

Flexible Work Arrangements - Working from Home Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose / Objectives

(1) This procedure outlines the process regarding a request to work from home and aims to ensure that the University meets its occupational health and safety obligations to all staff participating in working from home arrangements.

(2) It also implements the University's [Employee Wellbeing - Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure](#) and should be read in conjunction with that Policy.

Section 2 - Scope / Application

(3) Working from home refers to an arrangement by which a staff member regularly and frequently carries out the duties of his or her position at home.

(4) Working from home on an occasional or ad hoc basis is not regulated by this procedure and does not require completion of the formal documentation attached to this procedure.

(5) However, delegated managers and supervisors should consider and approve ad hoc or occasional working from home arrangements at a local level and ensure that work is undertaken in a safe and healthy manner.

(6) All staff are eligible to apply for a working from home arrangement.

Section 3 - Definitions

(7) Nil

Section 4 - Policy Statement

(8) Nil

Section 5 - Procedures

Part A - Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Manager / Supervisor	Implement the University's Employee Wellbeing - Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure and the applicable procedure in the manner outlined;. Assess, in consultation with the staff member, the application and either approve or not approve applications to work from home; Consult with People and Culture prior to making decisions on applications to work from home.

Roles	Responsibilities
Staff	Comply with the University's Employee Wellbeing - Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure and applicable procedure; Discuss with manager/supervisor reasons, timeframes and possible arrangements for working from home prior to lodging an application; Formally apply for working from home consideration using the HR44 form; Notify supervisor/manager of any changes in circumstances which may affect the working from home arrangement including any increase in risk to their own health and safety; Re-apply at least 4 weeks prior to the expiry of an agreement when extension of agreement is warranted.

Part B - General

(9) All requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the [Flexible Work Arrangement Policy](#), the [Health and Safety Policy](#) and this procedure.

Part C - Application Process

Staff Request

(10) The nature of some work is more suitable or appropriate to a working from home arrangement than others. Normally, a working from home arrangement will be more suitable where:

- a. the work requires a broad level of supervision;
- b. the work requires intermittent or a low level of face-to-face team, colleague, peer, student or other contact;
- c. the work requires minimal use of University records/files (particularly where the contents of files are sensitive, confidential, difficult to replace or require dual access) and other resources located in the University ;
- d. the work is project-based or the work outcomes are easily identifiable and measurable; and
- e. necessary arrangements can be made to maintain confidentiality of information.

(11) Before putting forward a request staff should consider issues such as:

- a. any interruption to client service, supervision or other communications;
- b. cost implications;
- c. how/when you will be able to be contacted when working from home;
- d. the appropriateness of the home environment (including the physical workspace, noise and interruptions, and access to relevant people, documents and equipment);
- e. supervision of any reporting staff;
- f. the regularity and duration of the arrangement (for example, will it be one day per week, one day per fortnight, four hours every Friday afternoon); and
- g. the conditions under which a less regular arrangement would take effect (for example, during school holidays).

(12) Where practicable, a request to regularly work from home should be discussed verbally between the staff member and the relevant supervisor/manager in the first instance.

(13) A subsequent formal request should be made in advance in writing using the 'Employee Variation Request' (HR44).

(14) Applications to work from home must be made in writing on the 'HR44' to the appropriate manager/supervisor outlining the following details:

- a. proposed days, dates and/or hours of the home-based work arrangement (where relevant);
- b. anticipated commencement date, review date and finish date;
- c. why the staff member wishes to work from home for the proposed hours or days, including sufficient relevant

detail for the supervisor to adequately consider the request; and

- d. the proposed tasks or type of work that will be undertaken while working from home and how the staff member will maintain adequate and regular contact with their normal work site and supervisor.

(15) An application to initiate, renew or continue a working from home arrangement should be made at least 4 weeks prior to the proposed start date or expiration date of the current arrangement.

Consideration of Request

(16) Applications for a work from home arrangement should be considered and determined by a delegated officer in accordance with the [Delegations and Authorisations Policy](#). The decision must be made in accordance with the University's [Employee Wellbeing - Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure](#), the [Health and Safety Policy](#) and this procedure.

(17) Working from home is normally approved for an extended period (12 months) at a time, and shall be reviewed annually at least one month prior to the date of expiry. Alternatively, it may be approved for a 3-month trial period to provide both parties an opportunity to assess the suitability of the arrangement.

(18) Other factors to be considered during the consideration stage include those listed below.

Operational Requirements

(19) A working from home arrangement should not unreasonably interfere with the delivery of services to University clients (including students) or with other operational requirements.

Cost Implications

(20) Any relevant cost implications must be discussed during the approval process and may include those related to the staff member working in the home-based work site, where appropriate.

(21) While the University would not normally meet the costs associated with a home based work site, on a case-by-case basis and appropriate to the circumstances, reasonable cost implications should be thoroughly examined and where possible, agreed before approval and commencement.

The Home Environment

(22) The home environment must be appropriate to the work being conducted in both its physical features (e.g. desk, chair, computer) and environmental conditions (e.g. air flow, noise, lighting etc.). This is important in relation to the staff member's working conditions as well as the service provided to clients who may contact the staff member while they are working from home (e.g. any noise or interruption that may affect the quality of phone conversation).

(23) Working in the home must not create an increased risk of physical or psychological injury in comparison to working at a University provided workplace.

Communication and Supervision

(24) A working from home arrangement must not affect the rights of other staff, in particular those who report directly to the staff member requesting to work from home.

(25) A working from home arrangement must be able to incorporate appropriate conditions for supervision and performance discussion.

(26) Other staff must be provided with clear information about when and how they can contact the staff member who is working from home. This may involve providing some explanation as to the purpose of the arrangement, while

ensuring privacy and confidentiality is maintained in the circumstances.

Reasonable Adjustment/s and Accommodation

(27) In accordance with the [Employee Wellbeing - Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure](#), applications to work from home must give due consideration to the University's obligations under anti-discrimination legislation and employment law to provide reasonable accommodation (for example of carers/parents) to ensure that staff can fully participate in working life.

(28) However, it is important to note that working from home is not suitable as a substitute for normal and regular child or elder care arrangements.

(29) Where University work is to be undertaken at home in conjunction with primary caring and domestic responsibilities, managers and supervisors may request clarification of appropriate care arrangements in order to ensure that University work can be effectively completed at home.

Declining a request

(30) Where a request is not granted, supervisors/managers should seek advice from People and Culture.

(31) The decision not to approve the request should be discussed verbally with the employee in the first instance. Wherever possible, alternatives should be considered before a final decision is made.

(32) The final decision must be communicated to the staff member in writing within 21 days of receiving the request. The decision must clearly set out the reasonable business grounds upon which the decision was made.

(33) A copy of this documentation should also be placed on the employee's personnel file. All employment records should be retained in accordance with the University's [Records Management Policy](#).

Approving a Request - People and Culture Processing

(34) The decision must be communicated to the employee in writing no later than 21 days following receipt of the application.

(35) The working-from home arrangement must be documented using the 'HR44 Employee Variation Request' and forwarded to People and Culture for processing. The written agreement must include:

- a. commencement and end date of the arrangement;
- b. number of days/hours per week at the home work site;
- c. attendance requirement details at the University workplace;
- d. completed and approved Home Office OHS Checklist;
- e. completed and approved [Computer Workstation Self Assessment Worksheet](#) (signed by the employee);
- f. list of equipment specifying items supplied by the Department and items to be supplied by the staff member;
- g. copy of the list of any University equipment to be taken off University premises; and
- h. other relevant details (ie special arrangements relating to home-based work signed by staff and supervisor).

Review of the Arrangement

(36) The home-based work arrangement may be reviewed and evaluated at any time if relevant circumstances change or the arrangement is not effective.

(37) The agreement may be varied or replaced by another written agreement between the University and the staff member.

(38) A review regarding the [Computer Workstation Self Assessment Worksheet](#) and the Home Office OHS Checklist documentation is required when relevant circumstances change, including a change to the nature of the work, the location of the home based workplace or the purchase of new equipment. It must be initiated by the staff member or the manager/supervisor and new documentation should be completed and submitted.

(39) In circumstances where a staff member working from home moves house or relocates to a new position, a review should be undertaken to ensure OHS compliance and development of a new agreement suitable to the circumstances.

Termination of the Agreement

(40) The University and staff member may discontinue the working-from-home arrangement at any time by mutual agreement. A relevant and suitable notice and transition period is required, which would normally not be less than 2 weeks.

(41) Should the staff member or supervisor wish to terminate the working from home arrangement, agreement should be sought, including provision of a clear rationale and a similar period of notice given. Should the University or staff member have doubts regarding the feasibility of the working from home arrangement, a trial period initially (eg. 3 months) may be considered.

Illness

(42) The staff member must notify the supervisor if she/he is ill and unable to perform the duties of the position, and must follow normal procedures in relation to sick/carers leave.

Work Related Expenses

(43) The work unit budget will not normally meet the costs of home based utilities such as electricity, water or gas, internet service provider or phone provider.

(44) The work unit may reimburse the cost of telephone calls made in relation to the work undertaken at home. This should be discussed and agreed at the approval stage, particularly where the staff member does not have access to a University sponsored mobile phone.

(45) A record detailing local, mobile, STD and international calls must be maintained by the staff member. The record must include date, telephone number, cost, person telephoned and reason for the call.

(46) The work unit would not normally cover internet access costs, phone service costs or any other utility to fulfill the requirements of the position.

(47) The work unit may provide limited consumables necessary in order to fulfill the work undertaken at home and these details should be discussed and agreed during the approval phase.

Part D - Health, Safety and Wellbeing while working at home

(48) A designated area in the home should be established as the Workplace.

(49) An [Computer Workstation Self Assessment Worksheet](#) and an Home Office OHS Checklist must be completed by the staff member and assessed by the supervisor/manager, in consultation with the OHS team where necessary, as satisfactory before commencement of work.

(50) Where changes are made to the Workplace, the nature of the work or the workstation, the staff member must complete a new [Computer Workstation Self Assessment Worksheet](#) and Home Office OHS Checklist and provide a new photo.

(51) The staff member must notify their supervisor of any health and safety related issues and submit their signed checklist and worksheet for approval.

University/WorkSafe Access

(52) Under specific circumstances, the University may require access to the home work site. Access times will be determined in consultation with the staff member. Reasons for requiring access may include:

- a. to service equipment
- b. to ensure compliance with University policy and procedures.

(53) Alternatively, the staff member may be required to bring relevant equipment to the University for maintenance, repair or update.

(54) Once a home-based workplace is established and approval to work from home is provided, WorkSafe has the same right to enter and inspect the home-based workplace as any other University workplace.

Purchase of Equipment

(55) The University would not normally cover the cost of equipment to work from home.

(56) If the business unit approves the provision of relevant equipment, a list of that University equipment must be developed in order to detail what is required to carry out the working from home arrangement. The list should detail the equipment that will be provided by the University and that supplied by the staff member.

(57) Staff members are subject to all University policies in regard to the use of University owned/leased equipment.

Maintenance of Equipment and University Property

(58) The cost of maintenance of equipment owned or leased by the University is the responsibility of the work unit.

(59) The work unit may request that faulty equipment be returned to the University for servicing.

(60) The work unit may reimburse reasonable maintenance costs of equipment owned by the staff member, proportionate to the percentage of time the equipment is used for work purposes and where the costs are incurred as a direct result of University work.

(61) Where the equipment is used for work purposes, the staff member is responsible for complying with standard University ITS practices, such as ensuring up to date anti-virus software is maintained on computer equipment.

(62) In general terms, staff should only take University property home where relevant to the performance of their work.

Return of Equipment

(63) Upon the termination of the working from home arrangement, any equipment owned by the University must be returned within 14 working days. All equipment is to be returned in reasonable condition.

Insurance

(64) It is the staff member's responsibility to take out insurance for their own equipment should the staff member elect to do so.

(65) The University will ensure, wherever possible, that the home-based workplace conforms to acceptable

Occupational Health and Safety standards and that the staff member working from home is aware of the need to maintain a safe working environment.

(66) The relevant supervisor/manager managing the request to work from home should ensure the following steps occur regarding health and safety obligations:

- a. that copies of the [Health and Safety Policy](#) are provided and discussed with the employee;
- b. that a Worksafe 'If you are Injured' poster is provided to the employee;
- c. that a copy of the [Employee Wellbeing - Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure](#) is provided to the employee;
- d. that suitable equipment is available for the employee to effectively work from home;
- e. that the employee is provided with the [Computer Workstation Self Assessment Worksheet](#) and the Home Office OHS Checklist;
- f. that the checklist is completed regularly to enable the employee to carry out a risk assessment of the home-based work area;
- g. that all work related incidents that occur as part of home-based work are reported and investigated, and appropriate steps are taken to prevent a recurrence;
- h. that all health and safety issues are resolved; and
- i. that ownership of furniture and equipment, where relevant, remains with the University.

Occupational Health and Safety Compliance and Workcover

(67) Compliance with University OHS policies is required at all times.

(68) The staff member must notify the University of any accident, injury or near miss as a result of carrying out duties necessary to fulfill the requirements of the position.

(69) Injuries or illness attributed to the work being conducted must be reported immediately to the supervisor and entered into the VU OHS Incident Recording System, which is available from the People and Culture intranet site.

(70) A staff member who is working from home under an approved working from home arrangement will be covered by the University's WorkCover insurance if performing University work in accordance with the working from home arrangement in his/her home-office.

Commencement

(71) A working from home arrangement can commence at a mutually agreed time between the staff member and their supervisor/manager, on the condition that sufficient notice or consultation has been provided to satisfy the requirements outlined and the required documentation has been submitted to People and Culture for processing.

People and Culture Processing

(72) Once a request for working from home has been endorsed/approved by the delegated supervisor/manager the Flexible Working Arrangements Agreement Form, Working from Home - [Computer Workstation Self Assessment Worksheet](#), Home Office OHS Checklist and Agreed Arrangements Forms must be completed (along with any relevant attachments) and submitted to People and Culture for processing. This must be done prior to the commencement of the arrangement.

Section 6 - Guidelines

(73) Flexible Work Arrangements Toolkit (located under 'Flexible work and parental leave').

Status and Details

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