Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)

Updated March 8, 2023

For faculty, see COE: Flexible Working Arrangements and Telework - Faculty.

Overview

We are a residential teaching and research community supporting the success of nearly 3,000 students. On campus and in-person interaction and collaboration among faculty, staff, and students are essential to our research, teaching, and service mission. We believe this experience cannot be replicated in virtual or online contexts. However, we also recognize the benefits of remote work and flexible work schedules for our employees. Based on the success of our FWA pilot program and positive feedback from our employees we are extending the flexible work arrangement for our employees until further notification with a strong commitment that excellence in our teaching, research, and service mission will not be compromised.

Flexible work arrangements, including teleworking, are permitted by UT Austin, as long as they are in the best interest of the University and will enhance the productivity of the employee, and followed according to university rules, procedures and policies. All flexible work arrangements require prior supervisor’ s approval.

Flexible work arrangements are a variation in where a job is performed (e.g., teleworking) or the time the work is performed (e.g., flexible schedule).

Types of flexible work arrangements

- Teleworking: routinely working one or more days per week at a location that is not the regularly assigned place of employment
- Flex-time: varying an employee’s schedule on a regular or non-regular basis while still completing the required 40 hours per week (typically scheduling hours between 7:00 am – 6pm) provided that all offices shall be open during the hours of 8:00 am – 5:00 pm Monday - Friday
- Compressed work week: working more hours on some days of the week to complete the required 40 hours/week in fewer than five 8-hour days.

University’s Guidance on Flexible Work Arrangements - Staff

The university has established the following policies and guidelines around Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) and Telework:

- HOP 5-2110 Work Schedule
- HOP 5-2130 Telecommuting
- HR: Flexible Work Arrangements
- ISO Security Guidance for Working Remotely

Our College will comply with university and Board of Regents policy, and local, state, and federal law.

See additional College of Education guidance in the other tabs on this page.

COE FWA Policy and Process

- Employees should live in a geographically close/commutable distance from UT, with the ability to travel to a primary campus location within a few hours.
- Prior to offering or approving work locations outside the state of Texas, supervisors must review the work location with their HR Executive and Business Officer, who will consult with central HR’s Strategic Workforce Solutions (SWS), Director of HR and the Dean for approval. See tab “Out-of-state work requests” on this page.
- For employees of research centers and auxiliary units living within Texas but beyond the Greater Austin area, Texas Telework is allowed.
- If an employee will work remotely and/or flex their work time, they must complete a UT Flexible Work Arrangement Form (PDF) - either Non-Telework or Telework. Both forms must be uploaded to the employee’s worker profile in Workday. In the event of any change the FWA form must be updated to reflect that change.
- Supervisors may not allow FWAs for more than 1-2 days per week without approval from the Dean or relevant Associate Dean.
  - Dean’s Office administration relevant associate dean
  - Academic department Associate Dean for Faculty Development and Educator Preparation
  - Centers Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies
- FWA agreement at the minimum should be revisited annually at the time of performance appraisal. Any changes must be documented in the form.
- FWA agreements are subject to change based on the business needs and/or employee’s performance,

Notes

- The FWA proposal form should align with COE guiding principles and COE FWA Policy & Guidelines.
- The FWA proposal form is needed for regularly occurring schedules only - not university closures or emergencies/natural disasters that would necessitate employees to work from home.
- Business reasons may include the completion of tasks requiring uninterrupted concentration (writing and editing, data analysis, coding, or other complex or detail-oriented work, or reducing space/noise issues in shared offices). Business reasons should not include childcare needs, commute time, illness, slow periods at work, or other personal reasons.
• "Requested Schedule" should specify actual, regular work hours (e.g. 8am-5pm), and include at least 30 minutes for a lunch break.

• A typical response for "Describe how and when this agreement will be evaluated" could be something like, "Supervisor expects employee to maintain the same level of performance while telecommuting. Feedback to be provided as needed and in annual performance reviews."

• A fixed term trial period is recommended for new telework agreements, with regular reviews to assess job performance.

COE Flexible Work Arrangement Guidelines

This section outlines the guidance for managerial decisions around flexible work arrangements (FWA), including telework, for classified and A&P staff. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, to ensure that academic excellence is maintained in supporting both the instructional and research mission of the college. Decisions must always factor in the customer experience for students, faculty, staff, donors, and others and the business needs of the unit. Managers must consider the function of the unit, the nature of the position, the location of work, and the capabilities of the employee when making these decisions.

Maintaining Excellence and Culture

Every decision around work-from-home experiences must consider maintaining our excellence in serving our customers. Some functions are best handled in the office, while some are best performed remotely, and others can be equally effective in either environment. Managers must make these decisions in context with training new hires, personal interactions, teambuilding, collaborative activities, sense of community, and recruitment and retention of staff. To support a more remote work environment, it may be necessary to redefine processes/procedures as well as identify new expectations and etiquette for operating remote technologies.

Managers should work with employees to establish expectations and boundaries around certain aspects of working remotely such as work/life balance and constant availability. Managers should also recognize the proximity of in-person staff being tasked with things remote workers would not be tasked with due to in-person availability.

Employees and managers should maintain the same level of professionalism regardless of technology or work location. Managers and employees should closely adhere to the core rules of netiquette, or network etiquette.

Nature of Position

When deciding if flexible work arrangements/telework would be a good fit for the position, it is important to think about the attributes of the position. First, review the FWA tips and tools on central HR's website to help determine if a position is appropriate for FWA. Next, consider the environment of where the position functions, and whether its primary purpose is to serve instruction, research, or administration. Finally, reflect on the specific job duties of the position. Some positions are student-facing, others are faculty- or staff-facing. Some positions engage with the public while others perform back-office duties. Examine whether job duties require in-person work (such as reception or facilities) or where duties previously done in-person can now be done remotely.

Work Location

When reviewing a telework request, managers should consider the space in which the employee will work. The employee should have an available, dedicated workspace in their personal dwelling in order to telework. The employee should not use personal computer equipment while working remotely, and should follow appropriate ISO protocols & policies to ensure the protection of university-owned data and equipment. The employee and manager will agree on the workplace location, job duties performed remotely and in-person, how they will meet ISO security requirements, and the protection of confidential data via the UT Flexible Work Arrangement Form (PDF).

If the employee requests to work remotely at a location that differs from their designated remote workspace, they must obtain approval from their manager in advance of that change. If not approved, the employee must either work from the designated remote workspace, come into the office, or use accrued leave. The employee is responsible for completing all timesheets in accordance with UT leave policies.

Who Is in Your Space

Telework is not a replacement for appropriate dependent care or other responsibilities of an employees’ personal life. Supervisors may require modifications to FWA plans, with reasonable notice, to adjust for non-work/personal responsibilities based on the unit’s business needs. The employee should use existing accrued leave in accordance with UT leave policies as needs arise. UT employees meeting certain qualifying reasons and eligibility are entitled to up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protective leave: Family Medical Leave. Employees may also seek accommodations via the Office for Inclusion and Equity. In the instances where accrued leave, FML, and/or accommodations would not apply, the employee should discuss the situation with their manager to find a solution on a case-by-case basis given the nature of position and needs of the unit. The manager should verify the employee is working their designated scheduled weekly hours. If the employee is unable to work their scheduled weekly hours or unable to perform their job duties, then the manager should consider a temporary or permanent reduction in hours and/or revoke the FWA agreement.

Performance

Some individuals are better suited for work-from-home experiences than others. Performance standards and measures must be monitored closely by management. Performance improvement must be managed regardless of workplace location. Performance issues may result in the revision or cancellation of the work-from-home arrangement for the employee. If performance concerns arise, consult Strategic Workforce Solutions.

Hours of Duty


Each full-time employee should have a defined workday which should include start and stop times for completing their normal 8 hours of work. In-person employees must cover the standard open office hours of 8 AM to 5 PM, with the ability to flex between 6am to 7pm. Work-from-home hours should be scheduled around supporting business and customer needs of the unit. Compressed schedules (4 days X 10 hours) or nights/weekends/on call/seasonal needs may be appropriate and/or required for certain positions. If working remotely, the employee must adhere to the work schedule outlined in the employee’s UT Flexible Work Arrangement Form (PDF). Managers may require employees to deviate from the agreed upon work schedule as last-minute /emergency business needs arise. Managers shall make every effort to provide reasonable advanced notice to attend in-person required activities.

Recruiting and Retention

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) are a business strategy that can help employers recruit and retain talented employees. Flexible work arrangements can lead to greater work-life balance, which in turn may lead to greater employee satisfaction, fewer unscheduled absences, increased retention, enhanced individual performance and increased business productivity.

The decision to offer flexible work arrangements could have an effect on recruitment and retention. Managers should consider the varying factors (internal and external to UT) that could impact recruitment and retention.

Facilities

If units decide on hybrid remote work, managers must consider redefining how they allocate space. Teleworking can reduce the number of staff workspaces needed for each unit. Managers can use various forms of alternative space options, including but not limited to: shared office space, hoteling, private conference space, and/or break-out rooms. No major shifts of office assignments or space renovations should occur without prior approval. Please consult with your local facilities manager for space allocation needs.

Equipment, Technology, and Supplies

- Employees should have no more than one primary on-site work space and one unit-issued computer.
- Units should determine what equipment and technology may be taken to, or purchased for, remote telework offices, versus retained exclusively onsite. Technology location changes must be communicated to the Information Technology Office.
- CSUs should follow appropriate business procedures in the acquisition and management of required equipment and supplies involving remote work (e.g., inventory controls, data security standards, UT procurement rules, and COE technology procurement policy).
- Consider equipment costs, employee income, required duties, equity, and inventory requirements when deciding to issue items to employees.
- University funds may not be used to renovate remote offices and workspaces.
- Units should maximize the use of digital business tools such as DocuSign, Microsoft Teams, and UT Box to facilitate efficiency.
- Employees are responsible for providing internet connectivity and mobile service that allow them to work effectively from a remote location.

Parking

- Employees must pay for their own parking.
  - Use the Parking Perks Debit Program (formerly Share Pass) for intermittent use

Out-of-state work requests

See additional information at COE- Flexible Working Arrangements and Telework - Faculty.

In some circumstances, an employee (new hire or current) not residing in Texas may be approved for a long-term remote-work arrangement. Direct supervisors of such employees should obtain the approvals of central HR (staff) or APS (faculty), and the COE Director of HR (staff) or appropriate Associate Dean (faculty), following the process below:

1. Supervisor contacts the COE Director of HR at COE-HR@austin.utexas.edu to discuss the proposed arrangement.
2. If the Director of HR supports the arrangement, the supervisor will complete the Out of State Request form and send to internationaloutofstate@austin.utexas.edu and cc COE-HR@austin.utexas.edu. (For requests for faculty, please also cc COE-FacultyAffairs@austin.utexas.edu.)
3. Central HR will review the form to make sure the proposed arrangement meets University and state guidelines.
4. Attach the Out of State request approval email with the Workday business process and add comments in Workday.

Faculty remote telework requests

1. Faculty member must first obtain the approval of all of the following, in order, before proceeding to step 2:
   a. Department chair (cc department Administrative Manager)
   b. Dean or Dean’s delegate
   c. COE Director of HR (email COE-HR@austin.utexas.edu)

2. If all of the above approvals have been obtained, faculty member in collaboration with department Administrative Manager will complete the Out of State Request form and send to internationaloutofstate@austin.utexas.edu and cc COE-FacultyAffairs@austin.utexas.edu.

3. Central HR will review the form to make sure the proposed arrangement meets University and state guidelines, and will then route to APS.

4. APS may either approve the request, or route it to the Provost for further review.

5. APS will notify the CSU of their decision.

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