



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Hybrid Workplace Policy

### 1. Policy Statement

The University recognises the benefits of more flexible ways of working, including where employees perform their work. The University is committed to supporting a blended approach to work location where it is operationally feasible and where it is of benefit to the organisation, its staff and students.

As we are a large and complex organisation, no single set of working arrangements will suit all areas and roles. This policy explains how the University will support and manage requests from employees to work a mixture of on and off-campus e.g. from home on an ad hoc basis or with an agreed pattern. It sets out the expectations of those who work in this way, explains the process involved and signposts to other related policies and guidance. The procedure for requesting a hybrid workplace arrangement is detailed at the end of this document.

This policy provides a route for employees to request ad hoc, occasional and regular patterns of work that will involve working on and off-campus. Adopting a hybrid approach to working arrangements is not a contractual right and requests may be declined if the impact on workload, others and/or University business is deemed detrimental. Any agreement to a request to work in a hybrid manner will not result in a change to the contract of employment. This policy does not include permanent changes to working patterns, location or hours – these changes are covered by the [Flexible Working Policy](#). It is possible for an employee to combine a formally agreed flexible working pattern with other forms of flexibility, such as an informal hybrid workplace arrangement.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the university who hold roles that can be performed in part off-campus.

Broadly, there are three main groups of employees:

- those who have always been able to work in a hybrid way e.g. on and off campus to suit their role, work commitments and personal circumstances
- those whose roles can only be performed in person, on-campus, to whom this policy does not apply, and
- those who may now be able to work in a hybrid way given the new ways of working the University is seeking to embrace.

To explain further, given the diversity of the University's operations, there will be much work that can only be performed on-campus, examples include but aren't limited to customer or student facing roles and activities, manual and practical tasks such as grounds maintenance, cleaning, laboratory work or supporting on-campus student open days.

The nature of academia means University of Edinburgh Academic and Research staff have naturally always had more flexibility in how they work. It is therefore acknowledged that many are already working in a hybrid way. Consequently, so long as the role continues to be performed effectively, and unless an a member of Academic or Research staff wishes to request a hybrid workplace arrangement under this policy, there is no requirement for them to do so in order to continue their previous, assumed flexibility. However, as many more employees can now benefit from a blended approach to where they work, this policy seeks to provide clarity on hybrid workplace arrangements to all staff. For Academic and Research staff who will continue to work in the same hybrid way and who have not requested it through this policy, it is vital that they understand the principles contained within this policy will still apply to their working arrangements.

### 3. Definitions

**Hybrid workplace** refers to the location from which you work, where it is not constrained by one specific location, for example an office on campus or an off-campus location such as your home, i.e. somewhere that an appropriate workspace is available to you.

**Hybrid working** is a way of working in line with our hybrid workplace policy, operating safely, securely and effectively from an appropriate location; this could be a mix of on and off-campus. While hybrid working supports work-life balance, you

will not have a formally fixed pattern of off-campus days as a result of any request made through this policy, and will need to flex to meet operational needs.

**Off-campus working** refers to any work that is delivered from a location that is not a University of Edinburgh building or site, including home or other appropriate space, which must be within a reasonable commuting distance of the campus.

**On campus working** refers to work that is delivered from a University of Edinburgh location. This could be teaching activities, teaching, research, support activities, professional services, student services or any other institutional business that is required to be carried out from a University of Edinburgh location. It is not necessarily constrained to the on campus location you are most regularly based e.g. your primary office location.

**Reasonable commuting distance** is what you and your manager deem to be reasonable, taking a common sense approach. It will vary depending on location, mode of transport, availability of public transport, time spent commuting, etc. As the University's Edinburgh based campuses remain your contractual work location, you will not be able to claim expenses for any costs incurred commuting to work on campus.

#### **4. Principles**

This policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- 4.1 The University campus remains the centre of gravity for all staff, meaning it is the focus of University activity. Therefore, there is an expectation of regular on-campus working for employees who adopt hybrid working.
- 4.2 An employee's contractual place of work will remain the University campus, unless (i) a permanent pattern of mixed work locations is agreed through a formal flexible working request, or (ii) a change of location is required by the University. Any contractual changes will be confirmed in writing.
- 4.3 As with flexible working requests, requests for hybrid working will be considered promptly, fairly and with sensitivity.

- 4.4 Personal information provided during the request process will be handled confidentially and respectfully.
- 4.5 Reasonable efforts will be made to support requests for hybrid working.
- 4.6 Hybrid working must not hinder the effective performance of the employee, their team or the wider University. In particular, it must not create additional workload for other employees or impact service provision. In some cases, this will mean that requests will have to be declined.
- 4.7 While hybrid working supports work-life balance, it must not be used to replace childcare or other personal commitments. All employees are trusted and expected to focus fully on their work during working hours, regardless of work location.
- 4.8 Employees who routinely work off-campus for part of the week must remain connected with their colleagues and managers and participate/ contribute to the same extent as if they were on campus. To support this, managers will set out clear expectations of those who have hybrid workplace arrangements agreed, including but not limited to best practice ways of working, communication with colleagues and engagement with work.
- 4.9 Employees with an agreed hybrid workplace arrangement are expected to attend campus when required, with reasonable notice, for example, to meet in-person customer demand, face to face teaching or attend a meeting.
- 4.10 Regardless of working location, all employees are required to comply with all University policies and procedures.
- 4.11 The requirement for IT and/or office equipment to be provided to enable an employee to work off-campus must not disadvantage or prejudice the manager's decision on a hybrid workplace arrangement - or be inconsistent across staff members in its application.
- 4.12 Employees with hybrid workplace arrangements in place will be provided with equal access to development, regrading and promotion opportunities.
- 4.13 All hybrid workplace arrangements agreed under this policy will be deemed to be informal in nature and subject to regular review.
- 4.14 Employees will be given early notice of any concerns arising from their new working arrangements and given reasonable time and support to address these concerns. They will be given reasonable notice prior to any variation of the arrangements taking effect i.e. before any arrangement needs to change or revert to on-campus working.

## **5. Hybrid working outside of the UK**

Living and working outside of the UK and permanent fully remote working are not permitted under this policy.

Any request to work in an overseas country must first be discussed with your manager. Approval to work overseas must be granted prior to any arrangement being made as there are a number of considerations that must be taken into account, both by you and the University. More information can be found on the [Working Abroad webpages](#).

## **6. Requesting, considering and approving requests**

The procedure for requesting a hybrid workplace arrangement is outlined on [page 10](#).

You are required to request and agree your hybrid workplace arrangement with your line manager. This will include agreeing which components of your role and activities are best or must be performed on-campus.

In considering your request to work in a hybrid manner, your manager will do so in line with the principles detailed in section 4. Requests for a hybrid workplace arrangement may be declined for legitimate organisational reasons. As there is no one-size-fits-all arrangement, it is important that comparisons are not made between teams, departments and different areas of the University.

Your manager will carefully consider the equality, diversity and inclusion impacts of your request, and will consider how to address these impacts before approving your request.

In considering your request, your manager will consider the impact of your request on the team as a whole. This is to ensure:

- all requests are considered fairly and take account of those who wish to work solely on campus, so that the work is organised to ensure those working on campus are not unfairly impacted
- effective team working is not compromised
- no other employee is negatively impacted by your hybrid workplace request.

Your manager is responsible for considering your request, and will confirm their decision to you. They may contact their HR Partner, if required.

#### 6.1 Reviewing your arrangements

Your manager will review your hybrid workplace arrangements periodically. This may be regularly included in one-to-one meetings with you and may require action to address any issues and concerns. The arrangement will be formally reviewed and confirmed, at least, on an annual basis. This will ensure the agreed ways of working continue to be effective for all parties concerned.

### 7. **Expectations of and Support for Hybrid Workers**

#### 7.1 Wellbeing and Mental Health

Hybrid working is underpinned by a commitment to enabling, promoting and encouraging staff wellbeing.

There are many ways to maintain or improve wellbeing. Regular on-campus attendance is one way to maintain a sense of belonging, which can support wellbeing. The routes to access information and support are available through the [Health and Wellbeing website](#). Additionally, you and your manager can refer to the [work related stress checklist](#), [guidance and risk assessment](#) tools available to you.

#### 7.2 Inclusion

Your manager will include all team members in team activities equally, regardless of where you work. A range of e-learning modules are available on the [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion webpages](#) to support managers in understanding and managing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) issues. Further information is available on the EDI webpages with specific regard to [supporting disabled staff, and to support remote working, the Managing Remotely Toolkit](#).

#### 7.3 Accessibility and Collaboration

You will be required, with reasonable advance notice, to attend meetings, training or events on campus at the request of your manager or other members of the management team. You are expected to make yourself available to attend these on-campus activities.

When working off campus, you must remain accessible and contactable, and you are expected to respond to communications in the same timescales as you would when working on campus. While this is important for all staff, it is vital if you are a sponsored worker (i.e. you require a Skilled Worker visa to work in the UK). You may find it helpful to denote your work location in your calendar so that others can locate you if required e.g. if requested by the Home Office. More information can be found in the [Recording Where You Are Working FAQs](#).

#### 7.4 Remote Working Environment and Health and Safety considerations

When working off-campus it is important to ensure that your work environment is safe and secure with a relevant degree of privacy. Physically, it is also important to ensure that there is adequate space, furniture, lighting and any other equipment you require to properly carry out your role.

Further guidance and information on homeworking, and links to the training and Display Screen Equipment (DSE) risk assessment are available on the University's [Health & Safety website](#).

#### 7.5 Equipment and Information Security

You will be provided with appropriate equipment and technology to enable you to perform your role effectively, and to reduce any risk of injury or illness if your hybrid workplace request to work off-campus is agreed.

Once your hybrid workplace request has been agreed, your manager will consider the provision of any additional equipment requirements as a reasonable adjustment if you have a disability.

When working off-campus you must ensure that you continue to comply with the University's Computing Regulations and records management protocols. All appropriate data sharing agreements must be followed and you must ensure that no sensitive data is taken off-campus. The [Information Security and staying safe online guidelines](#) provide useful information.

#### 7.6 IT Support

Information Services provides guidance on IT issues related to off-campus working on their [webpages](#) and you can refer to the [IS Helpline](#) if support is required. Guidance on getting the most from your home broadband can be found [here](#).

### 7.7 Associated Costs and Expenses

Even with an agreed hybrid workplace arrangement in place, your place of work will remain as stated in your [Conditions of Service](#) – this means your normal place of work remains the University's Edinburgh based campuses and/or offices. Therefore, you will not be reimbursed for travel between the University campus and your remote workplace. For all other expense-related information, please refer to the [Expenses Policy](#).

### 7.8 Insurance and Other Considerations

If you work from your home address you are responsible for assessing the personal implications of home working. Specifically, you are advised to discuss any implications with your mortgage provider or landlord and house insurer. You are also responsible for any University property in your possession.

More information about the University's insurance policies can be found on the [Finance webpages](#) or by contacting the [Finance Helpline](#).

### 7.9 Access to Off-Campus Working Locations

On occasion, the University may need to access your off-campus workplace e.g. your home. This could be to:

- install, inspect, replace, repair, maintain or service University property where it is not possible or appropriate to do so on campus, or
- retrieve University property, or
- advise on or investigate significant health and safety concerns.

By choosing to work off-campus, you consent to the University or its representatives, at reasonable times and with reasonable advance notice, accessing your remote workplace e.g. your home. The University will only do so where it deems it absolutely necessary, and where there is no suitable alternative method of performing the required task.

### 7.10 Supporting you as a new employee

If you have just joined the University, your induction period may include some off-campus working, however, the University believes the best induction is done predominantly face-to-face.



Your manager will work with you to determine how best to induct/on-board you. They can refer to the [On-Boarding Support for guidance](#).

## **8 Links to Other Relevant Policies and Guidance**

The Hybrid Workplace Policy can be read in conjunction with the University's associated or relevant policies and guidance which you can find on the following web pages:

- [Flexible Working Policy](#)
- [Working abroad webpages](#)
- [Health and Wellbeing website](#)
- [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion webpages](#)
- [Guidance on Supporting Disabled Staff](#)
- [Managing Remotely Toolkit](#)
- [Recording Where You Are Working FAQs](#)
- [Health & Safety website](#)
- [Information Security and staying safe online guidelines](#)
- [Expenses Policy](#)
- [Finance webpages](#)
- [On-Boarding Support](#)

## **9 Document History and Review**

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## Hybrid Workplace Procedure

### 1. Requesting a Hybrid Workplace Arrangement

If you wish to make a request for a hybrid workplace arrangement you must discuss this with your manager. Requests will be dealt with informally and any arrangements agreed will be subject to review. The review will allow you both to fully assess any impact on you, your colleagues and/or the needs of the business.

Requests may be for an informal regular arrangement e.g. to work from home on set days or part days every week, or may be more ad hoc, occasional or variable in nature depending on work demands.

**Note:** If you require a permanent change to your working arrangements, for example a change to the days or hours you work to support your caring responsibilities or as a reasonable adjustment, you should request this via the [Flexible Working Policy](#).

Agreed hybrid workplace arrangements will apply only to the role you hold at the time of making the request i.e. they will not automatically transfer to any future roles held at the University. Therefore, if you already have a hybrid workplace arrangement in place and apply for a new role, you must ask the recruiting manager at the earliest opportunity within the hiring process if it will be possible to retain the arrangement if you are appointed. The recruiting manager will consider your existing arrangements in the context of the new role, team make up and business needs. If your existing arrangements cannot be accommodated, you will be informed of this and the reason(s) for this decision. You should consider whether or not you wish to proceed with your application.

### 2. Considering your request

If your manager is satisfied that your request can be met they may agree to it without having to hold a further meeting with you i.e. beyond the initial discussion you have already had with them. However, it is advised that a discussion still takes place following the decision in order to clearly set out expectations, new ways of working and to ensure the correct IT equipment and H&S arrangements have been properly considered.

If your manager wishes to find out more about your request and how it will affect the needs of your business area and/or your colleagues you will be invited to a meeting to discuss this. Meetings may take place remotely e.g. via MS Teams, telephone or in person. At the meeting your manager may suggest an alternative arrangement or modifications if your original request cannot be agreed. Additionally, they may suggest trying out your requested or modified working arrangements to gauge whether it can be made to work for all parties e.g. you and your colleagues. This would normally last for around twelve weeks before your manager will review the arrangement.

If the working arrangement is successful it will be agreed, and will be regularly reviewed. If it has not been satisfactory, your manager will discuss this with you and provide the reasons for this. You may mutually decide whether to test an alternative arrangement. If that is not feasible, you will be told the reasons why, and you will need to revert to your previous working arrangement.

Your manager will maintain a record of their team's working arrangements, detailing the requests they have agreed.

### **3. Outcome of Request**

If your manager agrees to your request they will confirm this with you as soon as is reasonably possible, by email. While your new working arrangements will be confirmed in writing, by email, they will not be contractually binding or result in a change to your contract of employment and will be subject to regular review.

If your manager does not agree to your request you will be informed as soon as is reasonably possible, giving you the reason. Due to the informal nature of requests for hybrid workplace arrangements, decisions may not be appealed.