

Working From Home Policy

Last updated 6 June 2018(administrative amendments only)

Policy Assigned to: Chief Human Resources Officer

Overview

The [Flexible Working Arrangements Policy](#) outlines the range of leave and flexible working arrangements available at the University to attract and retain staff members; to provide flexibility in meeting business needs; and to assist staff to manage their work and personal responsibilities. This policy sets out the guidelines and procedures to be followed when considering a working from home arrangement. The opportunity to work from home is not an entitlement or a right.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff employed by the University.

References

The University of Sydney Enterprise Agreement 2018-2021

[University of Sydney \(Delegations of Authority - Administrative Functions\) Rule 2016](#)

[Flexible Working Arrangements Policy](#)

[Work Health and Safety Policy 2016](#)

[Policy On the Use of University Information and Communications Technology Resources \(ICT Resources\)](#)

Policy

The University recognises the importance of flexible work arrangements in helping to attract and retain its workforce, while at the same time ensuring a strong team-based culture on campus.

Home-based work is a voluntary and co-operative arrangement agreed to between a staff member and the University. Home-based work will be considered on a case by case basis.

Information and Communication Technology

If home-based work involves access to University resources and computer networks, the Supervisor and the staff member must ensure that appropriate security arrangements are in place, and that the staff member abides by the standards and guidelines contained in the [Policy On the Use of University Information and Communications Technology Resources \(ICT Resources\)](#)

Work Health and Safety

The University is committed to providing a safe and healthy place of work for all staff members and this extends to staff who undertake home-based work. All [work health and safety \(WHS\) policies and procedures](#) that apply to staff members of the University will, as far as practicable, apply in carrying out work at a home-based site.

Workers' Compensation

Staff members undertaking authorised home-based work are covered by the same principles of the *Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998* that apply to staff on campus.

If a staff member has an accident or sustains an injury whilst undertaking home-based work, the staff member is required to report the injury or illness to their Supervisor and via [RiskWare](#). All accidents and injuries must be reported to the University **within 24 hours of occurring**. *Staff should be aware that home-based work may not be appropriate for staff rehabilitation and return to work cases following an injury.*

Further information about reporting accidents, injuries and claiming workers' compensation insurance is available from the [WHS website](#).

Insurance Arrangements

Staff members are solely responsible for checking whether working from home has any impact on any existing insurance arrangements they may have, including public liability or equipment covered by their own home contents insurance, and any obligations they may have to notify their insurer that their home is to be used for work purposes.

Absences

Staff undertaking home-based work are required to follow the same processes for notifying of absences (e.g. sick leave, carer's leave) that apply to all staff. Where required, absences are to be booked on myHRonline. These processes are outlined in clause 192 of the Enterprise Agreement.

Academic Staff

It is recognised that, depending upon teaching, research and professional commitments, Academic staff may at times work from home or at alternative work locations. Academic staff need to be aware that their absence from campus may have an impact on their colleagues; students; and faculty initiatives and responsibilities. Whilst a formal *Working From Home Agreement* is not required, the arrangements must be discussed and agreed with the staff member's supervisor to ensure:

- campus-based responsibilities are appropriately balanced with home/other location work arrangements;
- appropriate contact and availability arrangements are in place;
- an understanding of WHS requirements and responsibilities.

Professional Staff

Working from home arrangements for professional staff may be for regular periods of time, or, on an ad hoc one-off basis.

Ad hoc or one-off periods of working from home, or at an alternative work location, do not require a formal *Working From Home Agreement*, however approval must be obtained in advance from the staff member's Supervisor. Supervisors need to be mindful that the University's duty of care responsibilities will continue to apply.

Regular periods of working from home must be formalised in a [Working From Home Agreement \(WFH Agreement\)](#) prior to commencing such an arrangement. The WFH Agreement must clearly outline the duties to be performed whilst undertaking home-based work, the mechanisms for monitoring output, as well as the supervision arrangements, prior to the arrangement being put in place.

A working from home arrangement may initially be for a trial period. If, following a review, the arrangement is to be continued the WFH Agreement will specify the agreed period (up to 12 months) and stipulate the timeframes for regularly reviewing the arrangement to ensure that it is working effectively. A WFH Agreement may be extended for a further period (up to 12 months) where the Delegated Officer is satisfied

that the arrangement is working effectively.

At any time, either party may terminate a WFH Agreement. At least two weeks' notice must be given indicating the cessation of the WFH Agreement.

Approved WFH Agreements do not carry over to any new position which a staff member may transfer or be promoted into. In the case of a transfer or promotion, a new application to undertake home-based work must be submitted.

Organisational change may require that a WFH Agreement be reviewed or terminated where it is considered no longer suitable for work to be undertaken from home due to changed operational requirements or circumstances in the work area.

Working From Home Guidelines – Professional Staff

Definitions

Delegated Officer means the person who holds a position at the University which has delegated authority in accordance with the [University of Sydney \(Delegations of Authority - Administrative Functions\) Rule 2016](#) to vary a staff member's terms and conditions of employment.

Enterprise Agreement means the *University of Sydney Enterprise Agreement 2018-2021* or any replacement agreement.

Home-based worksite means a designated workspace within a staff member's home where the staff member will perform home-based work.

Home-based work means performance of duties at the home-based worksite as agreed between the University and the staff member.

Working From Home (WFH) Agreement means the signed written agreement that outlines the conditions of a working from home arrangement between the University and a staff member, and includes relevant checklists relating to work health and safety requirements and office ergonomics.

General Principles

When a staff member or Supervisor is considering whether working from home is appropriate, consideration must be given to the nature of the work to be performed at home, the staff member's attributes, the home-based worksite and facilities, the effects on co-workers and clients, and whether service delivery is impacted.

Work Requirements

An initial view must be formed about whether the work to be performed at home can be performed productively in a home-based environment. Positions that:

- are predominantly client/student facing;
- need on-campus access to University-based information, equipment, systems or facilities;
- require a high degree of supervision to perform the role effectively;

may not be suited in their current form for home-based work.

A staff member's managerial responsibilities may render a position unsuitable for regular home-based work. Where home-based work arrangements are feasible for a staff member with managerial responsibility, the approved arrangements should ensure that the staff member concerned is accessible to staff and that a reasonable proportion of the staff member's work time is spent on campus.

Work Relationships and Team Building

In the interest of promoting co-operative and collaborative working relationships, it is essential that a reasonable amount of the staff member's work time is spent on campus.

Personal Skills, Attributes and Work Performance

Consideration should be given to the staff member's suitability to work at home. The staff member must be able to work as efficiently and effectively as if the staff member was on campus. Relevant factors in assessing this will include:

- demonstration of self-motivation, time-management and organisational skills;
- capacity to work independently; and
- a proven record of satisfactory work performance.

Any request for extension or continuation in a WFH Agreement, will be based on the staff member's satisfactory demonstration of these factors.

Reason for Home-Based Work

Staff members must outline the specific reasons why they would like to undertake home-based work. The University will take the reasons into account when assessing an application. *Staff should recognise that while a home-based work arrangement may assist with dependant care, it is not considered a suitable substitute.*

Contact Availability

Contact arrangements must be agreed upon between the staff member and Supervisor, and are to be clearly detailed in the WFH Agreement. These arrangements may range from diverting the staff member's University phone number to their home phone number or mobile phone, limiting client contact to email, and the screening of calls by another work colleague if appropriate and/or practicable. The suitability of these arrangements will be determined on the basis that service delivery will not be adversely affected. The staff member's home contact details will remain confidential and will not be provided to other people unless the staff member has agreed in advance.

Record of Hours Worked

The staff member, Supervisor and Delegated Officer should all have a clear and detailed understanding of the hours to be worked, including any flexible working hours arrangement, which forms part of the WFH Agreement.

Staff who are normally required to complete timesheets must record the hours worked at home on a University [timesheet](#). Enterprise Agreement hours of work provisions for professional staff apply including taking a break of at least 30 minutes after working for 5 hours.

Any absences should be recorded on a University timesheet where appropriate, and booked on [myHRonline](#) where required.

Suitability of the Home-Based Worksite and Facilities

Work Health and Safety

WHS requirements and responsibilities apply equally in home-based workplaces as for campus-based workplaces.

Prior to a staff member being granted approval to commence regular home-based work, the following steps must be complied with:

- a) Details of the part of the home to be used for home-based work must be clearly identified and recorded in the WFH Agreement. The designated work area must be a distinct section or part of the home.
- b) The staff member must read and comply with the University's [Work Health and Safety Policy](#) and complete

the [Working from Home - WHS Checklist \(the Checklist\)](#). The completed checklist must be forwarded to the staff member's Supervisor together with the application.

It is highly recommended that where the majority of home-based work will be of a clerical or computer based nature that the staff member review and assess their home based work environment in accordance with the [guidelines on setting up your workstation](#) available on the WHS website.

- c) The Supervisor must review the Checklist(s) to assess compliance and determine suitability for the home-based worksite.
- d) In the event that the proposed home-based arrangements do not satisfy the applicable WHS standards, approval will not be given for home-based work arrangements. When the Supervisor is satisfied that WHS risks associated with the staff member undertaking work from their home-base are properly managed, the Agreement and Checklist should be forwarded to the [HR Service Centre](#) for placement on the staff member's personnel file.

If a staff member needs to make alterations to either their home-based worksite or equipment, the staff member is required to notify their Supervisor and complete a new [Working from Home - WHS Checklist](#) and review of their home based work environment in accordance with the [guidelines on setting up your workstation](#) prior to any changes being implemented.

Equipment and Utilities used at a Home-Based Worksite

The University provides a fully equipped work area for each staff member on campus.

It is the responsibility of the staff member to establish a suitable home-based worksite. In the event that the home-based work environment does not contain all the equipment necessary to undertake the role or specific tasks from home and/or does not meet WHS requirements, a WFH Agreement will not be entered into or it will be terminated by the University.

The cost of any utilities to perform home-based work is the expense of the staff member. In some circumstances the University may, at its sole discretion, agree to financially support the purchase of equipment or payment of utilities to support a staff member in working from home, however the University is under no obligation to provide such support and each request for assistance will be determined on a case by case basis. A working from home arrangement should be at least cost neutral to the University.

The need and cost of any consumables (e.g. stationery) must be discussed and agreed to prior to any home-based work commencing.

Guidelines on electronic access arrangements for staff who are working from home are available on the [ICT website](#).

Insurance

Staff members are responsible for third parties who visit their home-based worksite and may wish to take out public liability insurance. Staff members are also responsible for any loss or damage to their own equipment or assets and the University recommends that staff members obtain and maintain appropriate contents insurance cover.

It is recommended that staff advise the University of the name of their property insurer which can be recorded on the WFH Agreement.

Access Arrangements to the Home-Based Worksite

From time to time, the University may require access to a staff member's home-based worksite. The University will seek the consent of the staff member prior to accessing a home-based worksite; such consent must not be unreasonably withheld. All WFH Agreements must provide for reasonable access for the purposes of:

- assessing and monitoring security arrangements of equipment and documents;
- WHS inspections and risk assessments;

- incident investigation; and
- supervision.

Procedures – Professional Staff

Applying for Working From Home Arrangements

Working from home arrangements must be negotiated between the staff member, their Supervisor and the Delegated Officer and considered on a case by case basis.

The authority to approve a WFH Agreement for non-exempt staff is outlined in the [University of Sydney \(Delegations of Authority - Administrative Functions\) Rule 2016](#), clause 7.3.7.

The authority to approve a WFH Agreement for exempt staff is outlined in the [University of Sydney \(Delegations of Authority - Administrative Functions\) Rule 2016](#) clause 7.3.4.

Steps to be undertaken by Staff Members

- Staff members interested in a working from home arrangement are to initially discuss any proposal with their Supervisor. Under no circumstances is a working from home arrangement to commence before approval has been given.
- For regular periods of working from home a written application must be submitted through the Supervisor to the Delegated Officer for approval.

Applications must include:

- a completed [WFH Agreement](#) clearly outlining:
 - reasons for the request to enter into a working from home arrangement;
 - details of the proposed working from home arrangement; and
 - the period of time that the arrangement will apply;
- the [Working from Home - WHS Checklist](#);
- evidence that the home based work environment has been assessed in accordance with the [guidelines on setting up your workstation](#); and
- any supplementary information and documentation to support the application.

Steps to be undertaken by the Supervisor / Delegated Officer

In considering the application and the proposed WFH Agreement, the Delegated Officer must take into account the personal circumstances of the staff member applying for the working from home arrangement while ensuring that the operational needs of the work area are met. The arrangement may initially be approved on a trial basis and restricted to certain days.

For all applications, the Delegated Officer must:

- assess whether home-based work will be feasible, having regard to the work area's operational needs, job requirements, skills and performance, management responsibilities, and if it is appropriate to the role;
- ensure that the staff member is aware of the individual's and University's WHS responsibilities;
- consider any relevant factors identified by the staff member in their application to undertake home-based work (i.e. equipment and utilities, security – campus network, access arrangements, contact arrangements);
- ensure that the home-based work environment meets WHS requirements, the staff member has completed the relevant checklists, and made themselves aware of the relevant policies and procedures; and
- ensure that staff working from home continue to have access to relevant learning and development activities on campus.

Where a staff member is applying for a working from home arrangement as part of a request for flexible working arrangements to provide care for members of their immediate family or household (for up to 12 months or longer if agreed) the application may only be refused on reasonable business grounds.

Generally, the Delegated Officer will either approve or not approve the application within five working days,

Where the application is not approved the relevant Delegated Officer will discuss his/her decision with the staff member and where the request is refused provide detailed reasons for the refusal in writing.

Where the application is approved the agreed upon WFH Agreement will be signed by the Delegated Officer and a copy will be provided to the staff member, and the Supervisor, with the original approved WFH Agreement and attachments to be forwarded to the [HR Service Centre](#) for placement on the staff member's personnel file.

Following Commencement of the WFH Agreement

Staff are to:

- take reasonable precautions to protect University information and assets;
- comply with the arrangements outlined in the WFH Agreement;
- deliver on agreed work outcomes on a consistent basis;
- participate in team meetings and relevant learning and development activities on campus;
- by agreement, provide authorised University staff or other approved parties with access to the home-based worksite where necessary for matters such as WHS inspections, upgrading and repair of University-supplied equipment;
- monitor and review the home-based work arrangements on a regular basis as recorded in the WFH Agreement; and
- report any accidents or injuries occurring within the home-based worksite within 24 hours of occurring in accordance with University procedures detailed on the [WHS website](#).

Supervisors are to:

- monitor the home-based work arrangement to ensure that agreed work outcomes are consistently being delivered;
- review and sign-off on records of hours worked (timesheets) as required; and
- monitor and review the home-based work arrangements on a regular basis as recorded in the WFH Agreement.

At all times, either the University or the staff member may terminate a WFH Agreement by providing the other party with at least two weeks' written notice.

Administration

1. Background

This policy was developed by Human Resources staff following a review of flexible working arrangement options. The SSEO Unit, OHSIM Unit and Office of General Counsel assisted with the policy development. All staff had the opportunity to provide input and feedback into the draft policy. The policy was amended in April 2014 to align with the Enterprise Agreement 2013-2017. Administrative amendments were made in February 2017 to correct hyperlinks and to

remove the Working from Home Agreement which has been updated and is available on the staff intranet. Administrative amendments were made in June 2017 to update references to the University of Sydney (Delegations of Authority – Administrative Functions) Rule 2016. Amendment 4 August 2017 to remove the exclusion of casuals from coverage under this policy in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement which enables casual staff to apply for flexible working arrangements.

2. Management Responsibility

Director, Human Resources

3. Implementation Responsibility

Heads of School/Administrative Areas

4. Dates

Approval (version 1)	14/12/2010
Effect	15/12/2010
Review	
Approval (version 2)	
Effect	

5. Approval

Version 1	Dr Michael Spence, Vice-Chancellor and Principal
Version 2	

6. Signatures

Approved by:

Name

Dr Michael Spence

Position

Vice-Chancellor and Principal

Date

14 December 2010