



U-M Remote Work Agreement and Modes of Work Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Managers and Employees

GENERAL TELECOMMUTING

What is the University of Michigan Remote Work Agreement , and why are we doing it?

In alignment with our mission, Michigan Engineering strives to recruit and retain talented staff, leverage technology for efficiencies, embrace emerging work structures, and ensure an inclusive environment to enable staff to be their best and preserve Michigan Engineering's excellence and reputation.

Michigan Engineering recognizes the importance of work-life balance, the challenges related to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, and the College's responsibility to steward University resources and support carbon neutrality initiatives.

The [U-M Remote Work Classification Matrix](#) defines the remote work profiles, workspace definitions, eligibility, expectations, responsibilities, and other guidelines related to telecommuting. **Telecommuting is not an employment right, and any telecommuting arrangement may be changed or terminated at any time, and for any reason, by the employer.** Department leadership is responsible for maintaining a staffing structure that ensures all faculty, staff, and students receive the level of support needed during regular business hours by providing appropriate on-site staffing levels to ensure customer support activities are available.

Who does the U-M Remote Work policy affect?

Michigan Engineering staff (non-exempt, exempt, full, and part-time) who are in good standing and whose role, job functions, and work resource needs are aligned with the desired Modes of Work.

Is every department/unit required to offer telecommuting opportunities to their staff?

Michigan Engineering departments/units have discretion as to whether telecommuting is a viable option for their staff based on the parameters provided in the [U-M Remote Work Classification Matrix](#). Departments/units are encouraged to embrace the University's new Modes of Work staffing model. Modes of Work was developed to support units and supervisors in making decisions - about work practices, including how, when and where employees work. For more information, visit the [Five Guiding Principles, Definitions and Values Alignment](#).

I am interested in telecommuting. What do I do now?

The first step is to talk with your supervisor. Supervisor approval is required for any/all Modes of Work arrangements. All Remote Work Agreements must be formalized and documented using the U-M Remote Work Agreement .

When do I need to complete or update my U-M Remote Work Agreement ?

The first time you enter into an agreement and every time your Modes of Work classification changes, you must complete the U-M Remote Work Agreement unless you are classified as “Onsite”. You will also be required to review and certify your Agreement on an annual basis.

What should an employee do if they have an equipment failure, or internet outage, etc., that prohibits work from being completed remotely?

Department/unit leadership and managers should develop a standard plan around expectations for connectivity issues, and in all cases, the employee must contact the supervisor immediately if remote work becomes impossible for any reason. The plan could include, for instance, coming to the office (if necessary), flexing the schedule, or using vacation time.

What if I try a telecommuting arrangement and find it doesn't work for me?

Employees may also find that it is not the right fit for them once they have tried telecommuting. Telecommuters can request to have their Modes of Work classification amended and explore non-remote work options with their supervisor; however, decisions related to Modes of Work classifications and space are at the discretion of departments/units.

MANAGER GUIDANCE

My staff member wants to move out of a reasonable driving distance from U-M Ann Arbor campus. Can I, as the manager, approve the Modes of Work classification change?

Approving a Mobile/Remote work relationship outside of a reasonable commuting distance for an employee that is expected to maintain a physical presence on campus should be rare (short term in duration or for a critical transition) and requires a formal written request from the staff member and Michigan Engineering HR will review and seek approval from the U-M Office of General Counsel. If Approved, this would place the individual in the Modes of Work classification of “Mobile/Remote” as this decision would be the employee’s choice and not a requirement of the position any travel to campus for work related purposes would be at the employee’s expense.

As a Manager, how can I best ensure my telecommuters are productive?

Regular and consistent communication is even more critical in a telecommuting work environment. Managers will be able to assess staff performance and productivity by developing clear objectives, communicating regularly, and establishing regular face-to-face (virtual or in-person) meetings.

It will be imperative that managers address any performance issues or lack of productivity immediately to help staff members get back on track. At times, it may be necessary to change an individual’s Modes of Work classification - whether temporarily or permanently - which is why the U-M Remote Work Agreement and all Michigan Engineering offer letters include the following language: Telecommuting is not an employment right, and any telecommuting

arrangement may be changed or terminated at any time, and for any reason, by the employer.

Why are staff in other units, in similar roles with customer-facing positions, allowed to telecommute more than I am allowed?

Because telecommuting is determined by various factors, including but not limited to the type of work performed, resource needs, employee performance, and department culture, there will be instances where similar roles or classifications may not have the same Modes of Work classification. We recommend the supervisor work with leadership and/or Michigan Engineering HR to understand what flexibility is available in these cases.

All units must have staffing plans that include in-person services for all faculty and student activities during regular business hours.

As a manager, how can I make this equitable for employees whose work does not align with telecommuting?

Managers are strongly encouraged to be creative and flexible in developing opportunities for staff to participate in telecommuting at some level. Staff can be given assignments or projects that are developmental in nature and provide a set time per month to work remotely.

In some cases, where telecommuting is not possible, an alternative work schedule may be advantageous to the staff member and not result in disruption to the unit.

Managers are encouraged to consult with Michigan Engineering HR for assistance as needed.

As a manager, what is the process for changing an employee's Modes of Work classification?

Managers are encouraged to explain to the employee the reason it is necessary to change the employee's Modes of Work classification. Staff should be given reasonable time to make necessary personal changes (carpool, etc.) before the change is implemented. Once the conversation has occurred, the employee's U-M Remote Work Agreement must be updated.

Managers are encouraged to consult with Michigan Engineering HR for assistance as needed.

How do managers handle multiple staff requests for the same telecommuting days (i.e., Fridays or Mondays)?

The University of Michigan and Michigan Engineering are "open" during the regular business hours of Monday through Friday, beginning at 8:00 AM and ending at 5:00 PM. All departments and units must be staffed appropriately during business hours.

It is the responsibility of department/unit leadership to determine work schedules that meet the business needs of the organization. Managers are encouraged to be creative and develop solutions for high-demand workdays (i.e., rotations, more flexibility in summer months, etc.).

How do I set expectations for response time to email/phone calls?

Each manager should set reasonable expectations for response time with their staff, whether working remotely or onsite. Keep in mind that various factors delay response time even when staff are physically in the workplace. For example, an individual could be in a meeting, on a call, engaged in detailed work for a period of time, or taking a well-deserved break.

How do I set expectations for getting answers to quick questions similar to hallway conversations when in person?

Technology has made us easily accessible via phone, text, chat. Each manager should determine the appropriate use of the technology available for work-related purposes.

How do managers ensure transparency with staffing schedules to other members of their department community?

Department and unit leadership should have access to the staff member's work-related calendar, including which days the employee works remotely. An "All Staff" calendar may be needed in some instances and not in others. Each department and unit will need to decide what works best for their area and establish and share the policy.

MODES OF WORK CLASSIFICATION TYPE

What should a staff member do if they do not like their assigned Modes of Work classification (e.g., Onsite, Hybrid, Mobile/Remote)?

The Modes of Work classification type is based on many factors, including the type of work performed, resource needs, employee performance, and department culture. These factors were all considered when determining the telecommuting type of each staff member. At times, it may be necessary to change an individual's telecommuting type, which is why the U-M Remote Work Agreement and all Michigan Engineering offer letters include the following language:

"Telecommuting is not a right, and the telecommuting agreement may be changed or terminated at any time, and for any reason, by the employer."

WORK SCHEDULES

As a non-exempt staff member who has been approved to work at a remote location, will I need to get approval from my supervisor to work beyond 40 hours a week?

Michigan Engineering policy states that all overtime should be approved in advance of the extra hours being worked. Managers are encouraged to avoid overtime obligations by flexing staff schedules when possible to remain good stewards of University resources and promote healthy work-life balances.

What happens if I am a telecommuter and am too ill to work at home on my scheduled remote workday?

All employees should follow their department/unit call-in procedures and record paid time off as appropriate.

What happens if the telecommuter works in more than one department?

Each department/unit will determine the Modes of Work classification for the portion of employees' effort spent in their unit. The employee will need to complete a U-M Remote Work Agreement for each appointment.

Can managers request staff to come to campus on a telecommuting day?

A manager can request an employee who is scheduled to telecommute to come to campus. We

ask that managers always give reasonable notice as staff may be using those days for pre-scheduled activities, and unable to come to the workplace at a moment's notice.

What are my options when asked to work outside of regular business hours?

Managers have the flexibility to alter a staff member's schedule when appropriate to accommodate business needs. Requests of this nature should not be the norm, and staff should be given ample notice to make personal arrangements.

SPACE ASSIGNMENTS

What are my options if I do not like the type of space I have been assigned?

Michigan Engineering has historically been able to provide staff with private and semi-private dedicated space. Because space is at a premium, we must make the best use of the space available to us. A trade-off for the ability to telecommute is our ability to ensure efficient use of staff space. Over time, how space is utilized or allocated may change.

EQUIPMENT/WORK RESOURCES

Are departments required to provide equipment or home office furniture to telecommuting employees?

For information related to equipment and home office allowances, see the [U-M Remote Work Classification Matrix](#).

Will stipends be available to telecommuting employees to compensate for business use of personal cell phones or the internet?

For information related to technology stipends, see the [U-M Remote Work Classification Matrix](#).

DEPENDENT CARE

What are my options regarding telecommuting if I have dependent care needs?

Michigan Engineering will make every effort to be as flexible as needed in cases of reduced child and dependent care availability. Under normal circumstances, telecommuting is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate dependent care. Refer to the [U-M Remote Work Classification Matrix](#) for more information.

TECHNOLOGY

Can I telecommute if I am unable to meet the technical requirements of my assigned Modes of Work classification?

Staff who are unable or unwilling to have the resources necessary to telecommute effectively will need to work on campus.

What technology options are available for telecommuter(s) to remain connected to others (colleagues, faculty, etc.)?

There are many different ways you can ensure team connections, including, but not limited to, video conferencing (Zoom, Google Meetings, etc.), cloud-based collaboration tools (Slack,

Skype, etc.), and chat/instant messaging (GChat, etc.).

How should telecommuters handle working with sensitive data during remote work?

VPN (virtual private network) will securely encrypt all of your data. The use of the U-M provided VPN is highly recommended for telecommuting work. It is the manager's and employee's responsibility to ensure that the employee has the appropriate security software and knowledge to use it.

It is strongly recommended that employees use VPN when connecting from a public wifi network such as those in coffee shops, libraries, hotels, and conference centers. In addition, sensitive data should not be saved locally on laptops or home computers. Sensitive data should remain on U-M servers and U-M approved cloud storage (e.g., Google, DropBox, etc.).

TRAVEL

Who is responsible for paying expenses associated with travel costs to attend required onsite meetings, conferences, training sessions, and similar activities?

For information related to an employee travel allowance, see the [U-M Remote Work Classification Matrix](#).

If I am required to come to campus for a meeting on a scheduled remote workday, can I count that as business travel?

For information related to an employee travel allowance, see the [U-M Remote Work Classification Matrix](#).

OTHER

Will new parking options be offered for telecommuting staff?

Several groups are looking at parking options. Unfortunately, we are unaware of any significant changes to the menu of parking options.