



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS GUIDELINE

The University of Toronto is committed to formalizing requests and opportunities for staff to participate in alternative work arrangements (i.e. remote work setting, hybrid-remote work setting, or differentiation in work hours on a weekly basis) by providing operationally supported, wellness-driven work arrangements. In all cases, the University's focus on student, research, and learning supports remain at the forefront of decisions pertaining to alternative work arrangements.

Scope

This Guideline applies to staff at the University of Toronto, recognizing that not all roles may be fully, or in some part, conducive to alternative work arrangements (e.g., in-person teaching and support, in-person student supports, lab-based research, campus security).

Applicability

For clarity, this Guideline, inclusive of the restrictions noted in *Fundamental Requirements of Alternative Work Arrangements* below, generally pertains to:

- CUPE Local 1230, Full-time & Part-time
- CUPE Local 1230, Student Casual
- OPSEU Local 578
- USW Local 1998 (Appointed)
- USW Local 1998 (Casual)
- Advancement Professionals
- Confidential Staff
- Professional & Managerial Staff
- Research Associates & Senior Research Associates

Processes

Employer-Initiated

Initiated by the University, requesting or requiring one or more employees to undertake an alternative work arrangement (In such circumstances, the University will engage in dialogue with the employee directly.); or,

Employee-Requested

Requested by the employee and approved by their direct manager or supervisor, and subject to divisional processes and requirements.

Processes for requesting, approving, denying and terminating alternative work arrangements, as well as any additional procedural requirements will be provided in additional [Standard Operating Procedure documentation](#), and will be developed within the purview of this Guideline.

To ensure appropriate application of these procedures, Divisions will have alternative work arrangement approval processes in place, as determined by the Chief Administrative Officer, that will provide for:

- Processes that employees within the division will use to obtain written approval of alternative work arrangements;
- Processes that departments, units, and managers will use to obtain written approval for Employer-Initiated alternative work arrangements; and,
- Processes that will enable the tracking of all approved alternative work arrangements including both Employee-Requested and Employer-Initiated.

All processes should reflect a commitment to equity and fairness in establishing alternative work arrangements.

Processes should include fair timelines and a focus on the fundamental requirements of alternative work arrangements listed below as the means of reviewing arrangements.

Fundamental Requirements of Alternative Work Arrangements

In order to ensure that each campus is vibrant, actively supports student life, and is reflective of the University's standing as an engaging, diverse, inclusive, and accessible academic environment, **fully remote work arrangements will not normally be approved by University administration.** Foundational requirements of alternative work arrangements are as follows:

- 1) The duties, tasks, and overall functions of the work, including the environment in which the employee is required to perform the work, must be suitable for the proposed type of work arrangement. Divisional Human Resources (HR) will work with managers in assessing whether a position is suitable for alternative work arrangements. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - The individual's duties must be ones that can be performed at the proposed time(s)/location, and independently where the duties require independence.
 - The proposal must address privacy and confidentiality of information required by the employee in the course of their duties.
 - The individual must be able to maintain productivity and continue to meet performance standards and expectations.
 - The arrangement must be suitable in view of departmental practices.
 - The arrangement must not negatively affect operational productivity and efficiency.
 - The arrangement, in and of itself, must not result in a change to the workload of the employee or their colleagues.
 - The arrangement must maintain any workplace accommodations in place for the employee. Health and Well-being (HWB), and if applicable the Family Care Office for accommodation related to family obligations, can assist in reviewing accommodation needs or modifying accommodations (Note: this Guideline is not intended to remove or supersede the normal course for accommodation requests, or family care needs).
 - Alternative work arrangements, in and of themselves, shall not trigger overtime.
 - The arrangements must not contradict any Collective Agreement provisions, or employment policies, including policies pertaining to specific employee groups.
- 2) The work style of the employee (e.g., level of independence) must be compatible with the alternative work.
- 3) The arrangement is **not permanent**, and includes a start, review, and end date.
- 4) The proposed arrangement must be reasonable and include elements that will promote success. For example, if the proposed arrangement is to work from home, the employee must have suitable office space in their home or other space under their control in which they will perform the remote work.
- 5) The monthly hours of work and income must remain consistent such that it does not impact the employee's pension and benefit plans provided by the University. However, this is not applicable for those who reduce their Full-Time Equivalent (FTE), or are taking part in a job-share program, on a temporary or ongoing basis.
- 6) The manager and employee will assess the arrangement on an ongoing basis, communicate about the work and the alternative arrangement, and be willing to adjust the Arrangement as necessary, recognizing that both departmental and individual needs may change over time.
- 7) All employees with alternative work arrangements must have [Multi-Factor Authentication \(MFA\) enabled on their electronic devices](#), as well as meeting all other technology requirements as discussed further in this Guideline.

Appendix A: Impact of Alternative Work Arrangements on General Terms and Conditions of Employment

If an alternative work Arrangement is approved, the alternative work Arrangement constitutes a temporary arrangement that does not change the employee's basic terms and conditions of employment with the University under the applicable Collective Agreement, employment contract, policies, and laws. Unless specified in the alternative work Arrangement, the Arrangement does not impact the employee's employment status, compensation, benefits (including pension) and perquisites, or job duties.

If the employee's hours of work are impacted by the alternative work Arrangement, this will be set out in the documented alternative work Arrangement. It is expected that all employees, including those with alternative work arrangements, actively work during hours identified by the manager (and specified in the alternative work Arrangement).

An alternative work Arrangement of a set length does not constitute a guarantee of continued employment during or beyond that time. The University retains its contractual rights, including the right to assign work, to reorganize the workplace and the work, and/or to terminate employment with or without cause pursuant to the applicable Collective Agreement, employment contract, policies and laws.

Although an alternative work arrangement does not, in and of itself, amend the terms and conditions of an employee's employment, there are various arrangements that need to be made for an alternative work arrangement to be successful. Additionally, employees may need to be aware of employment terms and conditions that are more relevant or apply differently to them while working virtually. Employees working within these arrangements should pay particular attention to the following.

Performance of job duties during working hours

Just as the employee is required to do while working on University premises, the employee in an alternative work arrangement is expected to perform work duties in the normal course during agreed upon working hours.

Employees working remotely must arrange hours of work with the approval of their manager such that caregiving obligations (if any) do not interfere with the performance of job duties.

Should childcare, eldercare, care for sick relatives, or other personal obligations arise while working remotely, employees should follow the normal process they would follow if such obligations arose while the employee was working on University premises.

Requesting Vacation, Overtime, Personal Days etc.

The normal departmental processes apply for seeking approval for overtime, and requesting or reporting, as applicable, vacation, personal days, or other absences. Managers who are uncertain whether a request is compatible with the alternative work arrangement can contact their Divisional HR Office for clarification. For clarity, alternative work arrangements, in and of themselves, shall not trigger overtime.

Suitable Workspace

Employees working remotely are responsible for providing a suitable alternative workspace (e.g., considering safety, ergonomics, privacy, and confidentiality – See *Appendix B: Remote Workspace Safety Checklist*). Typically, this will be within their residence (where they are the owner/occupant). The employee must provide an address and other information as may be reasonably requested by their manager, including a description and photos of their workspace.

The off-site workspace must be regarded as the employee's private workspace during their designated hours of work and respected accordingly. This means that confidentiality and privacy of work products, and University conversations, can be protected at all times. The Arrangement is designed for the employee who will work independently away from the office, e.g., in their home. The off-site workspace is not for receiving visitors, holding meetings, receiving supplies, or otherwise conducting duties with others. If the employee working remotely needs to meet with others for any reason in the performance of their duties, arrangements should be made to do so

at the University, or virtually using enterprise software (e.g. Microsoft Teams). The University will not be liable for any accidents or loss to third party residents or visitors to the home office.

Equipment and Supplies

For purposes of this Guideline, the term “Equipment” includes but is not limited to any information technology, hardware, software, and viable internet connectivity. A stable and reliable network connection with sufficient bandwidth through home ISP is an important part of ensuring a sufficient workspace. The University will not typically subsidize the cost of the employee’s alternative workspace, such as computer hardware or internet service at home.

Specific requirements in terms of equipment (e.g., viable connectivity via internet, VPN, devices), will be set out in the alternative work Arrangement. If the University is providing any equipment or supplies, this will also be specified in the alternative work Arrangement. Such equipment or supplies are to be used solely for the purposes of the employee’s duties for the University. They remain the property of the University, and subject to the employee being required to maintain them and return them at the end of the alternative work Arrangement or earlier if requested by the University (as described below under “Return of University Property”).

The employee working off-site is responsible for insuring any employee-owned equipment used in the performance of their work and for informing their house insurance carrier of their intent to work remotely. [The Provost’s Guidelines on the Appropriate Use of Information and Communication Technology](#) also apply to employees working in their designated alternative workspace.

Employees working off-site with University equipment should familiarize themselves with the procedure for [Use of Capital Assets Away from University Premises](#) and complete the [Capital Asset Away from University Premises Form](#).

Communications

The employee must be reachable by telephone, text or instant messaging, email or other agreed upon method of contact during the agreed upon hours of work to the extent that they would be available if working on University property.

Reporting obligations

The employee will be advised if required to report to their manager (and maintain contact with co-workers) in a different way or with a different level of frequency while working off-site than when working onsite.

The employee is responsible for notifying their manager as soon as possible in the event of equipment or connectivity malfunction. In such cases, it is expected that every reasonable effort be made by the employee to minimize work disruption.

Employees are also reminded that all usual reporting obligations exist during times they are working off-site, including the obligation to report to the supervisor in accordance with normal departmental practices in the event the employee is sick or otherwise unable to work during scheduled working hours (including, for example, attending a medical appointment or other personal obligations).

Attending Work at the University

Employees working off-site may be required to attend work at the University for meetings, conferences, or other types of events as determined by their manager. This may include, but is not limited to, professional development, team building exercises or necessary workforce planning meetings. While at work on University premises, the University will provide a workspace for the employee as necessary. This workspace may be shared office space, in some cases an office hotelling-style space.

In some cases, a work activity taking place during hours in which the employee would usually work off-site will require the employee’s attendance in person. The employee will be given as much advance notice, where possible at least two calendar days in advance, of a work activity requiring the employee to attend in person, if that activity is not normally required on campus. When this occurs, it may or may not be possible for the employee to work off-site on a different day that week in place of the day of in-person attendance.

Employees working off-site will not be reimbursed for parking, mileage, or travel between their home and the University including on days when they are expected to be working remotely (not on campus) and the employee is required to attend a work activity in person.

Return of University Property

When the alternative work arrangement ends for any reason, or earlier if at any time the manager or division determines, in its sole discretion, that it is no longer required by the employee, the employee will return any University property that was provided to them for purposes of working off-site. This includes all University-owned equipment and supplies, as well as documents, material, files, etc.

Injury or Accident

The employee working off-site must report any injuries or accidents that occur in the course of their employment to their manager as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than 24 hours after such injury/accident. [The Online Accident/Incident eForm for Employees](#) should be used to make such reports. The employee working off-site agrees to facilitate any University investigation into the report, including a virtual or in-person visit to the employee's alternative workspace, at the employer's discretion. Such a visit will be facilitated as soon as reasonably possible after the injury or accident.

Privacy and Confidentiality

At the University, information that is not public must be treated as confidential. The University is subject to various requirements regarding privacy and confidentiality that arise out of legislation and policy. All such requirements must be met by the telecommuting employee in respect of any electronic or hard-copy information or records outside secure University environments including those that they access electronically from off-site.

An employee working off-site must take all reasonable steps to secure and maintain the confidentiality of all University information and documents while they are being transported to and from their off-site workspace, and while in the off-site workspace. Such steps will include protecting such information and documents from being damaged, destroyed, stolen, copied or otherwise accessed by unauthorized individuals. University documents that are to be disposed of or destroyed in the course of the employee's work are to be disposed of or destroyed on site at the University.

There may be some documents that the employee will not be permitted to take out of the departmental office and/or access remotely due to privacy/confidentiality concerns.

If a breach of privacy/confidentiality occurs, the employee must inform their manager as soon as reasonably possible. Managers should consult with the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy \(FIPP\) Office](#) when notified of a breach.

Breaches of privacy/confidentiality arising during the course of off-site work will be assessed on their individual facts and might result in disciplinary action up to and including the termination of employment.

Employees working off-site should familiarize themselves with the [University Guideline Regarding Security for Personal and Other Confidential Information](#), as well as their Divisional Privacy Policy.

Responsibility for Loss and Limitation of Liability

An employee working off-site is wholly responsible for any personal injury or accidents involving any other individuals (e.g., residents, visitors), or for any loss or damage to their own personal property and the personal property of such other individuals, in the alternative workspace or the dwelling in which it is located.

The employee shall indemnify and save harmless the University, its governors, officers, employees and agents, from any and all claims and/or any and all liability arising out of the employee performing their duties at an off-site location, except to the extent, if any, that such claims or liability are caused by the negligent act or omission of the University, its governors, officers, other employees or agents. This indemnification does not apply to WSIB claims made by the employee

in relation to an accident arising out of and in the course of the employee's employment in accordance with the Alternative Work Arrangement.

Information Security

The employee working off-site is responsible for protecting University data by adhering to the Provost's [Guidelines on the Appropriate Use of Information and Communication Technology](#) as well as the [University of Toronto Information Security Remote Work Guidelines](#). Employees working off-site must comply with all University guidelines to protect University data and the use of computer hardware and software, including, but not limited to:

- Using strong passwords as required for UTORid and other departmental accounts. Do not use the same password for more than one service i.e. the UTORid password must not be used for any other service.
- Encryption of data storage on PCs, laptops, mobile devices, USB keys Learn how to secure your devices and data with these [encryption guides by Information Security and Enterprise Architecture](#).
- Using a University-sanctioned VPN (Virtual Private Network) to securely connect back to University systems.
- Store sensitive documents on Office 365 or local area network storage, not local devices. Sensitive documents temporarily stored on a local device must be copied to an approved location (Office 365 or local area network storage) and deleted after use.
- Devices being used to perform University work must be up-to-date with patches and have current anti-malware software installed and configured.
- University work should be performed on devices running current versions of software.

The employee working off-site must report any data security breaches to their manager and local IT department as soon as reasonably possible. Managers should consult with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FIPP) Office when notified of a breach.

Additional information can be accessed on the [Security Matters](#) webpage.

Please consult with your [Information Technology Services \(ITS\)](#) contact for more information.

Appendix B:

Remote Workspace Safety Checklist

To prevent the development of unsafe or unhealthy working conditions, employees are advised to consider the list below with respect to their remote workspace.

The remote workspace should, to the extent possible, provide the same level of health, safety and security that an employee would receive at a regular, on-site workspace. Employees working in a remote workspace are responsible for assessing that worksite for existing or potential problems and for taking corrective steps, in consultation with the [U of T Environmental Health & Safety \(EHS\) Office where appropriate](#). At any time if you have safety concerns, please report the concern to your supervisor.

For more information, please visit the U of T [Environmental Health & Safety website](#) or call (416) 978-4467.

Emergency Procedures

- ☐ Emergency contact numbers are posted near the phone.
- ☐ Access to a phone in case of an emergency.
- ☐ Emergency evacuation route for my off-site workspace.
- ☐ Emergency contact information provided to Supervisor.
- ☐ First aid kit is fully stocked and inspected periodically.
- ☐ Smoke detector located in off-site workspace area that is fully functioning, tested monthly and batteries changed every six months.
- ☐ Fully functioning carbon monoxide detector (tested monthly), and batteries changed every six months.
- ☐ There is a fire extinguisher that is easily accessible, fully charged, seal is unbroken, proper class, visually inspected monthly, professionally inspected annually.
- ☐ If you are injured while working at home, report the incident to your supervisor immediately. They will complete an incident/accident report: <https://ehs.utoronto.ca/report-an-incident/>.

Electrical Safety

- ☐ Adequate surge protection is utilized with all electrical equipment.
- ☐ Outlets are not overloaded.
- ☐ Adequate number of electrical outlets.
- ☐ Receptacle plates are in good condition.
- ☐ Power bars are used in place of extension cords and plugged directly into the wall. If extension cords are used, they are CSA-approved and grounded by three prongs.
- ☐ Electrical cords in good condition and working properly.
- ☐ Electrical cords neatly secured, out of the way, and anchored when possible.
- ☐ Minimal clutter around all electrical equipment (for ventilation purposes).
- ☐ Electrical panels are properly covered and easily accessible.
- ☐ Lighting is working properly and appropriate bulb wattage is used.

Office Ergonomics

- ☐ Tips on setting up an ergonomic workstation: [Environmental Health & Safety](#)

Work Environment

- ☐ All furniture is free of sharp edges and materials are safely stored.
- ☐ Doors and drawers are kept closed when not in use.
- ☐ Neatly organized and free of tripping hazards (including stairwells). Handrails are in good condition.
- ☐ Shelves are not overloaded and there are no heavy objects stored above shoulder height.
- ☐ Lighting enables effective work and enough space to work effectively.
- ☐ Ventilation and temperature are comfortable.
- ☐ Noise levels do not interfere with work activities.
- ☐ Outside landings and walkways are clear.

Other hazards (if any) - please list and measures taken to remove or reduce the hazard:

Additional Resources

- ☐ University workplace policies and guidelines are available on the PSEC webpage (<https://people.utoronto.ca/policies/>). They include but are not limited to the University's policies and guidelines relating to Health, Safety, and Environment, Workplace Conduct, and the Alternate Work Arrangements Guideline, some of which are listed below:
- ☐ [Environmental Health & Safety Policies & Procedures](#)
- ☐ [Fitness for Work, Human Resources Guideline on](#)
- ☐ [Health and Safety Policy](#)
- ☐ [Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment, Statement on](#)
- ☐ [Harassment, Statement on Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment](#)
- ☐ [Research, Policy on Ethical Conduct in](#)
- ☐ [Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment, Policy on](#)
- ☐ Workplace Harassment, Policy with Respect to Workplace Harassment (see also Workplace Harassment Program)
- ☐ Workplace Harassment Program (see also Workplace Harassment Policy)
- ☐ [Guideline for Employees on Concerns and Complaints Regarding Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment \(Discrimination Guideline\)](#)
- ☐ [Human Resources Guideline on Workplace Harassment and Civil Conduct \(Civility Guideline\)](#)
- ☐ [Workplace Violence, Policy with Respect to Workplace Violence](#) (see also Workplace Violence Program)
- ☐ [Workplace Violence Program](#)
- ☐ For questions regarding applicable workplace training including Basic Health and Safety Training, please visit <https://ehs.utoronto.ca/training/>.