

## UTC Telecommuting Guidelines

### I. Objective

To provide guidelines and standards for the establishment of telecommuting arrangements either requested by regular, temporary or student employees in an active pay status or when required by the University.

UT [Policy HR0480 – Work Schedules](#) establishes standards for work schedules which accommodate both the business needs of the University and, as feasible, employee requests. Alternate work schedules, such as telecommuting, may be developed and approved by administration in collaboration with the Office of Human Resources. Telecommuting is defined as a work arrangement approved in advance in which an employee works at least part of their work hours off-campus from an alternative location. On an as-needed basis, the University may approve occasional telecommuting arrangements (as defined under Section II.A.1 below) without the establishment of a formal telecommuting agreement.

These guidelines are designed to provide the structure needed for effective implementation and operation of telecommuting arrangements. University administrators and employees are responsible for ensuring compliance with the provisions of these guidelines.

### II. Definitions and Eligibility

Telecommuting arrangements provide employees the opportunity to work at a place other than their regularly assigned on-campus work location, such as their residence or an alternate location approved by administration. Telecommuting arrangements utilize technologies, flexible work schedules, and multi-user workstations to maximize efficiency of work processes while reducing costs associated with office space. Employees who utilize a Telecommuting arrangement will be assigned their residence (or alternate approved location) as their official work station for the days they work away from the office. The employee's permanent work station will remain as designated by the University, as employees may be required to report to their on-campus work station location as requested by management for meetings, continuity of critical services, etc.

Employees may make a request for individual consideration of a Telecommuting arrangement, or University administration may require a Telecommuting arrangement for employees who support unit business and operational needs or as part of emergency response procedures. Although not exhaustive, the University may consider granting an ongoing or occasional Telecommuting arrangement for the following reasons:

- Temporary Need to Care for Self or Others (e.g., children, spouse, elders, etc.)\*
- Medical Reasons\*
- Inclement Weather
- Unit Operational Needs
- University Continuity Planning in Response to Emergency Situations
- Other

Approval will not be granted where the employee's physical presence on campus is required to perform the essential functions of the employee's job, where Telecommuting is not in the University's best interest, or for those positions identified as essential personnel during administrative closings or other emergency response situations.

\*Employees and supervisors should contact the Office of Human Resources to determine if formal leave procedures should be initiated when a *Temporary Need to Care for Self or Others* or *Medical Reasons* is selected as the basis for consideration of a telecommuting arrangement.

## A. *Types of Telecommuting Arrangements*

1. Occasional Telecommuting Arrangement: An occasional telecommuting arrangement may be requested by an employee to accommodate a personal need to be away from their on-campus work location for a temporary period, typically no longer than 1-3 business days in duration. Examples of scenarios that may warrant consideration of an occasional telecommuting arrangement include: (1) the temporary need to care for self or others due to a temporary illness or injury; (2) the temporary need to travel for personal reasons; or (3) the need to handle other personal affairs in which the employee is capable of working from a remote location for some or all hours of their assigned work schedule.

Occasional telecommuting arrangements must be approved in advance by the supervisor following an evaluation of the essential functions of the position and determination that permitting such functions to be performed remotely for a temporary period is in the best interest of the University. Approval of an occasional telecommuting arrangement should be based on, without limitation, consideration of the factors outlined below in the [Telecommuting Arrangement Decision Guide](#). A formal telecommuting agreement form may not be required but supervisors are expected to set clear communication and performance expectations for employees during an occasional telecommuting arrangement.

An approved occasional telecommuting arrangement should be considered temporary and can be discontinued at any time by administration based on, without limitation, consideration of the factors outlined below in the [Telecommuting Arrangement Decision Guide](#). An employee may be required to use annual or sick leave for time out of the office if a telecommuting arrangement is not sought and approved in advance or if work is not performed as requested by their supervisor during a telecommuting arrangement. If an employee is unable to return to their assigned on-campus work location to perform work upon termination of a telecommuting arrangement, then they may be required to record leave or placed in a leave without pay status, etc., as appropriate. Failure to adhere to University guidelines and policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

When, due to the need to address personal matters, an employee is unable to perform work duties remotely during regular work hours while in an approved occasional telecommuting arrangement, employees must request and record leave in accordance with unit procedures and University policy, including, without limitation, UT Policy [HR0380 – Sick Leave](#) and [HR0305 – Annual Leave](#).

2. Ongoing Telecommuting Arrangement: In accordance with [HR0480 -Work Schedules](#), a regular or ongoing telecommuting arrangement is a work arrangement approved in advance in which employees regularly work for at least part of their work hours at an alternative off-campus location. Employees who regularly telecommute for all or part of their work schedule will require a documented [Telecommuting Arrangement Agreement](#) approved by the Unit Head, appropriate Division Head/Vice Chancellor, and Human Resources.

Approval of an ongoing telecommuting arrangement should be based on, without limitation, consideration of the factors outlined below in the [Telecommuting Arrangement Decision Guide](#), in which an evaluation of the essential functions of the position has been concluded with the determination that permitting such functions to be performed remotely is in the best interest of the University. Ongoing telecommuting arrangements may include:

- (1) alternating schedules of remote and on-campus work to enable use of shared workspaces on campus that maximize space and sustainability efforts;
- (2) alternating schedules of remote and on-campus work that supports unit business needs; or
- (3) a full-time remote work schedule that supports unit business needs.

An approved ongoing telecommuting arrangement should be considered temporary and can be discontinued at any time by administration based on, without limitation, consideration of the factors outlined in the [Telecommuting Arrangement Decision Guide](#). An employee may be required to use annual or sick leave for time out of the office if a telecommuting arrangement is not sought and approved in advance or if work is not performed as requested by their supervisor during a telecommuting arrangement. If an employee is unable to return to their assigned on-campus work location to perform work upon termination of a telecommuting arrangement, then they may be required to record leave or be placed in a leave without pay status, etc., as appropriate. Failure to adhere to University guidelines and policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**Employees in an approved ongoing telecommuting arrangement are prohibited from providing ongoing or full-time dependent or adult care during established work hours and must instead request and record leave in accordance with unit procedures and University policy, including, without limitation, UT Policy [HR0380 – Sick Leave](#) and [HR0305 – Annual Leave](#), when such needs arise.**

### *B. Determining Eligibility for a Telecommuting Arrangement*

The [Telecommuting Arrangement Decision Guide](#) includes *Guidelines for Determining Eligibility for a Telecommuting Arrangement* as a short-hand reference regarding (i) the process by which a telecommuting arrangement may be requested and (ii) the role and responsibilities of the Unit Head in that process.

### *C. Identifying Essential-Services Personnel*

Essential services may be identified on a case-by-case basis when considering the current operational and service delivery needs of the campus in response to varying emergency situations (e.g., inclement weather, administrative closings, reduced services, etc.). In each scenario, essential services may be identified as those that are mission-critical to maintaining campus operations and service expectations as determined by University administration. Each Division Head/Vice Chancellor must collaborate with their unit administrators to identify essential-services personnel to (1) work on campus, (2) serve in an on-call capacity to return to campus as needed, or (3) maintain a telecommuting arrangement during an administrative closing or emergency response situation to provide continuation of critical services. Examples of essential-services personnel units may include, without limitation, the following:

- Chief Executive and Operating Administrators (e.g. Chancellor, Vice Chancellors, Deans, Assistant/Associate Vice Chancellors, etc.)
- Public Safety
- Safety & Risk Management
- Facilities Planning & Management
- Auxiliary Services
- Human Resources
- Budget and Finance
- Housing and Residence Life
- Communications and Marketing
- Dean of Students
- Student Health Services and Counseling Center
- Information Technology
- Academic Affairs Administration and Instructional Support
- Athletics Administration

The following factors may be considered in determining essential-services personnel:

- Duties are to provide immediate and continued support of essential operations
- Duties are required to be performed on location
- It would be impractical to convert duties to another position/personnel for that duty to be performed without interruption

Employees should be notified if they are identified as essential personnel and of expectations outlined for response during an administrative closing or other emergency response situation. Essential personnel may be denied the opportunity to establish a telecommuting arrangement. Additional guidance for establishing performance expectations for a telecommuting arrangement can be found in the following sections of this document and the [Telecommuting Arrangement Agreement](#).

### **III. Work Schedules / Time Keeping**

Pursuant to [HR0480 -Work Schedules](#), the supervisor is responsible for setting the work schedule and may alter it based upon the needs of the department. An employee's telecommuting work schedule should be consistent with the core work day of their campus department unless a variation is approved by the supervisor, which will be determined on a case-by-case basis and may include the need for extended hours. Employees who participate in a telecommuting arrangement are considered to be in an official duty status during the employee's designated work schedule.

Employees are expected to maintain their assigned percent of effort recorded in the official IRIS personnel system while performing work in a telecommuting arrangement. Time not reported as worked during a telecommuting arrangement should be recorded as leave when necessary and approved by the employee's supervisor, pursuant to UT Policy [HR0380 – Sick Leave](#) and [HR0305 – Annual Leave](#).

All departments and exempt / non-exempt employees must adhere to time keeping/payroll requirements outlined in [UT Policy FI0930 – Payroll](#) during periods of telecommuting arrangements. Requirements for reporting time, entering time in IRIS, and submitting time approvals in IRIS, by established bi-weekly and monthly payroll deadlines continue as-is during telecommuting arrangements. All departments must ensure continued compliance.

All overtime compensation policies remain in place during telecommuting arrangements. This underlines the importance of accurate time reporting requirements of employees working from a remote location. Pursuant to [UT Policy HR0445 - Overtime Compensation](#), any work by a non-exempt student employee or staff employee (regular or temporary) that exceeds 40 hours in a workweek is considered "overtime." Supervisors may require employees to work overtime. An employee who wishes to work overtime voluntarily must first receive approval from an appropriate supervisor. No employee is authorized to work overtime without first receiving either instruction or approval from an appropriate supervisor. When an eligible employee works approved overtime, the University will provide compensatory time in accordance with *UT Policy HR0445*, unless campus or department practice provides for the payment of monetary compensation. Temporary employees are not eligible for compensatory time. Holidays and administrative closings are included in hours worked; all other leave with pay is excluded from overtime calculations.

An employee may be required to use annual or sick leave for time out of the office if a telecommuting arrangement is not sought and approved in advance or if work is not performed as requested by supervision during a telecommuting arrangement.

### **IV. Facilities**

#### *A. Remote Office Space*

Employees working from a remote location should have a designated work space or work station that will

provide appropriate working conditions. Requirements may vary, depending on the nature of the work and the equipment needed to perform the work.

#### *B. Shared Workspace*

When employees have workspace-sharing arrangements, each employee utilizing a shared workspace should clear the shared space of all work and personal items after each use to reduce threat of confidentiality and data security breaches and ensure an accommodating workspace for all users. Disinfecting the area on a regular basis will reduce the spread of contagions and promote the overall health of the workforce.

#### *C. Home Utility Expenses*

Incremental home utility costs associated with telecommuting will not be paid or reimbursed by the University.

#### *D. Phone Allowances*

Requests for a phone allowance will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis for employees performing a significant amount of work duties from their personal telephone device while in a telecommuting arrangement.

#### *E. Internet Accessibility*

Requests for internet accessibility assistance will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis for employees without current internet access when a significant amount of work duties will require access to the internet. Requests should be submitted for review and approval as outlined in [FI0730 – Telephones and Other Communication Devices](#).

#### *F. Miscellaneous Expenses*

Costs associated with the copying of work-related materials, facsimile charges, express mail, etc., may be reimbursed by the University, if employees receive prior approval to incur said expenses. Reasonable efforts should be made to minimize such expenses by the employee's use of University resources while performing work duties. Reimbursement requests should be followed in accordance with established work-related expense reimbursement procedures.

### **V. Equipment**

The University may provide the employee all or a portion of equipment necessary to perform duties at a remote work site, subject to availability and budgetary restrictions.

#### *A. Computers, University-Owned Equipment, etc.*

The University may provide equipment (including desktops, laptops, tablets, printers, etc.) and materials (office supplies, etc.) needed by employees to effectively perform their duties from a remote location. Current on-campus equipment may be relocated as needed with approval of telecommuting arrangements. Employees may be authorized to use their own equipment, with the approval of their supervisor. Employees are responsible for protecting University-owned equipment from negligent use, theft, damage, and unauthorized use.

## *B. Maintenance*

University-owned equipment used to perform work from a remote location will be maintained, serviced, and repaired by the University. When employees are authorized to use their own equipment, the University will not assume responsibility for the cost of equipment, repair, or service.

## *C. Assessing Equipment Needs and Resources*

Assessment of all equipment, resources and training needed to perform work from a remote location will be necessary. Please refer to the [Working from Home or a Remote Location](#) webpage for helpful information related to access to commonly used IT resources.

An inventory record of all University-owned equipment provided to an employee in a telecommuting arrangement must be established, signed and maintained by the supervisor. All equipment provided or approved for removal to a remote work site must be returned at the conclusion of the telecommuting arrangement, a date sooner as established by the supervisor/departmental procedures, or at the time of the employee's separation from the University.

## **VI. IT Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) / IT Security**

All employees must adhere to [UT Policy IT0110 – Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources](#) when performing work on campus or at a remote site.

Resources, training, and contact information regarding Information Security can be found [Here](#).

## **VII. Records Management**

Employees are required to comply with the following guidelines on using records or duplicating records when working at remote locations.

- Any work documents, including official records removed from on-campus work spaces by employees performing work at a remote location, remains the property of the University. Additionally, any official record that is generated by employees working from a remote location becomes the property of the University.
- Employees should get written approval from their supervisor prior to taking official records/sensitive information to a remote work site. The approval should be valid only for a defined period of time. All official records/sensitive information that are moved from an on-campus location to a remote work site should be documented in accordance with established departmental procedures or requirements (e.g., sign-out sheets, etc.) as determined by supervisor. All records/sensitive information approved for removal to a remote work site must be returned at the conclusion of the telecommuting arrangement, a date sooner as established by the supervisor/departmental procedures, or at the time of the employee's separation from the University.
- When any University record is used by an employee at a remote site, care must be taken to ensure that information is not disclosed to anyone except those who are authorized to access the information in order to perform their duties. Appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards should be taken to ensure the security and confidentiality of these records.

## **VIII. Liability Issues**

Questions related to claims for personal property damage or loss or personal injury arising out of an employee's performance of official duties from a remote location should be directed to the UTC Office of Human Resources and the employee's supervisor. Working from a remote location mirrors office workers' compensation liability and standard protocol. If a work injury is life-threatening, or results in serious bodily injury, immediately call 911. For non-urgent injuries, the first steps to report the injury to your supervisor and to the workers' compensation company, Corvel. A Corvel provider can be reached 24/7 at 1-866-245-8588. For more information about workers' compensation, next steps, and forms, visit the [UT Workers' Compensation](#) site managed by the Office of Human Resources.

## **IX. Inclement Weather / Equipment Issues**

In instances of inclement weather, employees must continue to work to the extent possible. However, if an employee is unable to work due to issues beyond his/her control (e.g., power outage, equipment failure, etc.), the employee must report the issue to the supervisor immediately or as soon as practical. Depending on the amount of time remaining in the work day, the supervisor may either allow the employee to take leave (if requested) or request that the employee report to their on-campus work office/location, if practical.

## **X. Supervisory Responsibilities**

When establishing a telecommuting arrangement, supervisors have the responsibility to ensure all University operational needs are met and arrangements align to ensure compliance with all elements outlined in the established telecommuting guidelines. Supervisory responsibilities to highlight may include, but are not limited to:

1. Setting forth appropriate measures to protect confidential information;
2. Ensuring that customer service is not adversely affected by telecommuting arrangements;
3. Clearly defining and setting forth the telecommuting employee's responsibilities;
4. Maintaining effective communication with telecommuting employees;
5. Informing telecommuting employees of UTC Telecommuting Guidelines;
6. Ensuring there is not a hardship or burden placed on other employees (additional work, etc.) due to established telecommuting arrangements;
7. Maintaining responsibility and accountability for treating all telecommuting and non-telecommuting employees similarly in acts involving managerial discretion, including but not limited to: distribution of assignments among employees in the work unit, use of appropriate tracking and communication tools, performance management, both informal and formal feedback, performance coaching, learning and development, reassignment, promotions, retention, and discipline; and
8. Providing advance notice, if practicable, to telecommuting employees regarding requests to report to the regularly assigned office location (notice is not required and does not absolve an employee's responsibility to be physically present upon request).

An overview of supervisory actions for executing a telecommuting arrangement include:

1. Determine and document eligibility for an occasional or ongoing telecommuting arrangement via the Telecommuting Arrangement Decision Guide.
2. Establish a Telecommuting Arrangement Agreement form and distribute UTC Telecommuting Guidelines to employees.
3. Establish an Equipment Inventory.
4. Monitor effectiveness of telecommuting arrangement and employee performance.

## **XI. Employee Responsibilities**

Participating in a telecommuting arrangement is a privilege and employee efforts must ensure compliance with all elements outlined in these established telecommuting guidelines, the expectations documented in the UTC Telecommuting Arrangement Agreement Form, and other expectations including, but not limited to:

1. Maintaining established performance standards;
2. Ensuring that the alternative worksite is appropriate and provides the work environment, connectivity, technology, resource access, and security authority consistent with the work in which the employee is engaged;
3. Procuring and providing internet services appropriate to the work effort at their own expense;
4. Maintaining flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of the supervisor, work team, and unit (communication and collaboration);
5. Reporting to the regularly assigned office location, pursuant to unit needs, for all or part of the workday during which they would otherwise be engaged in a telecommuting arrangement;
6. Documenting telecommuting work time in accordance with established UTC and departmental time and attendance policies;
7. Complying with UTC and departmental rules and practices pertaining to requesting and obtaining approval for leave, overtime, or any change to the employee's work schedule;
8. Maintaining effective communication with supervisors and other employees with whom communication is essential for successfully implementing the arrangement;
9. Being considerate of employees sharing workspace, and maintaining a clean workspace at all times;
10. Properly maintaining and protecting confidential information, and following data security procedures at all times;
11. Using a shared workspace only so long as needed; and
12. Maintaining a high level of customer service at all times.