Guidelines for Working from Home

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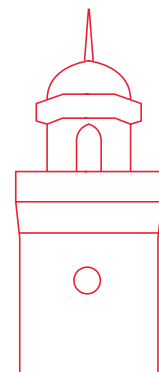
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Introduction

Acadia recognizes the value of flexible work arrangements for both employees and the University. These benefits include improved employee wellbeing, employee retention, space utilization, productivity, sustainability, accessibility, and ability to manage commuting/parking pressures.

Guiding Principles

In developing and implementing these guidelines, the university has developed the following guiding principles to inform decision making:

Excellent Service

The availability of work from home arrangements will always be subject to specific operational requirements which will vary based on role and unit. Work from home arrangements have direct benefits to the university, including improved productivity, better space utilization, and alignment with strategic objectives; but will always be subject to our faculties and departments unique mandates to provide excellent service to students, faculty, staff and our community.

Employee Experience

Acadia is consistently looking for ways to improve the employee experience. Supporting and enabling employees to effectively balance their professional and personal lives, including through use of work from home arrangements, is a key component of the Acadia employee experience.

Dual Responsibility

Employees share in the responsibility of making work from home arrangements successful. The individual circumstances of employees will be an important consideration when assessing the feasibility of flexible work arrangements, including the employee's access to the required work tools and adequate technology, and the employee's ability to work effectively in a flexible environment. The success of these arrangements requires mutual accountability and commitment to successful outcomes.

Integration of Practices

Our approach to work from home arrangements will be designed to integrate with our strategies, policies, and collective agreements. Work from home arrangements will be jointly agreed to by employees and their managers, and will follow the provisions of appropriate collective agreements, terms of employment, and other relevant policies. When designing work from home arrangements, the university will develop approaches which align with key university priorities, including inclusion, accessibility, sustainability, and the needs of students.

This guide is designed to provide Acadia University leaders, supervisors and employees with practical information, resources and documentation when considering and/or managing work from home arrangements.

This guide is designed to be applicable to regular Acadia staff positions.

Working from Home - Overview

The working from home arrangement allows employees to perform their usual job duties at an approved alternative location. This can take the form of either partial remote work where employees split their time between working in-office and remotely, or full-time remote work where employees work remotely all the time.

Positions with a high level of autonomy and minimal requirements for face-to-face interaction are most appropriate for remote work arrangements. Supervisors need to consider and establish means and methods for supervision and monitoring of workload and results. They should determine the frequency and method of communication with their employees to ensure performance expectations are met, and communication channels are open.

Employees working remotely are expected to maintain their regular hours of work unless alternate arrangements are made with their supervisor. It is expected that anyone working remotely will maintain a normal workload.

Faculties and departments which are providing remote work options for employees should ensure that there is appropriate coordination across the unit which takes into consideration minimum on-campus service levels, availability or work space for employees working on campus, and any requirements for all staff to be present on campus for certain meetings or events.

<u>Reflections</u>

- ➢ May be a strategic tool to retain valued employees who want to work from home for some or all of the time.
- ➢ With a suitable remote work environment, employees can work with minimal distractions, resulting in improved productivity and efficiency.
- ➢ May allow employees to organize their workday around their personal peak productivity periods, peak work demand periods, as well as accommodating personal and family needs.
- ➢ Implementation of remote work across a unit may result in better space utilization.
- ➢ Often changes the fundamental way work is performed and requires a review of unit operations, job duties and responsibilities, and performance management practices before determining if such an arrangement is appropriate.
- ➢ Employees need to consider whether they have suitable alternate space to perform their work without decreasing productivity.
- ➢ Supervisors should provide guidelines for procedures on meeting with clients and ensuring appropriate University policies are adhered to.
- ➢ Consider the issue of isolation of the employee, which may result in feeling less engaged with the work of the unit, department, or university.

Example An employee may request to work from home Mondays and Fridays, while continuing to work in the office Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays each week.

Considerations

Prior to initiating a work from home arrangement, it is important that appropriate planning take place and that consideration be given to the full impacts of the arrangement to maximize the potential for success. This involves faculty/department leadership, supervisors, and employees all understanding their role in administering successful flexible work arrangements and fully considering the implications of work from home arrangements before they are formalized.

While it is the University's goal to offer flexible work arrangements where there is alignment with the guiding principles outlined in this document, it is also recognized that such arrangements will not be suitable for all faculties, departments, positions, and situations. Leaders, supervisors, and employees should be open to discuss the various factors involved, and decisions should be based on full consideration of all of the reasons, facts and options.

Collective Agreement / Policy Considerations

Work from home arrangements need to align with existing collective agreements, terms of employment, and university policies. Leaders, supervisors, and employees should review these documents prior to initiating a flexible work arrangement.

Considerations for Faculties/Departments

Faculties and departments are ultimately responsible for administering the work from home arrangements. Considerations for faculties and departments include:

- The operational characteristics of the unit or group within a larger unit, including the nature of the work performed, requirements to access certain equipment or on-campus resources, and the need for standardized operating hours.

- The administrative costs associated with implementing work from home arrangements. This could include the need to provide new or different equipment to employees, as well as scheduling and overtime impacts.

- Impact on client and student service as well as additional operational requirements, including, but not limited to, requirements pertaining to operating hours, service standards, and staffing levels.

- Impact on co-workers and the work of the unit, including the ability to provide equitable opportunities.

- Consideration of peak or critical periods during the year which may impact the ability to provide flexible work arrangements.

Considerations for Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for confirming individual work from home arrangements with employees who report to them. A key part of the role of a supervisor is working with employees to assess whether a work from home arrangement would be a good fit for the individual and their role. Considerations for supervisors include:

The job duties of the position and whether job requirements raise any conflicts with the proposed flexible work arrangement.

- Performance considerations related to the particular employee, including past history managing work expectations.

- The individual's ability to demonstrate the competencies necessary to be effective in a flexible work arrangement, including independence, initiative, reliability, organizational ability, and collaboration and communication skills. This needs something specific to a level of independence with respect to technology.

- Whether the employee can be reasonably expected to perform their role in a remote setting, including access to a suitable remote work location with access to appropriate remote work-site technology, internet connections, and software applications.

- The interdependency of the employee's work with other staff members and whether the flexible work arrangement will have an adverse impact on other employees.

Considerations for Employees

Before participating in a work from home arrangement, employees should consider how the arrangement will impact their work life, and factors which will influence success. While participating, employees remain covered by all terms and conditions of their employment, including those outlined in relevant collective agreements, handbooks, University policies, and all other legal and regulatory requirements. Employees should consider the potential impacts of the following factors:

- Whether a work from home arrangement will allow for a healthy balance between workload and personal responsibilities or interests and align with an approach to work which supports their personal health and wellness.

- Access to an appropriate space to work, including work site that can be set up as a dedicated work area that allows for uninterrupted work and access to an appropriate internet connection and any other required infrastructure.

- Recognition that work from home arrangements can impact employees' sense of boundaries between work and personal life and assurance that appropriate steps to establish and maintain healthy boundaries will be taken.

- Consideration of the different communication requirements involved in working under a work from home arrangement, including increased reliance on email, MS Teams, and other alternatives to in-person communication.

Monitoring Work from Home Arrangements

Both the supervisor and the employee should expect ongoing adjustments. A periodic review and evaluation will allow issues to be identified and corrected by adjusting details of the arrangement. A number of factors could trigger the need to modify the arrangement, including operational impact, work performance, and employee satisfaction, with some examples as follows:

Work Performance	Employee Satisfaction	Operational Impact
Productivity / ability to meet deadlines	Employee satisfaction with duties, responsibilities, and autonomy	Impact on attendance, punctuality, overtime
Attention to detail		Impact on the productivity of unit, service standards, and ability to achieve goals and objectives
Quality of work output	Relationships with co-workers and leaders	
Quality of communication with co-workers and leaders	Achievement of personal life benefits	Impact on the morale of the unit and interpersonal interactions
Performance metrics for service delivery		Ability of the unit to manage meetings and departments needs
Availability for meetings without distraction		Alignment of outcomes with intended benefits of work from home arrangements

Where issues related to performance, behavior or attendance arise, supervisors should work with employees to address these concerns in a supportive and open manner. In some circumstances, this will include adjusting the method of communication and feedback to account for work from home arrangements, including relying on communication methods other than in-person meetings. Regardless of how feedback is provided, supervisors should consider the following steps in addressing their concerns:

1) Set clear performance standards and communicate them effectively

2) When performance concerns arise, address them in a timely, open, and supportive manner

3) Partner with employees to develop an action plan for addressing areas of develop, including identifying supports

4) If incidents continue, consider escalated forms of intervention, which may include adjustments to the work from home arrangement

5) Consult with Human Resources for further options

Signs that Work from Home Arrangements Need Modification

<u>Performance</u>

• Need for additional training or skills development on use of technology

• Increased workplace distractions impacting performance

• Inability to meet deadlines or complete tasks to required standard

• Inability to effectively assess performance

<u>Wellness</u>

• Employees appearing disengaged, quiet, or withdrawn

• Unexplained changes in behaviour or attitude, including in interactions with colleagues

• Expressions of burnout, overwork, or challenges managing assignments

• Performance, Attendance, and Behavioral issues which have a root-cause in wellness

<u>Attendance</u>

• Inconsistent expectations around hours of work, and measuring productivity

• Negative health/attendance impacts related to working from home

• Other demands placed in a at home-work environment impacting attendance

• Need for clearer ground rules around attendance

<u>Behaviour</u>

• Inappropriate language in team meetings/texts/chats

• Increased rudeness or shortness with colleagues

• Lack of participation on an ongoing basis in team meetings

• Lateness or punctually issues without a reasonable explanation

• Ignoring clear direction from supervisor

Work from Home

https://hr.acadiau.ca/files/sites/hr/Policies%20and%20Procedures/Work%20From%20Home%20-%20Updated.pdf

Appendix A

https://hr.acadiau.ca/files/sites/hr/HR%20FORMS/WFH-Appendix_A-RequestForm.docx