



Telework Guidelines

Purpose

The University of West Georgia allows teleworking, on a voluntary basis, to employees who fill job classifications/positions that have been designated as eligible for telework. The option to telework is not an employee right and is appropriate only when it results in a benefit to the University. Telework may not be suitable for all employees and/or positions. A department may implement teleworking as a work option for certain eligible employees based on specific criteria and procedures consistently applied throughout the unit.

The purpose of this policy is to define the program for teleworking (also known as telecommuting or working from home) and the guidelines and rules under which it will operate. This policy and its accompanying guidelines provide a general framework for managers and employees so they may better understand their associated rights and responsibilities. It does not attempt to address the special conditions and needs of all employees, nor is it intended to interfere with existing faculty schedules driven by teaching, research, service, and/or clinical responsibilities, which can vary daily.

Definitions

These definitions apply to these terms as they are used in this policy:

- **Alternate Workplace:** A work site other than the employee's usual and customary worksite (primary workplace). The alternate workplace may include the employee's home.
- **Core Operating Hours:** Each department/unit may establish operating hours according to the operating needs of the university during which all full-time employees are expected to work a minimum of forty (40) hours in a workweek. Core hours, which are a subset of operating hours, are the time period during which all regular professional/administrative and staff employees will normally be expected to be present. During this time, all offices are to be open for business, unless administratively and/or programmatically unfeasible. All offices are to be adequately staffed to transact business during these hours and to provide the necessary and appropriate services. An employee's flexible schedule will always include core hours to facilitate the scheduling of university business. An employee's individual schedule will be negotiated and approved by the employee's direct supervisor.
- **Eligible Employees:** An employee, in an eligible position, who has been identified by the employee's supervisor as satisfactorily meeting performance standards, terms, and conditions of employment of their position. The employee shall have no active formal disciplinary actions on file for the current or immediately preceding review period.

- **Eligible Positions:** A position having measurable quantitative or qualitative, results-oriented standards of performance that is structured to be performed during a work period that may vary from the core work hours established for a department or school. For teleworking, the position must be structured to be performed independently of others and with minimal need for support and can be scheduled at least one day a pay period to participate in teleworking without impacting service quality or organizational operations. The eligibility of a position for teleworking may change depending on circumstances.
- **Equipment Loan Agreement Form:** Document must be completed and approved by the supervisor and/or department head prior to removal of University property from the regular work site. Failure to complete the form will result in the personal liability of the employee in the event the property is damaged, lost or stolen.
- **Occasional Teleworker:** A teleworker, who with the approval of their supervisor, works at home on an infrequent basis. Approval is usually task or project specific and normally approved at least the day before the employee teleworks. Occasional teleworkers do not telework on a scheduled basis. For the purpose of this policy, occasional teleworkers are considered teleworkers. It is not necessary for the occasional teleworker to complete a formal Teleworking Agreement.
- **Primary Workplace:** The teleworker's usual and customary workplace.
- **Teleworker:** A person who for at least one or more days in a particular pay period works at home, or a satellite office, to produce an agreed upon work product. All teleworkers should complete the telework agreement.
- **Teleworking:** Working at a location other than the employee's usual and customary workplace.
- **Teleworking Agreement:** The signed document that outlines the understanding between the department and the employee regarding the teleworking arrangement. The teleworker agreement documents the mandatory policies in effect and the results of any other agreements between the supervisor and the teleworker. The agreement must be signed by both parties prior to the start of the telework period agreeing that both parties will abide by the terms and conditions of teleworking. The agreement must be reviewed and renewed at least annually to ensure that the guidelines for participating in the program indicate continued eligibility and are well understood. A supervisor may elect to revise the agreement when a need arises. In addition, the teleworking agreement should be reviewed and revised if necessary when there is a change in supervisor, job responsibilities, or change in work circumstances or performance. The agreement must have a place where the employee acknowledges that he or she has read and agrees to the terms of the policy and items listed in the agreement. Any employee who teleworks must sign a Telework Agreement.

Reasonable Accommodations

Requests for Telework due to medical needs must be evaluated under the University's Reasonable Accommodation process in the Office of Human Resources. Requests of this nature may be considered a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and, therefore, may require the University to waive certain eligibility requirements or otherwise modify the telework program for an employee with a disability needing to work remotely.

Employees may contact J'Nee Dobson, OHR Employee Relations at hr@westga.edu for Telework accommodation and modification requests. OHR will initiate the interactive process and work closely with the employee, supervisor and other appropriate persons relative to requests for Telework modifications and accommodations.

Process and Procedures

Telework may not be suitable for all employees and/or positions. Teleworking may be implemented as a work option for certain eligible employees, based on specific criteria and procedures consistently applied throughout the department. Departments and/or individual colleges will be responsible for designating the positions which will be authorized to approve telework arrangements. Directors, Department Chair, or other management staff authorized by the University to approve telework shall hereinafter be referred to as the Telework Manager for the purposes of this policy.

Telework Managers who choose to consider telework for employees shall be responsible for the following:

- Establishing expectations for and monitoring of employee performance;
- Identifying eligible positions suitable for telework;
- Identifying eligible employees (see “Employee Participation”);
- Determining if office-like space is required in the home or alternative work space;
- Determining if equipment will be provided to the employee to use at home (see “Equipment and Supplies”);
- Establishing how the teleworker will maintain regular contact with office coworkers and supervisors;
- Determining how the department will handle restricted access materials, security issues, and taking electronic or paper records from the primary work place (see “Security and Access to Information”);
- Ensuring that practices are consistent and compliant with state, Board of Regents, and university policy and state and federal law in the use of technology;
- Delivering telework training to employees;
- Ensuring that individual work schedules and reporting for non-exempt employees are in compliance with FLSA regulations, University, and Board of Regents policy;
- Ensuring that each employee’s request to telework is considered in relation to the department’s operating and customer needs;
- Requiring a Teleworking Agreement.

Conditions of Employment

The teleworker's conditions of employment remain the same as for non-teleworking employees. Employee salary, benefits, and employer-sponsored insurance coverage will not change as a result of teleworking. The employee shall adhere to all policies, rules, and regulations of the University of West Georgia, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, and state while teleworking. Further, an employee must have the willingness of their supervisor to perform the necessary supervisory responsibilities required for teleworking. The employee agrees not to conduct personal business while in official duty status at the alternate workplace.

Work Site and Work Hours

A defined workspace and defined core work hours are necessary (1) to reduce the University and the University System of Georgia's exposure to risk, (2) to facilitate proper management of teleworkers, and to ensure work is conducted in a productive environment.

Work Space

As a condition of permission to telework, the employee must verify that home facilities used for telework purposes are safe and suitable for purposes of the employee's work. The department may deny an employee the opportunity to telework if the alternate worksite is not conducive to productive work.

An employee approved to telework shall be responsible for setting up an appropriate work environment within their home. The university will not be responsible for any cost associated with the setup of a home office. Upon request, the University System of Georgia will consult with an employee on any modifications or requirements to operate University System of Georgia owned equipment at the home office. An employee will be required to provide the University System of Georgia with a statement within ten (10) business days of the request to telework confirming that they have met the reasonable standards to include health and safety requirements (including an ergonomically sound workstation) and promise to maintain it in the condition for the duration of the telecommuting period.

Equipment and Supplies

Office supplies (e.g. pens and paper) shall be provided by the department and should be obtained during the teleworker's in-office work period.

The employee is expected to use their own furniture, telephone lines, and other equipment. Any use of private facilities of the employee will be at the employee's discretion and not at the behest or expense of the University. This applies to all physical improvements and conveniences as well as services.

Employees must complete an Equipment Loan Agreement Form prior to the removal of University or state property from the regular work site. In no situation should the university-owned equipment be installed in an employee's home. However, the employee's supervisor, in consultation with Information Technology Services, may give written permission for certain equipment, for example computers, to be checked out and used at the alternate worksite.

Work Hours

Each employee who teleworks shall develop a work schedule with the employee's supervisor and the employee's supervisor must agree in advance to any changes to the employee's work schedule. Non-exempt employees subject to mandatory overtime must obtain approval from their supervisor before performing overtime. A nonexempt employee working overtime without such approval may cause the department to terminate the teleworking option and/or take other appropriate action. The employee must obtain approval in advance from their supervisor before taking leave during a designated telework day.

The employee must maintain contact with the office as specified in the work schedule, department policy, and telework agreement. Employees approved to telework will be required to retrieve voice messages and/or forward office telephone for remote work access and timely response. Employee "out of office" messages should refrain from referring internal and external customers to email. An employee's activities outside the time of work or outside the place designated for work will be deemed to be in the employee's own personal time and place, unconnected with work activities.

Expenses and Compensable Time

At the discretion of the supervisor, expenses for business related long distance and/or international calls and cell phone calls, which must be made from a teleworker's home, may be reimbursed if the reasons and costs for the calls are documented. The teleworker is responsible for the cost of maintenance, repair, and operation of personal equipment.

Liability

The employee's home workspace when used for telework is an extension of the department workspace. The University's liability for job-related accidents will continue to exist during the approved work schedule and in the employee's designated work location. The teleworker is covered under the State's Workers' Compensation Law for injuries occurring in the course of the actual performance of official duties at the alternate workplace.

If an injury occurs during teleworking work hours, then the employee shall immediately report the injury to the supervisor. The employee and supervisor should follow [Risk Management-Environmental Safety and Health](#) procedures regarding the reporting of injuries for employees injured while at work.

The State of Georgia and the University are not responsible for any injuries to family members, visitors, and others in the employee's home. The teleworker may not have business guests at the alternate workplace.

To the extent permitted by law, the employee will not attempt to hold the University or the state responsible or liable for any loss or liability in any way connected to the employee's non-work-related use of their own home.

The teleworker is responsible for contacting the teleworker's personal insurance agent and a tax consultant and consulting local ordinances for information regarding home workplaces.

Security and Access to Information

The teleworker is responsible for maintaining confidentiality and security at the alternate workplace, as the teleworker 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. All University policies on [Information Technology](#) and internet and technology use apply to teleworking, as they would in the primary work place.

Child and Dependent Care

Teleworking is not a substitute for childcare or dependent care. The teleworker shall continue to make arrangements for child or dependent care to the same extent as if the teleworker was working at the primary workplace.

Employee Participation in Program

Offering the opportunity to telework is a management option and is not an employee right. An employee's participation in the telework program is entirely voluntary. The employee, supervisor, or manager may terminate the teleworking agreement without cause. Teleworking is a work arrangement between an individual employee and their supervisor. Unless it is a condition of employment, a requirement of the job description, or an extenuating circumstance, a supervisor has no authority to require an employee to telework.