

Working from Home - Procedure and Agreement

Section 1 - Context

(1) This procedure supports the implementation of the University of Newcastle Work Health and Safety Policy and must be read in conjunction with that document.

(2) This procedure and associated agreement is not intended to cover or be implemented for ad-hoc, short term situations of working from home or from another location away from the regular workplace at the University (for e.g. Academic staff working while away at a Conference or on SSP Leave). In these circumstances however, staff members should consult the available ergonomics information in order to ensure that they are aware of how to work safely in these situations. Refer to the Safety at work website and the Workplace Ergonomics document (which contains a self-assessment checklist).

Section 2 - Procedure

(3) While the University does not normally require staff members to work from home it does recognise that there are occasions when circumstances may make such an arrangement convenient and beneficial for individual employees and supervisors. It is required that both the University and the staff member are in agreement on all aspects of the Working from Home arrangement and it is absolutely necessary that the required steps of this procedure are undertaken in order to establish:

- a. whether the duties are suitable for working from home;
- b. what, if any, equipment will be necessary for an employee to safely undertake home-based work;
- c. that the proposed working environment is healthy and safe and that the person who will be working from home has the information and training necessary to do the work safely;
- d. agreed hours of work and communications procedures.

Working from Home Offsite Agreement and Checklist

(4) This document must be completed by the staff member in consultation with their supervisor, signed by both parties, and then submitted to the relevant Head of School, Pro Vice-Chancellor, or Director, for review and approval prior to any work commencing at a home site.

Principles of Working at Home and Criteria for Approval

(5) Both the staff member and the supervisor must be aware of their responsibilities under the Work Health and Safety legislation with respect to ensuring that workplaces are without risks to the health and safety of any person and have assessed that this work activity, in the described manner and details, will meet this requirement. Any alterations to the conditions that may affect the health and safety of the staff member, will be reported as soon as practicable to the other party.

(6) The staff member agrees to maintain the deemed workplace as a healthy and safe environment (including

provision of smoke alarms, and appropriate first aid kit), and that the University is not responsible for injury to any third party or parties at the deemed workplace.

(7) The deemed workplace shall be subject to the same University Health and Safety policy and risk management provisions as the office-based site.

(8) For the purposes of this agreement the staff member will not work from any other location outside the office-based site apart from the home-based work site. To do so may be a basis for termination of the Agreement.

(9) The staff member's performance standard is at an acceptable level and remains at such a level whilst the arrangement is in operation.

(10) The impact of the staff member working from home on other team members has been considered and addressed.

(11) Any University supplied equipment will be returned to the University at the termination of the Working from Home Agreement.

(12) All equipment owned or leased by the University will remain the property of the University. The staff member agrees that the University will have reasonable access to the home-based work site with reasonable notice to repair or remove equipment, or assess the home-based work site with respect to Health and Safety or equipment and information security/confidentiality.

Terms and Conditions

(13) In the case of regular, ongoing working from home arrangements, a Working from Home - Application and Agreement must be completed.

(14) The core hours and duties to be performed must be established and agreed, and a work schedule is to be attached to the Agreement.

(15) The staff member will need to identify an area within their home that allows them to work with a minimum of disruption. This will be called the deemed workplace.

(16) A list of equipment needed to work from home, details of the responsible person who is to provide, maintain, repair and replace the equipment, and details of how the staff member will ensure it is secure will be documented.

(17) All conditions of employment remain the same as if the staff member was working at the University worksite.

(18) Access arrangements for the deemed workplace must be agreed between the supervisor and the staff member, and included in the Working from Home Offsite Agreement and Checklist.

(19) A record of working hours will be maintained by the staff member and submitted to the supervisor on a regular basis (such as the UON Flextime workbook template).

Suitability of Home-based Work Activities

(20) The nature of the work, and the abilities of the staff member and supervisor should fit the criteria for home-based work. Home-based work requires dedication, self-motivation and the ability to work without supervision. Jobs deemed generally suitable for home-based work may include (but are not limited to):

- a. project work
- b. policy development and analysis
- c. data analysis
- d. report writing

- e. systems design and development
- f. research
- g. marking and editorial work
- h. word processing/data entry

Unsuitable Home-based Work Activities

(21) Some jobs are more appropriately performed in the workplace, and may therefore be unsuitable for home-based work. Jobs generally not suitable for home-based work may include (but are not limited to) activities requiring:

- a. face-to-face interaction with supervisor/other staff/students/members of the public
- b. a high degree of supervision, e.g. trainee and entry level positions
- c. frequent access to material that cannot be moved from the workplace site
- d. servicing University facilities and/or assets
- e. site specific occupations
- f. team based work where regular, direct, daily contact with other team members is required.

Considerations in Determining an Application to Work from Home

(22) Before making a decision in determining the application for a staff member to work from home, the supervisor will need to:

- a. Identify the specific duties and work objectives to be met.
- b. Consider and assess the suitability of the staff member to:
 - i. manage time and workload efficiently;
 - ii. perform work reliably and responsibly;
 - iii. resolve problems independently;
 - iv. work in isolation;
 - v. be self motivated;
 - vi. be productive without immediate supervision;
 - vii. provide suitable space within the home for the safe and effective fulfilment of the functions of the activity to be performed.

Note: Checklists are provided in the Working from Home Offsite Agreement and Checklist

Steps for Completing a Working from Home - Application and Agreement

(23) The staff member will obtain and prepare a Working from Home Proposal (Part 1) including Staff Members Application, including the following details:

- a. the reason(s) for working from home;
- b. a list of current role responsibilities and how they will be adapted to working from home;
- c. the period of time, including the number of days per week and the hours per day;
- d. a description of the proposed deemed workplace;
- e. details of any Health and Safety training undertaken by the staff member;
- f. a list of equipment needed to work from home, who is to provide the equipment, and how the staff member will ensure it is kept secure;
- g. a description of how communication will be maintained with the supervisor and other team members (and clients, if applicable);

- h. access arrangements for equipment which is owned by the University;
- i. a plan identifying and addressing potential distractions in the home-based office;
- j. the security measures for equipment, documentation and data;
- k. normal mail delivery arrangements;
- l. impact and benefits of the arrangement on the organisational unit and the staff member;
- m. period proposed for the arrangement;
- n. familiarity and knowledge of their role.

Health and Safety - Working from Home Self Assessment Report

(24) The staff member must complete a 'Health & Safety' - Working from Home Self Assessment Report". This report will identify if the deemed workplace meets Health and Safety requirements;

(25) The Working from Home Agreement cannot be approved until the Self Assessment Report has been completed, and identified modifications are carried out to required standards.

Working from Home Equipment Requirements

(26) The staff member must complete the "Working from Home Equipment Requirements" document, with the Application to Work from Home.

Supervisors Consultation and Consideration

(27) The staff member shall meet with the Supervisor to jointly complete the Supervisors Consultation and Consideration document (Part 2) and agree on the management of the following:

- a. working with confidential information;
- b. a plan to address the concerns of the supervisor and other team members (and clients, if applicable);
- c. arrangements for attending the University workplace site;
- d. the position description or classification standards, outlining those duties which will be performed at the home-based site, and those to be performed at the University workplace site (if the staff member is working part of the week at the University workplace site);
- e. the plan to monitor the effectiveness of the arrangement.

Working from Home - Supervisors Checklist

(28) The Supervisor will complete the 'Working from Home - Supervisors Checklist'.

In-principal Consideration

(29) The supervisor will determine and document the outcome of In-principal consideration.

Submission to Head of School/Director

(30) The completed Working from Home Agreement will be signed by the staff member and the supervisor, and submitted to the Head of School/Director.

(31) The Head of School/Director will consider and determine the proposed Working from Home Agreement.

Outcome of Proposal to Work from Home

(32) The supervisor will notify the staff member of the outcome in writing. If the proposal is not approved the supervisor will provide the staff member with details underpinning the decision and alternative arrangements.

Commencement of Approved Working from Home Agreement

(33) The staff member will commence working from home on the agreed date and in accordance with the approved arrangements.

(34) The supervisor is responsible for maintaining communication and monitoring the staff member's performance under the approved working from home arrangement.

(35) All documentation must be provided to Human Resource Services and placed on the staff member's personal file. The supervisor will retain a copy for the organisational unit's records in a secured confidential area for the duration of the Agreement.

Termination of the Agreement

(36) The staff member, supervisor, Head of School/Division or the University may terminate the Agreement with four (4) weeks' notice at any time during the period of the Agreement. Reasons for termination include:

- a. changed circumstances at the deemed workplace
- b. a new role or position undertaken by the staff member
- c. concerns raised by the staff member in relation to isolation
- d. the staff member fails to maintain a healthy and safe workplace
- e. operational needs of the University which may preclude working from home for a period of time
- f. the original arrangements are considered to be no longer efficient or effective
- g. failure of the staff member to keep the equipment, documents, and data belonging to the University secure, private and confidential
- h. agreed access arrangements are not being upheld.

Review of the Working from Home Arrangement

(37) A review of the working from home arrangement will be undertaken within three (3) months. The staff member's performance agreement goals will provide the basis for the review, taking into consideration the achievement of set objectives, including:

- a. client satisfaction;
- b. standard of work completed;
- c. level of productivity;
- d. workflow and impact on other team members.

Supervisor's Responsibilities

(38) The supervisor will:

- a. Discuss the proposal with the staff member requesting a working from home arrangement within a reasonable timeframe, ensuring that the following aspects are covered:
 - i. establishment of goals and objectives in relation to productivity and quality standards;
 - ii. agreed leave arrangements;
 - iii. agrees resources to be provided to carry out the home-based work;
 - iv. the schedule for regular meetings to discuss progress and enable feedback;
 - v. arrangements to ensure that the staff member is included in relevant career and development opportunities;

- vi. arrangements to ensure that the staff member is included in organisational and social events;
 - vii. arrangements to ensure maintenance of privacy and confidentiality of University documents and information.
- b. Consider and make a recommendation for the staff member's participation in such an arrangement.
 - c. Provide the completed Application to the Head of School/Director for approval.
 - d. Notify the staff member's team regarding the arrangement, if approved by the Head of School/Director.
 - e. Maintain regular communication with the staff member.
 - f. Include the staff member in planned team meetings, social functions, etc.
 - g. Offer the staff member appropriate career development and training opportunities as they arise.
 - h. Provide the staff member with regular feedback on performance.
 - i. Monitor the effectiveness of the arrangement.
 - j. Review the arrangement within the agreed review period.
 - k. Follow up on all reported work-related injuries and/or incidents in line with the University's Health and Safety policies and procedures.

Staff Member's Responsibilities

(39) The staff member will:

- a. Complete and submit Working from Home Offsite Agreement and Checklist.
- b. Ensure that work is undertaken as per the agreed work schedule of the Working from Home Proposal (Application and Agreement).
- c. Adhere to University guidelines, policies and procedures.
- d. Attend basic training in Occupational Health and Safety and ergonomic requirements, as required.
- e. Maintain a healthy and safe environment in the deemed workplace in accordance with University Health and Safety policy and procedures.
- f. Report all injuries and/or incidents immediately to the supervisor who will arrange follow-up action in accordance with the University Critical Incident Management Policy.
- g. Inform their home buildings/contents insurer that a Working from Home arrangement will commence and when this will occur, as the insurer may need to adjust any home buildings/contents policy/policies.
- h. Ensure that agreed work hours are undertaken.
- i. Maintain the agreed communication arrangements with the supervisor and other team members (and clients where applicable).
- j. Be contactable by phone during the agreed work hours.
- k. Ensure all University documents and equipment are kept secure, private and confidential.
- l. Provide access to equipment owned by the University when required.
- m. Ensure that equipment in the deemed workplace is secure. (The staff member will be responsible for any lost, damaged or stolen equipment.)
- n. Assist in the identification of training needs and attend training, as required.
- o. Not allow access to the deemed workplace by other household members unless an emergency arises.
- p. Set and achieve realistic work goals.
- q. Ensure that normal, regular breaks are taken, in accordance with University policy, procedures and guidelines.
- r. Immediately raise issues with their supervisor, before the agreed review date, if the staff member has any concerns about the agreed arrangement.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	9th July 2015
Review Date	27th November 2015
Approval Authority	Director, People and Workforce Strategy
Approval Date	8th January 2018
Expiry Date	28th April 2022
Responsible Executive	Martin Sainsbury Chief People and Culture Officer martin.sainsbury@newcastle.edu.au
Enquiries Contact	Ruth Hartmann Employee Relations Advisor 0249217288 <hr/> HR Support 4033 9999

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Risk" - Effect of uncertainty on objectives. Note: An effect is a deviation from the expected, whether it is positive and/or negative.

"Risk management" - The co-ordination of activities to optimise the management of potential opportunities and reduce the consequence or impact of adverse effects or events.

"Academic staff" - An academic employee holding a substantive academic position of 0.5 full-time equivalent or above where the contract length is twelve months or longer.

"Asset" - Any tangible or intangible item (or group of items) that the University owns or has a legal or other right to control and exploit to obtain financial or other economic benefits.

"Confidential information" - All information which is disclosed to a party by, or on behalf of, the other party, or which is otherwise acquired by a party from the other party, or any adviser engaged by the other party, which: (a) is by its nature confidential; (b) is designated by the other party as being confidential; or (c) the party knows or ought to know is confidential, but does not include information which: (d) is or becomes public knowledge other than through a breach of confidentiality; (e) was already in the possession of a party and not subject to an obligation of confidentiality; (f) is lawfully received from a third party; or (g) is independently developed by a party.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Establishment" - When referring to an Award offered by the University, establishment means the process of approving an award that the University has decided to offer. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Supervisor" - Staff members with direct supervisory responsibility for other staff within the workplace (a Supervisor may also be member of Senior Management, with duties as an Officer as defined in the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, or any replacing legislation).

"Term" - When referring to an academic period, term means a period of time aligned to an academic year for the delivery of a course in which students enrol and for which they are usually charged fees for example semesters, trimesters, summer, winter or full-year term. The academic year for a term is determined by the academic year in which the course commences, not concludes. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Third party" - A person or group other than the University or any of the University's partner institutions.