

HUMAN RESOURCES

GUIDELINES FOR STAFF WORKING FROM HOME ON A REGULAR BASIS

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

This policy will be applied in a non-discriminatory way, in line with the School's equality and diversity policies.

1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 In recent times, improvement in communications and movement towards flexible working arrangements, have led to an increase in the proportion of time that some staff are able to work from home.
- 1.2 It is recognised that working from home can provide a number of benefits to both the employee and the School, including greater flexibility in working hours, higher quality individual work due to fewer interruptions from students and other staff, and reduced travelling time.
- 1.3 This needs to be balanced against certain detrimental effects which may arise from the reduced presence of staff in the workplace, including consequences for citizenship, management, scholarly life, the individual's team and the provision of services.
- 1.4 It should be noted that in general, it is likely that there would be fewer opportunities for Professional Support Staff to work at home than academic staff. This is because the work of PSP staff more often entails service provision, which by its nature requires individuals to be present and available at the School.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

- i. **Working from home** in this document refers to when staff carry out some of their normal duties from their home base rather than attending for work at one of the School's London sites, whether on a regular or occasional basis.
- ii. **Working from home** refers to time spent away from the School, other than on School business. It does not include:
 - the normal duties of staff whose work does not normally require them to be based at the School's London sites, e.g. staff based overseas on School business;
 - staff whose work is recognised as home-based, mainly DL tutors;
 - staff on secondment to other institutions overseas (e.g. MRC);
 - staff who are based overseas solely for the purposes of undertaking a period, or part of a period, of relevant study leave, or
 - staff working temporarily at sites other than the School's London sites for work-related reasons, e.g. field work, giving a lecture, attending a conference, teaching in another institution, examining a PhD, networking etc.
- iii. **Citizenship, academic management and scholarly life** refers to:
 - formal activities, to include carrying a full teaching load, an organizational role in teaching and research degree supervision (whether as supervisor or member of advisory committees), giving and attending seminars, participating in meetings, working groups and boards, and
 - informal activities including those which happen in an unplanned way, by occasional conversations, availability to comment on the work of other staff when asked, sharing of ideas, informal mentoring, circulation of information acquired informally about

research funders, initiatives etc, and keeping up to date with departmental and unit activities

iv. **Management** refers to processes involving the planning, organising, coordinating and controlling resources, in particular, but not exclusively, other staff.

3. APPLICATION OF THE GUIDELINES

- 3.1 As stated in the preamble, the nature of the work means that opportunities for working at home are likely to be greater for academic staff than for professional support staff. However, all applications will be considered on their merits.
- 3.2 These guidelines apply to staff wishing to work at home on a regular basis. Separate arrangements are in place for staff who have a statutory right to request flexible working; such requests will be considered on their individual merits.
- 3.3 Separate arrangements are also in place for staff who wish to work from a location remote from the School's London sites for personal reasons (whether overseas or otherwise) for a period of six months or more and where presence at the School will be in blocks of time, rather than on a regular basis each week.

4. GUIDELINES

- 4.1 There is no absolute right on the part of any employee to work at home. All such work practices will be reviewed regularly by the employee's line manager and, if necessary, the member of staff may be required to revert to their former working arrangement.
- 4.2 Normally, for academic staff, working at home for an average of 20% of their time averaged across the year would be considered acceptable. A request of this nature should be discussed with the line manager, and may be agreed informally.
- 4.3 In special circumstances, academic staff may be permitted to work at home for an average of 40% of their time, subject to the approval in all cases of the line manager and the Head of Department.
- 4.4 Staff would only be allowed to work more than 40% of their time at home in exceptional circumstances, and subject to the approval of the line manager, Head of Department and Head of Faculty.
- 4.5 Entitlement for PSP staff will be determined on an individual basis, with the approval of the line manager in all cases and, where considered appropriate, the head of section.

5. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 5.1 Staff must at all times be available and contactable during agreed working hours. They must inform an appropriate individual, e.g. the Departmental Administrator, of their planned whereabouts in advance, and ensure that appropriate people (e.g. the DA and the line manager) have an up-to-date contact number.
- 5.2 Reasonable notice of a request to work at home must be given to enable the employee's line manager to ensure that the working of the team or department will not be adversely affected.
- 5.3 Specific work activities must be undertaken.
- 5.4 Once there is an agreement that an individual is to work at home for a part of a day, a given day, or given period of days, the arrangement will be respected as far as possible. However, staff must be prepared to be flexible with their arrangements, in order to attend meetings or otherwise as required. In an emergency, employees working at home must be prepared to be recalled to the office at short notice.
- 5.5 Staff working from home are expected to bear the cost of telephone line rental and internet access, as well as any increase in domestic bills such as heating and electricity.

6. APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS*

- 6.1 Staff wishing to work from home for up to 20% of their time should discuss this with their line manager, and agreement may be reached informally.
- 6.2 All staff wishing to work at home for more than 20% of time, up to 40%, should complete the request form at **Annex A**, for approval by the line manager and Head of Department (head of section for staff in Administration and Central Services or Division of Education). Either of the latter parties has the right to deny the request, and their decision is final.
- 6.3 Such approval will be given for a period of up to one year, when the request will be reviewed and reconsidered. The review may be requested earlier if any performance issues (including individual productivity, contribution to citizenship, management, scholarly life of the School and provision of service) are identified by the line manager.
- 6.4 The mechanism will be similar for staff wishing to work at home for more than 40% of time in exceptional circumstances, except that the decision will additionally involve the Head of Faculty (or Secretary & Registrar/Dean of Studies as appropriate). Such approval will be given for up to one year.

7. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR LINE MANAGERS AND OTHERS INVOLVED IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Line managers should take into account the following when assessing any requests to work at or from home.

- the employee's ability to continue to make a sufficient contribution to citizenship, academic management and scholarly life as required;
- the suitability of the work, including consideration of the impact on any laboratory-based duties, as well as:
- whether the job involves the handling, processing or creation of information, rather than the delivery of a service that needs to take place on site (e.g., working as a receptionist, maintaining buildings or equipment etc);
- whether the employee can access required information easily and quickly from home;
- whether the output of the work to be done from home can be clearly defined and monitored;
- whether the individual's duties require them to be present at the School, e.g. for laboratory-based work, delivery of a service;
- the suitability of the home (see section on risk assessment)
- the capability and role development needs of the applicant, such consideration to include:
- the ability of the applicant to deliver work effectively without supervision;
- self-motivation, self-discipline and possession of good time management skills, and
- clarity of requirements, deadlines and objectives with feedback.

8. HEALTH AND SAFETY

The School has a duty of care towards all its employees and must ensure they are working within an environment that meets health and safety guidelines.

Staff working at home but employed on contracts from the School in London are covered by the requirements of the UK's Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the relevant subordinate legislation.

Staff must, as far as is reasonably practicable, comply with the School's Health and Safety Policy and detailed codes of practice, which are available on the School's intranet at

<http://intra.lshtm.ac.uk/safety/>. Any work-related accidents, incidents and ill-health should be reported to the line manager and the Head of Health and Safety; Anton de Paiva Anton.dePaiva@lshtm.ac.uk, who can be contacted for further advice.

Because the place of work is not directly under the School's control when staff work at home, individual staff are expected to take a significant role in managing their own occupational safety and health.

The self-assessment form attached at **Annex B** must be completed and attached to the request form. It is the responsibility of the line manager considering the request to ensure that the form is completed before any agreement is given.

If the employee moves to a different home address they must inform the School, and the suitability of the new work location must also be assessed.

It is the responsibility of the employee to notify the University of any other circumstances that could impact on the safety of the home working environment.

9. DATA PROTECTION

It is the duty of any employee working at or from home to take all reasonable precautions to protect information which is stored in the home relating to their employment with the School

They need to consider in particular access that other people residing in or visiting the home may have to the information.

Information must be kept secure when in transit between home and work, e.g. briefcases or laptops should not be left unattended.

Information which contains data about any identifiable living individuals is subject to the Data Protection Act. Employees working at or from home need to know and understand their obligation to keep data confidential and secure.

In practice employees working at or from home are best able to follow the data protection principles by keeping work related information files and documentation and domestic life separate and storing such information files and documentation in a lockable filing cabinet.

Where there is a risk that other household occupants might gain access to work related computer files these should be password protected. Great care should be taken not to inadvertently disclose passwords.

Staff working at home must ensure any computer at home that holds work related information files has up-to-date anti-virus software. Those using a broadband connection should ensure they have a properly configured firewall.

Work related information files and documentation taken or stored at home must also be accessible to anyone within the School who may need to use it for their work. In principle this means employees should never take home the only copy of this type of information.

Line managers are responsible for agreeing and monitoring procedures for ensuring the security of the work, information, and data files under the homeworker's control.

LR/HMJA
06.05.2011

Under review

** The Flexible Working Regulations 2014 extended the Right to request flexible working to all employees. Therefore applications to work from home for all staff are now considered in accordance with the Flexible Working Arrangements Policy and Procedure. 29 April 2019.*