members in all virtual modalities (video chat, email, text, call)
- ✓ Switching off at the end of the day and engaging in a self-care routine
- ✓ Striving for excellence

As a supervisor leading a remote team, you should commit to the following:

- ✓ Establishing and maintaining personal connections
- ✓ Being responsive and available through email, phone, and face-to-face meetings
- ✓ Engaging in regular check-ins with your staff
- ✓ Keeping remote team members involved
- ✓ Making performance, task, and scheduling expectations clear to staff
- ✓ Routinely checking in on staff to ensure work is getting completed
- ✓ Troubleshooting issues with your team
- ✓ Evaluating staff and providing performance feedback as needed
- ✓ Switching off at the end of the day and engaging in a self-care routine
- ✓ Striving for excellence

Do you have the necessary tools to work remotely?

To successfully accomplish your tasks and duties remotely, do you have all the tools available to you? Below is a general checklist of tools you may want to ensure you have access to prior to a telecommuting arrangement:

- Email—Do you have access remotely to read and respond to emails throughout the day. Will you be accessing emails via a remote desktop connection, via your phone or through HawkMail?
- Virtual Private Network (VPN)—You should ensure your laptop is equipped with and through the University’s VPN. Without this access, you will not be able to remote to your desktop and access your online files. See page below to set up your VPN.
- Job-specific databases—Banner, Raisers Edge, and Compass are just a few. Do you know how to access them remotely? Are your passwords to log in to various systems you utilize secured?
- Skype, Webex, Zoom, Teams—Which platform will you use to keep in communication with your team? What will be the expectation for being “on video”?
- Keep your information and the University’s information secure. See below for tips from ITS on securing data.
- Do you know who to contact for assistance with technology issues? ITS HelpDesk (helpdesk@hartford.edu or 860.768.4357).

Connect to campus with the Virtual Private Network

Connecting to the University of Hartford’s network from home increases the risk of data exposure or password compromise because you must use networks that are not controlled by the University. To minimize these risks, you should use the campus Virtual Private Network (VPN) when working with sensitive University data. This will ensure that everything you do is encrypted as it goes over the network. VPN protects your data from electronic eavesdropping and may be required to connect to some department and central resources from off campus. To find out how to install and use, see the [VPN Install Guide Available](#).

Secure your home wireless network

Home wireless networks are easy to set up and extremely convenient to use. However, an insecure wireless environment poses several risks that need to be addressed:

- Anyone near your home can use your internet connection.
- Anyone near your home may be able to access your computer.
- Anything sent over the wireless connection could be hacked or stolen.

The manuals that came with your wireless router should provide detailed information on how to secure your home wireless network. If you no longer have the manual, use the brand name and model type to search for an electronic copy online.

Keep your computer secure

If you are working on a computer that is not University owned, make sure that your operating system and applications are updated regularly. In addition, activate your computer's firewall protection and antivirus software. If you're working on University business on a computer at home, regardless of whether the computer is owned by you or the University, you **must** take measures to secure your computer and mobile devices.

Secure Your personally owned device

If you cannot use a University-owned device when working at home, however, please follow the steps outlined below to make sure you are minimizing risk to the University while working remotely.

Use a separate login account

If other members of your household use the same computer, create a separate login account for your University work and data, with a strong password that only you know. Using a separate login ensures other users on your computer cannot view or access your documents.

Encrypt all confidential data

If you have confidential data on a computer that is located at home, or that comes home with you, that data must be encrypted. Check with IT support staff to find out what encryption solutions are used in your department.

FLEXIBLE or REMOTE WORK SCHEDULE PROPOSAL

Employee Name:	Supervisor Name:
Job Title:	Date Submitted:
Department:	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt
UHart ID:	Hours/Week: <input type="checkbox"/> 35 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 40 hours

PART I: FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULE REQUESTED

- Remote/Telework Schedule
- Variable Hour Work Schedule
- Continuation of Current Flexible or Remote Work Schedule (*skip to Part IV*)

PART II: PROPOSED SCHEDULE

Please define the requested work schedule (e.g., 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. remote; 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. campus)

Monday: _____

Tuesday: _____

Wednesday: _____

Thursday: _____

Friday: _____

Duration of Requested Schedule (*minimum 2 months, maximum 6 months*): _____

If applicable, please indicate the duration of your proposed unpaid meal break: ___ 30 minutes ___ 1 hour

PART III: WORK ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

How will this proposed flexible work schedule sustain or enhance my ability to get my job done?

PART IV: EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE

I have read and understand the flexible work schedule policy and agree to the terms and conditions set forth in that policy. I understand that it is my responsibility to make my flexible work schedule a success and that my supervisor and/or the University of Hartford have the right to discontinue my flexible work schedule at any time by providing a minimum of a two-week notice.

_____ Employee Signature

_____ Date

