New Ways of Working – Professional services NDM

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic all staff have been required to work in new, previously unexplored and innovate ways. In the NDM, professional services staff have predominately worked from home throughout the pandemic, in accordance with the government "work from home" mandate. Though initially challenging for everyone, it is evident that professional services staff can continue to support the department's academic and strategic priorities and work collaboratively across staff categories without requiring all staff to work full-time on-site.

In consideration of recent experiences and to enable us to retain and attract high quality professional services staff, we believe a hybrid working model between on-site and remote working should be offered to professional services staff, if requested, and *as appropriate to their role*.

The principles of New Ways of Working

- We work to support the academic mission of the University of Oxford/NDM, and we recognise the value and benefits of in-person interaction with colleagues and those to whom we are delivering a service;
- In coming to their decision about flexible working, managers must be confident that they can continue to deliver the expected standard of service to support our academic and research colleagues and maintain a culture of collaborative working;
- We will arrive at these decisions through inclusive, open, and transparent discussions; and
- Staff must be 'available' to come in to work should it be required on days where they might typically, *under new ways of working* be working from home.

Principles for managers

Operational needs will be paramount, and you will need to consider the impact of any proposed changes on departmental and team objectives. During the pandemic, some duties have been carried out in a way that is 'good enough', or where a greater risk profile was temporarily acceptable. Whilst schools and other care facilities were closed, many staff did an extraordinary job balancing care responsibilities with working from home. To allow the University and department to operate in exceptional circumstances, some staff were permitted to flex their normal contracted hours to accommodate caring responsibilities. As we return to 'business as usual', pre-pandemic expectations will resume.

Anyone who is working remotely should ensure that they can work, attend virtual meetings, take phone calls, etc. throughout their agreed working hours, without unplanned interruptions. This will not be compatible with caring for dependants with intensive and unpredictable care needs during working hours, and staff will be expected to make alternative care arrangements for dependants of this sort who would be at home with them.

All professional services staff must work in a way that maximises the service levels provided in support of the academic mission of the University.

- A manager may agree a **maximum of two days** home working (per week) for full-time staff. Part-time staff are permitted one day working from home per week if they do not work every day. Part-time staff who spread their working hours across each day of the working week may be allowed a maximum of two days home working.
- Working from home days cannot be consecutive, including Monday and Friday.
- Compressed hours can be agreed on a 10 days worked in 9 days basis (9 day fortnight), or 5 days worked over 4.5 days. Compressed hours may not be accrued or carried forward beyond these measures.
- Where hours are compressed and home working is also agreed, the week in which the staff member takes their accrued hours will reduce their working from home day for that week. Where staff compress to 4.5 days, and have home working, the home working should be taken in the morning/afternoon of the shorter day.
- Ideally, there will be one day per week when all staff in a group are working onsite to enable team building, in-person discussions, etc.
- NDM core working hours are between 09:30 and 16:00, Monday to Friday.
- A trial period of 3 months will be implemented to review the on-going feasibility of the arrangement.
- The expectation is that these arrangements will be *informal* and therefore, it is important for managers to have open discussions about the ability of staff to change their working from home day/flexibility at short notice, for operational reasons. If individuals are unable to agree this level of flexibility, a formal flexible working request must be completed.
- Staff should not have formal and informal requests operating in parallel.
- Due consideration must be given to matters such as data protection training. Staff and managers must continue to comply with the University's training requirements (see below links).

Where greater than 50% of a 'team' are requesting more than two days per week working from home, the full staff matrix must be submitted to a Unit's Management Committee or Director for assessment of impact and sign-off.

Any needs relating to a disability should take precedence over the preferences of other team members. If a team member has a disability and working remotely would be a reasonable adjustment to assist them in managing this, it will be a priority to meet this need, where operationally possible. This may have financial implications, e.g. if the individual would need adaptive equipment both at home and in the office, and the University would be expected to find this.

Where possible, requests to facilitate caring responsibilities towards a dependent family member should be prioritised. It may be more appropriate, in certain circumstances, for employees to follow the formal flexible working request process, if the flexibility required is not feasible under NWW. Managers and staff are encouraged to be open with each other about the level of flexibility achievable under NWW. HR can support conversations if required.

Full-time remote working is not an option in the NWW scheme, and requests need to be made through the standard [flexible work scheme](#).

Separate processes apply if the individual wishes to request to **work from outside the UK**. This requires formal approval by Head of Department and careful consideration of issues including tax, social security, contractual issues, etc.

www.ndm.ox.ac.uk/working-for-ndm/ndm-human-resources/global-mobility

Training and guidance

- Data and security compliance

- IT security training

- Protect my computer

- Insurance

- University miscellaneous expenses guide

- HMRC guide to tax relief on work expenses

Questions for managers to consider in coming to decisions

- Has the team been able to work effectively and meet objectives, meeting stakeholder needs to a high standard?
- What expectations do colleagues or customers have of the team? How will those change once everyone can return to working on site?
- Are there working practices that you would wish to retain going forwards?
- What has been challenging for individual members of your team?
- If members of your team have a disability, what has been beneficial and what has been detrimental to their work and health? How can any benefits be maintained?
- How have individual members of the team coped with remote working?
- Are there operational requirements that mean some or all of the team need to work on site for part or all of the week?
- Are core hours covered?
- What culture would you like to establish in the team, and how can the team's working arrangements support that?
- Do you want in-person meetings on a regular or occasional basis?
- How can the team best support relationships and communication if some members work remotely?
- What working practices have worked well and given good outcomes during the pandemic and therefore should be retained?

- How can you ensure that the customers of your service are not adversely affected by any changes to team ways of working?

Trial periods

During a trial period the arrangement should be reviewed very regularly (eg monthly). This can be done in normal 1:1 meetings. Team leaders should give honest feedback and discuss any issues arising as early as possible, to give their team members the opportunity to address any problems with their support. It would not be reasonable to tell an employee that the arrangement is not working at the end of the trial period if issues have not been raised, and opportunity to address them in good time.

Once the trial period is over, and the arrangement confirmed, you should continue to review the arrangement regularly, perhaps every three to six months, or whenever you review work objectives.

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