

An Overview for Supervisors: UW–Madison’s Remote Work Policy

This document summarizes the purpose and main provisions of the Remote Work Policy. The full policy can be viewed at policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-5087.

Rationale and purpose for the Remote Work Policy

The University of Wisconsin–Madison recognizes the value of providing flexibility to its employees. Flexibility can increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover, increase the university’s ability to attract and retain talent, and maintain or enhance productivity for some roles.

The policy modernizes remote work practices at UW–Madison, reflecting the evolving nature of the workplace. The policy details remote work options and creates procedures and practices that can mitigate the risks and liabilities of remote work.

Although remote work may be an option for performing work in some circumstances, an on-campus presence for employees is often critical to maintaining a flourishing residential campus community. An on-campus presence:

- Maintains the highest possible quality of job function or campus service
- Builds connections between employees, facilitates quick exchange of information, and helps integrate new staff into office culture and operations

A pillar of UW–Madison’s strategic framework is to create a vibrant campus community that advances the university’s missions of scholarship, teaching, and service. Remote work arrangements should not be implemented if they diminish the connections and experiences necessary to achieve this goal.

As new tools and methods for connectivity become available, the university remains open to modifying its approach to remote work arrangements. The efficiency and effectiveness of remote work arrangements will be evaluated regularly.

A few key definitions

- In the context of this policy, “remote work” is a work arrangement in which some or all work is performed at an off-campus work site such as home or in an office space near home. This definition does not include workplace flexibilities, research trips, sabbaticals, or permanent off-campus work sites established by the university (e.g., field stations, CERN, IceCube).
- A “workplace flexibility” is a flexibility in which work is performed at an off-campus work site on a sporadic basis and does not follow a regular, repeated schedule.

Definitions of other relevant terms can be found in the [UW–Madison Remote Work Policy](https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-5087).

Who is subject to the policy

This policy applies to all employees who are in any of the following employment categories: Academic Staff (other than CHS Faculty and CT Faculty (e.g., clinical professors, clinical instructors)), University Staff, Limited Employees, Temporary Employees, Post-Degree Training Appointments, and Student Hourly Employees. Employees categorized as Zero-Dollar Appointments also are included. For Faculty, CHS Faculty, CT Faculty (e.g., clinical professors, clinical instructors), and Graduate Assistants (i.e., Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, and Project/Program Assistants), this policy applies only to out-of-state or international remote work.

Requesting, evaluating, and approving remote work arrangements

At UW–Madison, remote work is viewed as a cooperative arrangement based on the needs of a position, the department or unit, and the university.

An employee or supervisor may recognize the benefits of a remote work agreement, and either can suggest remote work as a possible work arrangement. There may also be instances in which positions, at the point of advertisement/recruitment or during the hiring process, are determined to be eligible for partial or full remote work arrangements.

Remote work arrangements are considered on a case-by-case basis by evaluating all of the following factors:

- Job responsibilities (e.g., jobs that require physical presence for effective performance are not suitable for remote work);
- The effective functioning of the overall unit (e.g., trainees may need in-person assistance; flow of information may be shared more quickly among those physically present; etc.);
- Potential cost savings to the university, school/college/division, and department;
- The needs and preferences of the employee;
- Employee performance;
- Equipment needs, workspace design considerations, office space, and scheduling issues; and
- Adverse impact between employees with similar job responsibilities in the work unit (prevent inequities).

The supervisor should communicate in advance what assignments and tasks are appropriate to be performed remotely and what assessment techniques will be used to measure success in meeting performance standards. Performance standards must be consistent across similar roles, regardless of whether employees work remotely or onsite.

Each school/college/division determines the specific procedures for evaluating and approving or denying a remote work request. A remote work arrangement must be agreed upon by school/college/division leadership, divisional Human Resources, and the employee's supervisor. School/college/division leadership may delegate approval of remote work arrangements to supervisors.

Remote work agreements

An employee approved to work remotely must enter into a *Remote Work Agreement*. This agreement describes the terms and conditions of an employee's remote work arrangement, including a description of the alternative off-site work arrangement, guidelines for maintaining communication and work engagement, and necessary equipment and services. These agreements include out-of-state and international work agreements.

Employee responsibilities when working remotely

Employees who work remotely are responsible for all of the following:

1. Working with their supervisors and other identified staff to ensure compliance with applicable laws, policies, and procedures;
2. Making any necessary adjustments for their personal income taxes and benefits; and
3. Working with campus IT staff to ensure any technology necessary to perform their work roles is compatible, secure, and in good working order.

Employee work schedules

The work schedule of a remote work employee will be determined by the supervisor and employee with approval by the supervisor and divisional HR before the start of the remote work. This schedule will be documented in the *Remote Work Agreement*.

An employee who works remotely (full or part-time) is expected to follow the same expectations as employees performing similar duties onsite. This includes, among other expectations, maintaining regularly scheduled and approved work hours and communicating with their supervisor and colleagues as necessary to meet operational needs and the requirements of the position.

Equipment, material, and supplies

Equipment provided to remote work employees, and its related costs, are determined, approved, and tracked by supervisors or divisional Human Resources. In general, employees are provided with a single computer (e.g., laptop) for performance of their responsibilities, unless additional equipment is otherwise required. Employees with remote work arrangements are generally expected to provide, at their own cost, internet connectivity at a quality necessary to support their work tasks, including the ability to use university-supported video conferencing tools. For employees who work both remotely and onsite, the university will generally not provide a fully equipped workspace at both locations (e.g., provide laptop for use in all work locations).


Prior to final approval for remote work, an employee must ensure that their remote workspace has the privacy, physical and technical security, appropriate equipment, software, and internet access to adequately perform their work responsibilities. Employees should reach out to their supervisor or divisional HR for assistance as needed.

Data privacy and security

The school, college or division will establish a plan for employees to remotely access needed resources and data in light of the type of information involved, type of computing environment required, and data privacy and security concerns. Those with complex needs with respect to requirements, including travel to areas with restrictions, should consult with the Office of Compliance and Office of Cybersecurity in advance of travel.

Denial, modification or revocation of a remote work agreement

A remote work agreement may be modified or revoked by a supervisor or employee based on evaluating the factors described in Section III of the [Remote Work Policy](#). If a supervisor determines that an agreement should be modified or revoked, the supervisor must discuss the reasons for the modification or revocation with the employee and provide a reasonable notice period before the revocation or modification goes into effect.



If an employee requests a remote work arrangement and the request is denied, or if a supervisor modifies or revokes a remote work agreement, the employee may request a review of the decision by the vice chancellor, dean, or director of the employee's school, college, or division. The decision of the vice chancellor, dean, or director is final and may not be appealed. Vice chancellors, deans, and directors should consider equity concerns when making a final decision.

Out-of-state remote work

The university reserves the right to determine in advance whether it will approve an employee's principal work location to be out-of-state, based on the operational needs of the university and whether the employee can meet performance expectations working out-of-state. School/college/division leadership, divisional Human Resources, and the employee's supervisor decide whether to allow an individual to perform out-of-state work. An employee who works remotely out-of-state must enter into an *Out-of-State Remote Work Agreement*.

International remote work

A school, college or division may employ an international remote worker only if the remote work is for a documented and approved business necessity. Business necessity is defined as a legitimate business purpose that fulfills the mission and objectives of the university and is not solely for the personal benefit of an employee.

Prior to approval for international remote work, the complex legal risks and liabilities of international remote work need to be addressed between the school/college/division, identified campus offices or departments, and the employee. The final arrangements will be reflected in the *International Remote Work Agreement*.

Last update June 30, 2021