4.4 Telecommuting

Policy Statement
Employees who work for the University of Georgia normally perform their work on University premises. Exceptions may be permitted according to the guidelines below.

General information
“Telecommuting,” “flex-place,” or “working at home” may be defined as allowing employees to work away from the employer’s premises one or more days a week and communicate by computer, telephone, fax machine, or other means. Telecommuting is an alternative management tool and is not meant to replace the sense of place and community at the University.

Telecommuting is not an employee right, benefit, or requirement, but rather a work arrangement that can be terminated by the supervisor at any time without notice. Termination of a telecommuting assignment will not serve as a basis for filing a grievance or an appeal. The supervisor retains the right to require the employee to return to the workplace on scheduled telecommuting days.

The typical characteristics of the telecommuting worker include:

- Being able to work independently without close supervision. This involves the ability to deal with periods of isolation from the supervisor and fellow employees.
- Willing to work alone.
- Having strong and proven communication skills.
- Knowing how to manage time effectively.

Managers/supervisors of telecommuting employees should:

- Be experienced in a managerial capacity and administering policies.
- Have strong communication skills.
- Understand the meaning of alternate site work.
- Be willing to manage someone “unseen.”

Eligibility:
(These guidelines do not pertain to faculty.)

- An employee must complete his/her probationary period to be eligible to telecommute.
- An employee who has been rated as less than satisfactory should not be eligible to telecommute.
- A temporary employee (non-benefits eligible) may telecommute as long as business needs justify the assignment.
- In some instances, exceptions may be made, depending upon the nature of the critical business need. Any exceptions to these guidelines must be approved by the Associate Vice President for Human Resources, or AVP’s designated authority.
Telecommuting stipulations:
- An employee requesting a telecommuting arrangement is not a sufficient business need. Supervisors should consider a telecommuting arrangement only when it is beneficial to the individual unit and the University.
- Approval of telecommuting arrangement is made on a case-by-case basis.
- Approvals should be based on the position's duties and responsibilities, as well as the employee’s record of performance and other factors, each independent of one another.
- The approval of an employee’s telecommuting arrangement does not mean that another employee who later may fill that same position will be authorized to telecommute.
- An employee who changes positions or is reassigned may not necessarily continue to telecommute.

The proposed position should readily lend itself to a telecommuting situation.
- Possible jobs that lend themselves to a telecommuting situation include accountant, architect, or programmer/analyst.
- Examples of positions not conducive to a telecommuting situation include an administrative assistant, receptionist, office support position, trades/craft job, housekeeping worker, laboratory specialist, and most health care providers.

Conditions of the telecommuting arrangement:
- The telecommuter hours of work/schedule:

The normal work schedule is Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm, unless otherwise specified on the Telecommuting Agreement form. University policies and procedures should be followed, including starting work times, breaks, lunches, and ending work times.
- Employer visits to the telecommuting work site:

Management reserves the right to visit the employee’s alternate work site during business hours (normally 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday unless otherwise stipulated). Managers and supervisors must have the employee’s permission to enter the employee’s alternate work site if the work site is private property.
- University equipment and supplies at the employee’s alternate work site:
  - Equipment usage will be in accordance with the University of Georgia and the Board of Regents policies. The employer will furnish equipment and supplies necessary in accordance with the telecommuting assignment. Authorization for use of University of Georgia property at non-UGA locations must be obtained from the University of Georgia Property Control Department. The equipment and supplies must be returned immediately to the University of Georgia upon termination of the telecommuting assignment.
  - Management reserves the right to remove University-owned equipment (including computers and software), materials, working papers, official or working documents from the alternate work site.
  - University equipment used in a telecommuting situation should be inventoried by the respective department and signed for by the employee.

Review & cancellation:
The unit is responsible for periodically reviewing the impact of the telecommuting arrangements on productivity and service. Telecommuting agreements should not exceed one year in duration.
Management reserves the right to end the telecommuting arrangement at any time. Under most circumstances, a reasonable notice period should be provided.

The University or a unit may discontinue, temporarily suspend, or alter the arrangement when the work needs change or services are impaired. This decision is not subject to the grievance procedure.

**Insurance and Workers’ Compensation:**
The University of Georgia is not liable for damages to the employee’s personal property while telecommuting, nor is it responsible for operating costs, home maintenance, or other incidental costs (e.g., utilities, home insurance, etc.). By participating in this program, the employee does not relinquish any entitlement to reimbursement for authorized expenses incurred while conducting business for the University of Georgia, although unauthorized expenses will not be reimbursed.

The University of Georgia is not responsible for damage caused by the unauthorized or misuse of UGA equipment and supplies assigned in accordance with the telecommuting agreement.

While working at the alternate site, employees should designate one area as the official workstation. The University of Georgia’s potential liability with on-the-job injury or occupational illness is restricted to this official workstation.

**Data security:**
Work performed in accordance with this agreement is considered official state business. The employee is responsible for protecting State/University of Georgia records from unauthorized disclosure or damage and will comply with the public record maintenance requirements. Release or destruction of any records should be done in accordance with official University and department procedures. Electronic files are considered official records and should be similarly protected. The employee is responsible for maintaining confidentiality and security at the alternate workplace, as the employee would at the primary work place. The employee must protect the security and integrity of data, information, paper files, and access to agency computer systems. Any suspected breach of security must be reported immediately. All records, papers, and correspondence must be safeguarded for return to the official location.

**Leave:**
All annual and sick leave usage will be in accordance with the University of Georgia leave policy.

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**Procedures**

**Responsibilities of the department:**
- To appropriately administer these telecommuting guidelines.
- Submit the signed Telecommuting Agreement form and signed Telecommutings Safety form to Faculty and Staff Relations in Human Resources.
- To determine if equipment forms need to be completed, click here to review the related policy.
- Create a formal work schedule defining standard hours of work in which the employee’s duties and responsibilities are to be performed.
- To establish a sound communication plan with the telecommuting worker, including:
  - Periodic scheduling of supervisor/employee meetings
  - Attendance at regular employer-sponsored staff meetings
  - Notification of office events and University events
  - Periodic performance reviews
- To establish, with the telecommuting worker, a place of work at the alternate site that is principally used to perform the employee’s required work.
To establish a process of submitting hours worked, whenever necessary.

**Responsibilities of the telecommuting worker:**

- The employee must sign the Telecommuting Agreement form with his/her supervisor.
- The employee must be available during the work hours specified in the Telecommuting Agreement.
- The employee must safeguard all University-owned equipment, including computer hardware/software, calculators, transcription equipment provided for the alternate work site.
- The employee agrees not to use, or allow use by non-University employees or other unauthorized person, of any University-owned equipment including computer hardware/software, calculators, transcription equipment, etc., for non-University use. Non-University use includes employees or persons holding non-University jobs, independent contractor work, etc.
- The employee is responsible for the safekeeping of any confidential materials, official or working documents, transcription tapes or other forms of media relating to patients, employees, and the business activities of the University.

**Forms/Instructions**

- Telecommuting Agreement form
- Telecommutings Safety form

**Responsibilities**

Responsible University Senior Administrator: Vice President for Finance & Administration

Responsible University Administrator: Associate Vice President for Human Resources

Policy Owner: Human Resources

Policy Contact: Sige Burden

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Phone Number: 706-542-9756

**Policy Dates**

Date Last Updated: 2/14/2020