

## Blended Working Guidance for Professional Services Colleagues

**This guidance is for new ways of working from 1 September 2021 when it is envisaged buildings have returned to more or less normal occupancy levels. Of course, many colleagues have remained working on campus throughout the pandemic so there will be no major change to their working arrangements.**

The University is a place-based institution offering the essential support, social and cultural development for students as well as research activity. We believe that colleagues derive significant value and joy from being on campus, enabling informal connections, collaboration, joint working and social interaction. As a values-led organisation, campus-based interactions are vital to build our core and aspirational values and we therefore want to maintain the campus as our working hub. We also need to be present for our students and offer in person support in particular for student facing roles.

At the same time, we believe there is great value in having a blended working model for both colleagues and the organisation as a whole. We believe that we can all benefit from more flexible ways of working, supporting our sustainability agenda and utilising our estate in more effective ways. However, we are still learning and whilst we are applying some initial limitations to the time spent working remotely, this will be under review and we hope to evolve our guidance and approach as we learn more.

This guidance is for Professional Services only; there are different challenges for academic colleagues who work within the teaching timetable and already have a degree of flexibility and opportunity to combine remote and on-campus working as part of the professional contract. This is driven by the requirements of their role, teaching arrangements and provision for their students.

### What is blended working?

During the lockdowns we learned that working from home can be suitable for a whole range of roles that had previously been delivered exclusively on campus. We have moved on significantly and understand that our colleagues want more choice and flexibility. We also appreciate that for some colleagues, their preference is to have the structure that attending a place of work can bring to their week. It's likely within teams there will be a mix of both ways of working.

Blended working is a mix of campus-based working and working remotely. The split between campus and remote working will depend on the role and the team, however as a guide we typically expect colleagues to be working on campus more than they are off campus. The University campus remains the primary place of work.

It's an informal arrangement, for Professional Services colleagues, where their role allows them to work effectively from any location. If a colleague would like a permanent change to their working arrangements, or to amend their contractual hours of work, they should make a request under the Flexible Working Policy and Procedure. The Flexible Working Policy is not intended to be used where a blended working agreement would be more appropriate.

### **How does it work?**

There is no application form, it's a conversation between the individual and their line manager. It also isn't set in stone, whilst having a set pattern of work is beneficial to both teams and individuals, there could be occasions where these arrangements could change depending on business needs, holidays, covering unplanned absence, need to attend in person meetings, or a colleague's personal circumstances etc. There may be certain times in the year where individuals are required to be on campus every day and other times when you can agree more flexibility than normal. It's flexible; it's informal; it's team specific; it's built on trust.

For colleagues with dependents, we recognise that blended working may help with school/care drop offs or pickups, however blended working is not for undertaking caring responsibilities and whilst colleagues are working remotely, they must have adequate care arrangements in place, ensuring that they are able to fully undertake their duties in the same way they would on campus.

We will be reviewing how this new way of working operates, so colleagues are reminded not to make permanent changes to their personal circumstances based on the new ways of working.

### **Is blended working appropriate?**

Whilst many of us have been working from home during the pandemic, moving to more blended working arrangements will bring some additional considerations:

- How to meet customer expectations with changing working patterns
- How to promote team cohesion and find time to be together
- How to utilise technology and working spaces to support the new ways of working
- How to create safe, effective and enjoyable environments with the changes in occupancy levels.

Equally, it is important to think about when it is both necessary for colleagues to be on campus in order to deliver services, but also when it is valuable for individuals and teams to be on campus together and what activities benefit the most from being in person, such as induction" and training, project work and collaboration, team meetings and one to one meetings. The business need for presence on campus is a valid case for a line manager rejecting a request for remote working on any specific date, or for any duration of time.

Teams will fall into 3 broad categories, bearing in mind, that this may change over time and is based on the position that the University's primary purpose is to provide in person face-to-face teaching for students, along with an environment that provides the required support, social and cultural development. Therefore, any working arrangements should always be based on the needs of our students, to ensure high levels of student satisfaction.



- **Campus roles**

For colleagues in these teams, the work needs to be carried out on campus and is not suitable for remote working. However, there may still be opportunities for flexibility such as varying start and finish times where appropriate.

- **Campus focused roles**

The team is required to be predominantly on campus but may be suitable for some remote working, either regularly or occasionally, but it is unlikely to exceed 20% of the working hours or one day per week.

- **Blended roles**

Teams of blended roles are suitable for a mixture of campus and remote work and would typically involve working at least 60% of the week on campus and the remainder remotely. Depending on the nature of the work, the size of the team, flexibility of cover requirements and business need, this may involve working remotely on a rota basis shared with other colleagues. Again, this could be a regular arrangement or something that is more occasional, based on individual preferences and business needs.

## **The Essential stuff - what you need to know**

### **Health & Safety**

You must ensure your home environment is suitable for homeworking. This includes having a suitable desk and chair, and also a reasonably strong internet connection. During the pandemic the HSE did not apply the DSE regulations for people temporarily working at home but going forward, if you are permanently working some time from home you will need to complete and pass a [DSE self-assessment for home working](#), share the assessment results with your line manager, and follow all health and safety guidance whilst home working.

### **IT equipment**

We are moving to a policy of one device per colleague which will mean you have either a desktop or Surface laptop/tablet, but not one of each. The University will not be funding additional IT or office equipment for colleagues who will be working in a blended way, with a mix of on campus and home working, unless specialist equipment has been recommended by Occupational Health.

Working in a blended way is an individual choice and if you want to set up an office at home you will need to ensure it complies with DSE requirements and fund any additional equipment yourself, or work on campus all the time. Guidance about what additional items of equipment you may need will be published on the intranet in the coming weeks.

In the coming weeks we will also be asking line managers to audit what equipment colleagues have and asking colleagues to return any surplus items to LIS so they can be shared out amongst those who need them. Hopefully from the end of July onwards when we can return to campus for 'visit days', teams can also have a clear out of offices and cupboards, and identify

further spare equipment that can be shared amongst team members who need it for home working, or arrange for it to be returned to LIS.

This piece of work will be completed over the summer, but until then colleagues who don't have a Surface laptop/tablet should assume that from 1 September they will have the same equipment they have now, unless we are able to allocate a device in advance. Colleagues who only have a desktop computer, which cannot be transported back and forth will be required to work on campus all the time, unless they wish to use their own computer or laptop. For colleagues in this situation, updated guidance will be provided near the time on how to access the network safely and securely using your own device.

We know there are many more nuanced questions about IT equipment that we need to provide some more clarity on, and we will provide that as soon as we can once the equipment audit has been completed.

### **Meetings**

One of the lessons from lockdown is that meetings sometimes work best if they are wholly online, or wholly in person. Mixed meetings, with some colleagues online and others in the room, can be less effective in some situations.

Owners of meetings will need to determine whether it is most appropriate for meetings to be held online only, in-person only, or whether a mix of both works for everyone. In addition to needing the right technology it is about having a good Chairperson who sets clear expectations of what the meeting will cover, and behaviour expected.

We know that some of our office-based desktops don't currently have cameras or microphones which will make attending online meetings from on campus impossible. All colleagues will have access to a camera and headset for their device before 1 September, to ensure they can engage and collaborate with colleagues and students online without disturbing others.

### **Data security and confidentiality**

All University equipment and University information must be kept securely. Please see the University Data Protection Policy. Colleagues must have completed all mandatory Information Security Essentials and GDPR training required by the University. Colleagues are required to have read and understood our [Data Protection Policy](#) and [IT Security Policy](#).

### **Childcare**

Just a reminder that Childcare should be arranged for your working from home days in the same way as for on-campus days, including use of after school clubs if other arrangements cannot be made. This is important so you can concentrate and prioritise work while working at home and still be flexible in case you are required in the office.

### **Car Parking**

Car parking will be reviewed during the Summer, with the intention of moving to a pay-per-usage system. This will avoid the issues around colleagues paying for full-time car parking, when they are not required on campus for the whole week. It will be impossible to install a new system before September, so as an interim measure we will retain free car parking until the end of August 2021 and then recommence charging at half of the pre-Covid rates until the new process is in place. Car parking deductions will be taken from September salaries.