

UCC Remote Working Policy

(incorporating the WRC Code of Practice on Flexible and Remote Working and the Right to Request Remote Working)

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy supports the provisions of the [Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023](#), Parental Leave Acts 1998-2023 and accompanying [WRC Code of Practice on Flexible and Remote Working](#) and sets out the arrangements that will apply for remote working requests in UCC.

UCC values staff wellbeing and is committed to fostering a work-life balance culture as it recognises that a better work-life balance allows people to perform at their best and facilitates the provision of an outstanding student experience.

UCC is a campus-based university with a vibrant community of staff and students and at the core of UCC's mission and values is a commitment to prioritising and maximising the on-campus student experience. In this context, this policy outlines the University's approach to remote working.

In addition to this policy, UCC supports other work-life balance working arrangements through its range of family friendly [policies](#).

2. SCOPE

As UCC is committed to delivering a face-to-face learning and campus experience for its students, there are some roles which are critical to the provision of essential frontline student services, operations, or supporting the University's infrastructure, and are therefore not suitable for remote working arrangements.

As there are many different teams and roles across the University, the type of working pattern agreed will be dependent on service needs, role, flexibility requirements and the suitability of the individual's remote-working environment. In order to maintain connectivity, promote well-being and a vibrant campus atmosphere, it is the UCC policy that staff must attend campus for a minimum of two days a week. Staff may be required to be on campus more frequently or for more days at discrete periods of the year to ensure service delivery requirements are met.

All employees have the right to make a statutory request for remote working. In this context it is not intended that the introduction of this policy will change the contractual attendance arrangements of academic staff. UCC will deal with each application objectively, fairly and reasonably, in line with the legislation, the procedures set out in the WRC Code of Practice on Flexible and Remote Working and this policy. At the core of UCC's mission and its values is a commitment to prioritising and maximising the on-campus student experience. In this context, there is no automatic right to remote working.

3. PRINCIPLES

- ***Support the business needs of the organisation*** – remote working must support the operational and business needs of the University as an institution committed to the highest standards of face-to-face teaching, research and service delivery;

- ***Be an Employer of Choice*** – providing a positive employee experience aligns with our strategic priority to ‘Be an Employer of Choice’, offering a place where diverse, high quality individuals choose to work and remain in the University’s employment;
- ***Transparency and consistency in the decision making process*** -The process for approving remote working arrangements will be equitable, open, consistent, and transparent;
- ***Health and safety*** - the health and safety of all employees is of paramount importance regardless of working arrangements.

4. DEFINITIONS

<i>Role suitability:</i>	The extent to which any of the duties which make up the role can be undertaken efficiently remotely, also taking into account the operational needs of the University, access to IT, health and safety considerations etc.
<i>Employee suitability:</i>	In the context of applications for a remote working arrangement, UCC’s right to consider the employee’s level of experience post hire/ required supervision/training needs/performance standards, IT skills, disciplinary record etc.
<i>Standard work hours:</i>	UCC’s standard hours are 09.00 – 17.00, Monday to Friday.
<i>Head:</i>	The academic head of an academic unit [by whatever name titled] or the administrative/research head of an administrative/research unit and shall include a person acting in the capacity of head. For the purpose of this policy, head shall also include a line manager with express authority delegated by the head to carry out the head’s duties under this policy.

5. ROLE SUITABILITY

In considering any application for remote working, the suitability of the applicant’s role for the working arrangement requested will be considered taking into account the criteria as set in this policy and outlined in the relevant legislation and the WRC Code of Practice. The criteria set out in the legislation and Code of Practice are not exhaustive, and UCC reserves the right to take additional criteria into consideration when assessing the suitability of a given role for remote working, as appropriate.

6. EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY

While an employee can apply for a remote working arrangement at any time, they may be required to have 6 months continuous employment with the University before an approved arrangement can commence. However, probationary employees may be considered for remote working, where remote working is appropriate, taking into account the general criteria, and specific further factors relevant in the context of probationers. Notwithstanding same, early career employees may need to be on-site full time for onboarding and training purposes for a period of time following the commencement of their employment.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety are paramount, whether working on-site or remotely. The University is committed ensuring compliance with obligations under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 and providing a safe place and safe system of work. Employees are reminded of their obligations in ensuring their own safety and that of others while at work.

In advance of an application for remote working being approved, employees must complete a self-assessment form identifying any potential risk and confirming that their workstation meets the relevant health and safety requirements - [Risk Assessment Form](#). The University reserves the right to audit the workstation to ensure compliance with health and safety standards. As part of an application for remote working, an employee must provide assurance for having and maintaining:

- a safe and secure workplace
- suitable working conditions at home (workstation, secure container for documents, appropriate Information Systems, data security and confidentiality measures, suitable and reliable Wifi)
- appropriate arrangements with your mortgage provider, landlord and insurers (if applicable) to allow working from home. For the avoidance of doubt, any tax or other additional costs as a result of working at home are the employee's responsibility.

The Health and Safety Authority Occupational Safety & Health Guidance on Remote Working (https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/remote_working/remote_working_guidance.pdf) provides guidance on roles and responsibilities in relation to blended working, and the blended working risk assessment process. The HSA is clear that responsibility for health and safety rests with the University whether or not work is being done remotely. Line management and employees should refer to and familiarise themselves with this guidance in the context of applying for and assessing applications for blended working.

8. EMPLOYEE FLEXIBILITY

The University expects employees to be flexible to meet business needs of the University. This could include for example an employee who has been approved to work in a blended manner still being expected to attend training, meetings, events etc if they fall on the normal working from home day.

9. OFFICE SPACE / ANCHOR DAYS

It is envisaged that remote working will specifically provide for changes in office space. As UCC starts to use space in different ways, anyone participating in remote working arrangements will also participate in flexible desk arrangements. This will mean, but is not limited to, working to the concept of agile, open plan accommodation (at all grades), optimising the utilisation of desks including the question of rights to designated workstations and optimising office floor space through no automatic right to single occupancy office for any grade while having due regard to the effectiveness of blended working. This will include, but is not limited to, office reconfiguration / rationalisation.

The University may require fixed days on-site where employees who have been approved to work remotely must attend the office, sometimes referred to as 'anchor days', e.g.

- All teams agree a weekly anchor day(s) based on the needs of the unit/ section,
- Units may decide to hold a weekly/monthly anchor day, and/or
- Teams may decide to hold activities on site that are best suited to in person group or collaboration work.

A bookable space may be required to facilitate anchor days.

10. COMPLIANCE WITH UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Employees who have been approved to work remotely must maintain professionalism and continue to adhere to all University policies, including, but not limited to:

- Annual Leave approval and booking
 - Data Protection.
 - Dignity at Work
 - Domestic Violence
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
 - Email, internet and social media policies.
 - Expenses policy
 - Grievance and disciplinary policies
 - Occupational Health and Safety (Safety Statement), including blended and lone working policy and accident and incident reporting.
 - Performance management*
 - Professional standards policy
 - Right to Disconnect.
 - Security and Confidentiality.
 - Sexual Misconduct
 - Sick Leave
 - Training and professional development
 - Working hours and rest entitlement.
- *Policy to be viewed having regard to remote working arrangements*

11. WORKING HOURS

In the University, normal working hours are 09.00 – 17.00hrs. Unless other working hours are agreed as part of an individual's work-life balance working arrangement, employees are expected to be available during these hours. If alternative hours are agreed under this policy, the revised working hours will be recorded on the application form.

Employees who are approved to work remotely are still expected to maintain the same working hours and observe the same break and rest entitlements as if they were in the office. Such employees are expected to be available during their normal /agreed working hours and to be able to access their laptop within a timely manner as if in their normal workplace.

Employees should also be aware that if working remotely, it is important to remember to disconnect from work outside of working hours e.g. employees are not expected to work

outside their contracted hours when they are working remotely and are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the [WRC Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Right to Disconnect](#).

12. WORKING ENVIRONMENT

In the event of a successful remote working application, the University may carry out an assessment of the blended working location as regards its suitability for work. Matters that will be the focus of the assessment may include health and safety, security and privacy and a suitable internet connection.

13. EQUIPMENT AND EXPENSES

Employees who have been approved for remote working in the home should, as far as is reasonably practicable and in line with funding availability, be provided with the necessary equipment as deemed essential to carry out their duties. In general, printers will not be provided for data protection reasons. Any equipment provided by the University must be returned when either maintenance or servicing is required or on termination of the remote working agreement or cessation of employment. Staff are responsible for all utility costs associated with working from home as part of blended working, including Wifi, heating and electricity.

14. TAX

Employees who have approved remote working arrangements may make claims directly to the Revenue Commissioners in respect of tax relief for certain costs when working from home. The application can be made at the end of the relevant tax year, in accordance with the relevant tax laws. Any claim made in this regard is solely a matter for the individual concerned. Further details on eWorking and tax are available at: www.revenue.ie/en/tax-professionals/. No expenses will be paid or reimbursed in respect of costs accruing to an employee who makes changes to their home, or purchases equipment in order to avail of a remote working opportunity. Travel and Subsistence will not be payable for attending the main work premises during a remote working arrangement.

15. JURISDICTION

Under a remote working arrangement, staff will ordinarily be resident in Ireland and within a reasonable commuting distance of the University. Remote working outside the island of Ireland will not be facilitated. Staff working remotely may be required to attend the workplace at short notice. Employees posted to specific roles or assignments abroad may be facilitated in exceptional circumstances.

In the case where an employee who has been approved for remote working is moving house, this should be discussed with the Head. This is to facilitate a new risk assessment and any other considerations in advance of the move.

16. REVIEW POLICY

The policy will be reviewed after a period of 12 months in operation so that the University's Work-Life Balance Policy can evolve taking on board learnings from how arrangements work out over time for employees and the University.

Every remote working arrangement is subject to an initial trial period of 6 months. The trial period will allow time for both employees and managers to assess how the arrangement is working. Any issues should be raised/ discussed and dealt with at an early stage through ongoing engagement with the Head. A formal review meeting will take place between the Head and the employee at the end of the trial period and any issues arising can be discussed with a view to resolving them. An extension of trial period or termination may be considered if necessary or if no issues have arisen the arrangement can be signed off on.

17. SECURITY & DATA PROTECTION (see Appendix 2)

All staff are reminded of the continued and heightened importance of data protection and privacy rights if working remotely and are referred to in the University's policies in this regard, in particular, those outlined in the University's data protection, IT, E-mail and social media policies that relate to IT usage and documentation storage.

IT Services may need to assess employee's access, storage and back-up requirements and make recommendations for the necessary measures and safeguards required to ensure that such measures implemented are appropriate for an approved blended working arrangement. These measures may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Commitment to adhere to IT/data protection protocols, policies and procedures when working remotely.
- Undertake additional IT training on data protection and IT security.
- Keep passwords secure and never share user accounts, passwords or credentials with anyone else.
- Take reasonable care to prevent the loss or theft of mobile devices, laptops and associated IT equipment etc and prevent any unauthorised access to data or systems including paper-based documents.
- Report any loss or theft of mobile devices, laptops and associated IT equipment etc. to the IT Department.
- Maintain strict confidentiality of all data and correspondence, both electronic and manual.
- Equipment and files should only be accessible to the employee and safeguarded from access by other members of the employee's household and visitors.

Version	1
Approved by:	Date
Governing Authority	11 February, 2025

REMOTE WORKING APPLICATION PROCEDURE

RIGHT TO REQUEST REMOTE WORKING

All employees have the right to make a statutory request for remote working. An employee can request remote working from their first day at a new job, but they may be required to complete a minimum of 6 months continuous employment with the University before an approved arrangement can start. However, probationary employees may be considered for remote working, where remote working is appropriate, taking into account the general criteria, and specific further factors relevant in the context of probationers.

MAKING A REMOTE WORKING REQUEST

An employee must submit their request for remote working to their Head as soon as is reasonably practicable but not later than 8 weeks before the proposed starting date.

It is envisaged that an online application form will be developed in advance of implementation. (See attached sample application form - Appendix 1). The application form must include the following information to help the Head with the decision-making process:

- details of the remote working arrangement i.e. how many days and which days requested; and
- the proposed starting and end date of the arrangement, if relevant; and
- the reasons for requesting remote working.

This is the employee's chance to set out to their Head how they are confident that they can continue to perform their role remotely to the required standard and their individual specific reasons for making the request for remote working. Examples of reasons for requesting remote working could include, but are not limited to:

- reducing the daily commute and carbon foot-print;
- optimising quality of life outside normal working hours;
- personal or domestic circumstances;
- neurodiversity or special medical needs or circumstances which could favour a quiet working environment or facilities not always available in the office.

The application must also include:

- details of the proposed remote working location and,
- information on the suitability of the proposed location which should include information on the following, where relevant:
 - the workstation is suitably equipped and configured to enable the employee to perform their role and duties effectively to the required standard;
 - the distance of the proposed remote workplace to the employer's on-site place of work is agreeable to the employer;
 - a suitable workstation that provides adequate privacy;
 - a commitment to ensuring that company data and intellectual property is secure and protected in accordance with employer policies;

- an agreement to complying with employee obligations, and to cooperating with employer obligations in ensuring compliance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005;
- an agreement to a risk assessment and, if approved, to make no subsequent substantive changes to the workstation without authorisation;
- an agreement to demonstrate compliance with, but not limited to, data protection, data security, confidentiality, IT, social media, email, protection of intellectual property company policies and measures;
- the availability of relevant equipment and technology at the proposed location and agreement to ensuring that equipment is used appropriately;
- confirmation of adequate and secure internet connection to perform the role which may need to be assessed by IT Services.

Having submitted their request, an employee must, if asked by their Head, submit any additional information the Head may reasonably require in relation to the request.

The employees should be mindful of their obligations under GDPR in relation to sensitive personal data which may be involved in blended working applications.

An employee can withdraw a request for remote working by giving written notice to their Head.

RIGHT TO A RESPONSE TO A REMOTE WORKING REQUEST

A Head who receives a request for remote working must respond as soon as is reasonably practicable, but not later than 4 weeks after receiving the request. If a Head experiences difficulty assessing the viability of the request, they can extend the 4-week period for a further period not exceeding 8 weeks.

Within 4 weeks of first receiving the request, the Head must:

- approve the request by confirmation email to the employee setting out the details of the agreed arrangement, the start date and duration of the arrangement, or
- refuse the request by written notice informing the employee that the request has been refused and the reasons for the refusal; or
- provide notice in writing informing the employee that more time is needed to assess the viability of the request setting out the length of the extension.

CONSIDERING A REMOTE WORKING REQUEST

A Head who receives a request for remote working must consider the request, having regard to:

- the needs of the University, including the needs of the service area/unit;
- the employee's needs, i.e. their reasons for requesting remote working;
- the requirements of this Policy in relation to considering a request. A Head should consider a request for remote working in an objective, fair and reasonable manner.

A Head may consider both the suitability of the role for remote working as well as the employee's suitability to work remotely. In reviewing whether a role or an individual employee is suitable for remote working, it is important that both are reviewed in an objective, fair and reasonable manner. (*Please see Appendix 3 – Guidance for Heads*)

In a situation where a Head cannot approve the remote working arrangement sought by an employee in their request, the parties should consider an alternative arrangement, where this is feasible. The Head and employee should be open to exploring and agreeing an alternative arrangement, where feasible, taking into account the specific circumstances of each individual case.

CHANGES TO A REMOTE WORKING ARRANGEMENT

A Head and an employee can agree, in writing, a change to a remote working arrangement which has already been signed, before or after it has started.

A change to an arrangement can be:

- postponing the arrangement or part of it to an agreed date; or
- curtailing the period of the arrangement; or
- varying the arrangement in an agreed way.

TERMINATION OF A REMOTE WORKING ARRANGEMENT

The Head can terminate an approved remote working arrangement in certain circumstances, before or after it has started if the University is satisfied that the remote working would have, or is having, a substantial adverse effect on the operation of the business because of:

- seasonal variations in the volume of the work concerned, or
- the unavailability of a person to carry out the duties of the employee, or
- the nature of the duties of the employee in the University, or
- any other matters relevant to the substantial adverse effect on the operation of the University's business.

In such circumstances the Head can give an employee written notice of termination of an arrangement after considering the following:

- the needs of the University;
- the employee's needs, i.e. the employee's reasons for applying for remote working; and
- the requirements of this Policy in relation to considering termination.

The notice must set out the reasons for termination and specify the date on which the employee must return to their original working arrangement. This date must not be earlier than 4 weeks from the date of receipt of the notice of termination unless the date the approved remote working arrangement comes to an end, is less than 4 weeks from the date of receipt of the notice.

In the event that the Head intends to give notice of termination, it must:

- notify the employee in writing of the proposal to terminate the arrangement, and
- include details of the grounds for terminating the arrangement, and

- give the employee 7 days after receipt of the notice to make representations to the Head in relation to the proposal, and
- consider any representations made by an employee before deciding whether to give notice of termination.

When considering termination of a remote working arrangement the Head, having consulted with the People and Culture Department, will consider if their reasons for terminating the arrangement are objective, fair and reasonable. The grounds for the decision will be set out in a clear manner in the notice to help the employee to understand why the arrangement is being terminated and that the decision has been given consideration. The Head will also consider in an objective, fair and reasonable manner any representations made by the employee who has received the notice. The parties will consider whether any alternative arrangements other than termination may be feasible depending on the particular circumstances of each individual case.

If the Head decides to proceed with terminating the arrangement, the employee must return to their original working arrangement on the date stated in the notice.

RETURN TO PREVIOUS WORKING ARRANGEMENT

An employee can request by written notice, to return to their original working arrangement earlier than had been approved by providing reasons and a proposed date of return. The Head must consider and give notice within 4 weeks of receipt as to whether the request has been approved or refused and the reasons for any refusal. When considering the request, the Head must have regard to:

- the needs of the University;
- the employee's needs i.e. the reasons the employee made the request to return; and
- this Policy relating to considering a request to return.

On the expiration of an employee's remote working arrangement, the employee is entitled to return to the original working arrangement that they held immediately before the approval of the remote working arrangement.

NON-COMPLIANCE

An employee must continue to meet all the requirements of their role while they are working remotely. If the Head, having consulted with the People and Culture Department, has reasonable grounds for believing that an employee is not fulfilling all of the requirements of their role, they can give an employee notice of termination of an arrangement setting out the reasons for termination and specifying the date on which the employee must return to their original working arrangement.

In the event that the Head proposes to give notice of termination on these grounds it will first:

- notify the employee in writing of the proposal to terminate the arrangement; and
- include details of the grounds for terminating the arrangement; and
- give the employee 7 days after receipt of the notice to make representations to the employer in relation to the proposal; and

- consider any representations made by an employee before deciding whether to give notice of termination.

An employee is required to return to their original working arrangement 7 days after receiving notice of termination for abuse of an arrangement.

RAISING CONCERNS

If an employee feels that the remote working request has not been considered in line with the legislation and/or with the Code of Practice, the employee may invoke the University's Grievance Procedure under the informal process in the first instance.

SAMPLE REMOTE WORKING APPLICATION FORM

I wish to apply for remote working as provided for under section 20 of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 2023.

I am seeking remote working commencing on xxxxxx. (this date should be at least 8 weeks after the date of application). Insert expiry date if applicable.

The following sets out my reasons for requesting remote working. Employees are encouraged to provide as much relevant information as possible with their request so that it can be fully considered. Please see section on 'Making a Remote Working Request' for further details.

The proposed location for my remote working is _____

I believe this location is suitable for remote working under the WRC Code of Practice on Flexible and Remote Working for the following reasons.

I will comply with the relevant University policies such as ICT Usage, Data Protection and Privacy, Diversity and Equality, Grievance and Disciplinary, Health and Safety including the [Risk Assessment Form](#) , protecting confidential University information and IP etc.

Signed _____

Date _____

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Technology Requirements

- Staff should have access to a reliable internet connection.
- All devices used to conduct University business should meet the University's [security standards](#).
- Regular software updates and security patches must be installed (automated).
- Appropriate equipment such as headsets, microphones and web cameras should be used to facilitate safe and secure collaboration and to protect University information.

Training requirements

- Undertake mandatory Visual Display Unit (VDU) and Cyber security training.
- Complete a risk assessment for your remote workstation at required intervals.
- Staff should have completed the [digital badges](#) that are on offer for cloud storage and a digital workplace.

Remote Access to University Systems and Services

- Staff must use multi-factor authentication (MFA) when accessing university systems.
- It is a staff members responsibility to keep their password secure. You should not use the same password for more than one account.
- Be easily contactable through University-approved communication tools such as Outlook and Microsoft Teams for virtual meetings and collaboration while working remotely.
- UCC devices should not be used by non-UCC employees.

Data Security

- Use [approved storage options](#) to protect university data. Data should not be stored on removable storage. USB drives are not appropriate for any personal or university data.
- When working remotely device security is critical. Staff should ensure their device is [configured securely](#). Devices must be encrypted in accordance with the [UCC Encryption policy](#) and ensure compliance with the [UCC Data Protection policy](#)
- Employees should report any damage, loss, or theft of ICT equipment as soon as possible and follow the [Data Breach procedure](#).

Support and Troubleshooting

- Technical issues should be reported to the IT helpdesk through <https://portal.ucc.ie>
- Security issues should be reported to itsecurity@ucc.ie

Communication Tools - Etiquette

- Keep your presence status updated to reflect your availability so that colleagues can contact you as needed. This is particularly important for staff working remotely.
- Join meetings on time to show respect for everyone's schedule.
- Stay on mute when not speaking to minimize background noise and interference.
- Turn on your camera, when possible, to foster a sense of connection and engagement.
- Use out-of-office sensibly to provide colleagues with sufficient information in case they require a response.
- Right to disconnect – use the scheduling tool if sending emails or Teams messages outside of normal working hours.

Accessibility & Inclusivity advice for staff on-premises \off-premises

- Before sharing a document or sending an email, use the accessibility checker to check that content is accessible – ALT text should be added for images to ensure compatibility with screen readers.
- If sharing a slide deck during a meeting, use PowerPoint live to allow participants access the full range of accessibility features.
- In online meetings, use Captions and recording where possible.

GUIDANCE FOR HEADS WHEN CONSIDERING AN APPLICATION FOR REMOTE WORKING

In reviewing whether a role is suitable for remote working the following questions could be considered by a Head. This is a non-exhaustive list, and these matters may not be relevant in all situations:

- What type of work does the role entail?
- What are the employee's key duties?
- Can any of the duties which make up the role be undertaken remotely?
- Does the role require a high degree of manual work?
- Does the role include tasks that must be performed or are more efficiently performed on-site?
- Does the role require access to equipment/technologies or data that are only available on-site?
- Does the role require face-to-face engagement with students, customers or other employees on-site or at other locations?
- Would remote working affect the service quality or organisational operations taking into account the number of employees currently on approved leave and/or on approved remote working or flexible working arrangements?
- Are there technological solutions to mitigate issues arising from remote working?
- Do any health and safety issues arise if activities are undertaken remotely?

In considering a request for remote working, a Head may consider the suitability of the employee. The following questions may be considered by a Head. This is a non-exhaustive list and these matters may not be relevant in all situations.

- Does the employee have the necessary IT skills to complete their required job functions outside of the office?
- Does the employee understand their role and require minimal supervision to complete their tasks?
- Has the employee met the performance standards and requirements of the role?
- Is the employee subject to an extended probation period?
- Is the employee subject to an active performance improvement plan?
- Is the employee involved in an ongoing disciplinary process or is there a live record of disciplinary action?
- Is the employee subject to a training programme or apprenticeship which requires supervision?
- Has the employee demonstrated an ability to meet deadlines or any other business requirements?
- Does the employee understand the need to demonstrate flexibility when required to attend on-site outside of their agreed arrangement in order to meet business needs?
- Does the employee understand that there may be a requirement to participate in team meetings/training/one-to-ones online while working remotely?

- Has the employee maintained a satisfactory attendance record and complied with the company's attendance policy?
- Does the employee need to be on-site for learning, development or mentoring purposes?
- Does the employee need to be on-site to collaborate with colleagues in a team environment in a face-to-face setting?