

## **UC Santa Cruz Flexible Work Principles and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Updated June 2022**

#### **Introduction**

These principles are intended to assist University of California, Santa Cruz (the “University”) principal officers, supervisors/managers, and employees (i.e., both staff and student employees) as we continue working collaboratively to operate the campus most effectively and, in many cases, implement flexible work arrangements. Flexible work arrangements are recognized as a strategic and purposeful way of how we organize our time and manage our resources to support the University mission of education, research, and public service.

The University strives to be an employer of choice that provides a work environment to attract, retain, and support a diverse set of talented employees. The University can advance its goals, promote efficiency, and help employees balance work and personal responsibilities through flexible work arrangements, including telecommuting and remote work agreements. The guiding principles and best practices for staff supervisors/managers is a guide to determine how to gauge whether flexible work arrangements are appropriate for employees and, if so, how to implement defined telecommuting and remote work agreements.

#### **Determining Flexible Work Arrangements for Your Division, Unit, or Team**

As the University continues developing a culture utilizing flexible work arrangements, supervisors/managers will be tasked with understanding whether flexible work arrangements are feasible for their particular team(s). For any unit, whether work can be done remotely should align with the guiding principles set forth below. These principles are outlined in **descending order of importance**. Flexible work arrangements may be appropriate if the employee’s scope of work can accommodate the needs identified in the principles.

#### **The Five (5) Guiding Principles:**

**1. Effective support of the University mission is the first priority.**

The University of California’s distinctive mission is to provide first class research, undergraduate and graduate education, and public service. This means that student, curricular, pedagogical, and research-based needs must be evaluated first. When possible and appropriate, the needs may be supported through various types of flexible work arrangements. An employee’s job duties may be carried out in flexible work arrangements and are subject to operational and business needs to serve the University’s mission.

**2. Physical, psychological and emotional health and safety concerns are foundational.**

The University recognizes that both a remote work environment and an office environment need to be safe and secure to support employee work. Both University-owned, operated, and controlled facilities as well as employee remote work spaces need to satisfy physical, psychological, and emotional health and safety as well

as comply with all applicable UC policies and procedures. When health and safety concerns arise, we will strive to accommodate and manage these concerns while simultaneously delivering on the mission.

3. **Actual and perceived fairness, equity, and trust among employees need to be measured, monitored, and maintained.** Two employees performing the exact same type of work (either in the same unit or in different units) may call for two different types of flexible work arrangements. The University provides a framework to analyze these different scenarios, but a precise formula will not be available. Supervisors/managers will be expected to evaluate the circumstances and seek solutions that advance the mission without disadvantaging or marginalizing any individual team member. Supervisors/managers should base their decisions about flexible work schedules on all relevant factors and craft a case-based logic for each flexible work schedule.
4. **Each functional area and the key positions in that function should be assessed for the appropriateness of flexible work arrangements and in-person requirements.** In-person experiences at certain critical moments over time can be essential for team building, engagement, and maintaining a healthy organizational culture. Most employees are members of at least two teams. One team includes the employee's peer group; the other team includes being a vibrant and active participant within the broader UC Santa Cruz community. Flexible work arrangements should support full and robust engagement in these multiple team cultures.

Each campus unit should determine whether flexible work arrangements support the unit's role in advancing the University's mission. The way each position in the unit and the characteristics of those positions contribute to the mission should be articulated. If a phone or video meeting are all equally effective compared to a face-to-face meeting in providing the services of the unit, and this meets the business needs, then a flexible work arrangement may be appropriate. In cases when a unit's primary clients (students, staff, or faculty) requests on-site presence due to operational concerns or other compelling reasons, the supervisor/manager and/or team member should attempt to be present in-person to work with the client or colleague.

Building in and retaining face-to-face experiences, in addition to remote work and telecommuting arrangements, are important to the University. One key moment often best experienced in person is when an employee begins their new job either as a new employee (including onboarding) or when they transfer to a new role elsewhere on campus. This [article](#) contains a literature review of working in virtual teams.

5. **Learn as we go, be flexible and open to change.** Each supervisor/manager should develop ways to measure, assess, and evaluate the effectiveness of active flexible work arrangements. Supervisors/managers should share, communicate, and maintain transparent practices to foster continuous learning and improvement. The University encourages change where necessary to continuously support its mission and needs. For

example, Staff HR revised the telecommuting/remote work agreement form for staff and student employees so that we can track and measure the volume and components of telecommuting and remote work activity over time. We can consider using any research findings and apply proven social or physical science lessons as we adjust and learn.

### **Decision Making**

After weighing these principles, if a supervisor/manager determines that flexible work arrangements can be implemented without impacting student, curricular, pedagogical, or research-based needs, the supervisor/manager should seek to document the flexible work arrangement as described below.

### **Supervisor/Manager Responsibilities**

Fostering a collaborative, successful flexible work environment requires intentional effort by both employees and supervisors/managers. Supervisors/managers should encourage their teams to practice self-awareness, and assume positive intent. It is also important for supervisors/managers to explain the principles and how they are being used to craft sometimes difficult decisions especially when employee preferences for flexibility may not align with University mission-based priorities.

In assessing whether particular positions are suitable for flexible work arrangements under the five (5) guiding principles, supervisors/managers should consider the following:

- What guidelines has my Dean/Principal Officer/Department Chair expressed about the role of flexible work arrangements for my unit or my employees?
- Based on the role of my unit, how will flexible work arrangements enhance or hinder our ability to deliver on our unit's goals?
- Can my employee's job functions capably support student, curricular, pedagogical, and research-based needs if the employee works remotely, full or part-time?
- Is the purpose of my unit's work best served by having individual employees work on-site for any period of time?
- Can I build a culture fostering employee engagement if my employees work remotely for any period of time?
- Does my employee have the tools necessary to work remotely? If not, can they be provided?
- How does remote work impact our clients' assessment of our work abilities?
- Do I have onsite space for my employees to work consistently and safely?
- How would establishing a flexible work arrangement help me recruit and retain staff and/or positively impact morale?

**Supervisors/managers should not make flexible work arrangement decisions based upon performance, seniority, or personal characteristics of an employee.** While flexible work arrangements may be welcomed, embraced, and perceived as an advantage of working at the University, flexible work arrangements are not to be used as a "perquisite" or incentive based on

performance. Flexible work arrangements should instead be seen as a mutually agreeable tool to advance the University mission in a way that allows the employee additional ways to carry out the work and recruit and retain employees.

After evaluating the five (5) principles using the questions above, if a supervisor/manager seeks to implement a flexible work arrangement, please use [the University's guidelines for routine telecommuting and remote work](#). Consistent with the University's [telecommuting and remote work procedures](#), supervisors/managers should ensure that they complete the following with their employees in order to confirm a telecommuting or remote work agreement:

1. Have your employee complete the [self-certification safety checklist](#) prior to establishing a flexible work arrangement.
2. Ensure your employee(s) review the [UC Santa Cruz Ergonomics](#) website for remote working tips to establish a home or remote office.
3. Formalize a routine telecommuting or remote work agreement using Staff Human Resources' [approved form](#).

Finally, supervisors/managers should adhere to the University's flexible work principles of fairness and equity when assigning work, scheduling meetings, and setting standards for communication (office hours, standing check-ins, availability for meetings, etc.) among team members. Principles of community and teamwork should be maintained with flexible work, as they would in person.

### **Employee Responsibilities**

If an employee is interested in establishing a flexible work arrangement, employees must first speak with their direct supervisor/manager to discuss whether routing telecommuting or remote work is appropriate. Employees may complete a [self-assessment tool](#) to help determine whether their specific position may be performed from home. However, the final decision about whether to establish or maintain a flexible work arrangement is made by an employee's supervisor/manager, division/department chair, or unit head and is subject to operational changes and business needs.

When a flexible work arrangement is established, employees must continue to comply with all University policies and procedures when performing work pursuant to a flexible work arrangement. Noncompliance with policies and procedures may result in rescission of the flexible work agreement and/or corrective action.

Relocating employees are responsible for updating their personal information in UCPATH. This will ensure timely and accurate communication from the University of California and appropriate tax withholdings on an employee's paycheck.

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

1. When is the best time to establish a flexible work arrangement?
  - a. As a supervisor/manager or employee, if you will be working on-site at a University owned, operated, or controlled facility less than full-time, a flexible work arrangement will be required. The best time to establish a flexible schedule is after the supervisor/manager has consulted with the employee and determined that the schedule meets the needs of both the employee and the University. In the case of a new employee it may be at the very beginning of employment or after an assessment period.
2. What is a flexible work arrangement?
  - a. An established arrangement that allows an eligible employee to perform work, either part-time or entirely, at an alternate work location other than a UCSC worksite, on a regular basis.
    - i. **Routine Telecommuting arrangement** allows an employee to work on a part-time basis at an alternate location other than a UCSC worksite. Routine telecommuters working on-site three or more days per week will have an assigned work location (e.g., office or cubicle) at a UCSC worksite. Those working on-site fewer than three days per week will have access to dedicated on-site hoteling workspaces at a UCSC worksite.
    - ii. **Remote Work arrangement** allows an employee to work entirely at an alternate work location other than a UCSC worksite. Remote workers will not have an assigned work location (e.g., office or cubicle) and may have access to on-site hoteling workspaces at a UCSC worksite. Prior to a remote worker having physical presence at a University location or program, their supervisor/manager must ensure the remote worker is compliant with relevant vaccination policy.
3. How long should a routine telecommuting or remote work agreement last?
  - a. Both routine telecommuting and remote work agreements are intended to remain in effect unless modified or terminated. As outlined in the formal Agreement, they are subject to ongoing review and may be subject to modification or termination with at least two (2) weeks written notice based on operational or business needs.
4. What is the required review cadence for flexible work arrangements?
  - a. While there is no requirement or mandate for reviews, it is strongly recommended that an agreement be reviewed annually. Additionally, supervisors/managers and employees will have continual discussions about how the arrangement is meeting operational needs and adjust as necessary in accordance with the agreement.
5. Can I modify a flexible work arrangement after it's signed and effective?

- a. Flexible work agreements are subject to ongoing review by supervisors/managers and employees and may be modified or rescinded with at least two (2) weeks notice in accordance with local procedures. The process used to revise or end a work arrangement should be as careful as the process to initiate it.
- 6. What are reasons for modifying or ending a flexible work arrangement?
  - a. While there is no exhaustive list of reasons for modifying or ending a flexible work arrangement, examples of situations which may require an amendment or rescission may include, but are not limited to: business needs are no longer being met, job or job requirements change, current coverage or staffing needs change. Job performance should not be a basis for modifying or ending a flexible work arrangement. Please contact your [Employee Relations Analyst](#) with more questions.
- 7. Can an employee's compensation be changed or altered based upon their remote work location?
  - a. No. An employee's salary must be within the salary range that is assigned to the job title based on the associated position's duties and responsibilities, even for fully remote employees whose services are performed away from the job location in California or in another state. Levels for individual contributor, supervisory, and management roles within each distinct functional area are defined consistently across occupations and with the labor market for comparable jobs. Personnel Policies for Staff Members 30 (Compensation), collective bargaining agreements (CBAs), and applicable local procedures govern staff compensation.
- 8. Are an employee's working hours affected by a flexible work arrangement?
  - a. No. The number of hours an employee works should not be affected by the employee's flexible work schedule. Hours of work are described in PPSM 30 for policy-covered employees and in the applicable CBAs for represented employees. Employees and supervisors/managers should ensure clear and timely communication around scheduling and availability during the course and scope of their flexible work arrangement. The supervisor/manager and employee should agree beforehand on how to reconcile any issues that arise if time zone differences are an issue in a flexible work agreement.
- 9. Can I onboard a staff member working remotely full time?
  - a. Yes. The University will provide an inclusive experience which introduces and integrates your new employee into the organization's culture and vision, provides them with the tools and resources they need to be successful, as well as an understanding of expectations. Please contact your [Talent Acquisition Consultant](#) for more details. In addition, during the onboarding process, supervisors/managers should establish regular check-ins during the first 90 days to assess a new employee's progress. Discussions between an employee and hiring manager should determine what additional information the employee needs, address any training gaps, and continue discussions about performance expectations. A new employee should be paired up with a department colleague who can provide support as needed, especially in remote working situations.

10. Are there professional development opportunities for staff with a flexible work arrangement?
  - a. Yes. Whether an employee works on-site at UC Santa Cruz or is a hybrid-remote or remote worker, professional development opportunities (management, leadership or other professional development) remain unchanged. Please contact our [Learning and Development team](#) for more details.
11. Will my benefits be impacted if I establish a flexible work arrangement?
  - a. All employees have equal access to University of California benefits regardless of where they reside. Please keep in mind that employees who live or relocate outside of a benefit plan's coverage area may have limited benefits and provider options. If employees have questions about specific insurance options when they move outside of their plan's coverage area or out of state, please contact the University's [Benefits Office](#).
12. Is a supervisor/manager required to establish a flexible work arrangement for an employee?
  - a. No, absent a qualifying reasonable accommodation. All flexible work arrangements are subject to ongoing review and business and operational needs as determined using the University's five guiding principles. However, please note that requests for disability accommodations must be handled in accordance with [Personnel Policies for Staff Members 81 \(Reasonable Accommodation\)](#) or the applicable collective bargaining agreement. This includes situations where an employee with a disability requests a flexible work arrangement as a reasonable accommodation. It also includes situations where a remote employee with a disability or a hybrid remote employee with a disability may need a reasonable accommodation in order to perform the essential functions of their position.
13. What types of equipment are provided to employees who have flexible work arrangements?
  - a. Please see the University's [Guidelines for Routine Telecommuting/Remote Work](#) for what types of equipment may be provided to employees working off-site on a full- or part-time basis.
14. Are employees allowed to request reimbursement for any expenses as part of their flexible work arrangements?
  - a. Please see the University's [Guidelines for Routine Telecommuting/Remote Work](#) for what types of expenses are reimbursable to employees working off-site on a full- or part-time basis.
15. Can academic employees engage in flexible work arrangements?
  - a. The University's academic senate and Academic Personnel Office are working together to establish separate telecommuting and remote work guidelines for academic employees and senate faculty.
16. Is the University tracking the use of flexible work arrangements for staff employees?
  - a. The University is in the process of establishing a system to track how many flexible work arrangements are used by staff employees. Supervisors/managers are responsible for regularly reviewing whether ongoing flexible work arrangements are effective for their staff.



17. Who can I contact for advice?
  - a. Please contact your [Employee Relations Analyst](#) to discuss establishing, modifying, or rescinding a flexible work arrangement.
18. Does this guidance alter or modify existing flexible work arrangements in place?
  - a. Employees and supervisors/managers with existing flexible work arrangements should revisit those agreements at minimum, annually. Both employees and supervisors/managers should review and analyze how the employee's role or business needs may have changed using the five (5) principles set forth above. If changes occur, the flexible work agreement can be updated as needed.
19. Does principle four (4) allow for the hiring of a person where the position assumes a 100% remote role from the beginning of employment?
  - a. Yes. There can be certain circumstances where the role is defined to be 100% remote. In these cases the hiring agreement should describe what happens if circumstances change and the need to travel to campus (or elsewhere) arises.

### **Tools and Resources**

- [UC Santa Cruz Ergonomics](#): Provides tips for working remotely.
- [Self-Assessment Tool](#): A one-page survey that helps inform compatibility for working remotely with criteria including appropriate job duties, self-management, flexibility, communication skills, and an appropriate remote working environment.
- [Self-Certification Safety Checklist](#): Guides the employee in assessing the overall safety of the proposed alternate worksite and computer workstation, including UCSC ergonomics training and worksite assessment.
- [Routine Telecommuting/Remote Work Agreement](#): Outlines agreed-upon conditions, requirements and expectations to ensure successful telecommuting and remote work arrangements. This document is prepared jointly and signed by the employee and supervisor/manager and subject to the department head/senior manager's approval.
- [Resource Needs for Remote Worksites](#): Key resources along with sourcing options to help support employees in optimizing their remote worksites.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Resources:**

- [SHR Routine Telecommuting and Remote Work Guidelines](#) (campus-wide forms,etc.)