Remote Working Policy

The following policy has been approved by St Edmund Hall. Any amendments to the policy require St Edmund Hall's Governing Body approval. Each employee when working remotely for St Edmund Hall is required to comply with this policy. Limited support and guidance for individuals is offered by St Edmund Hall's IT Office which in turn is supported by the University's central IT services teams.

St Edmund Hall is required by its Governing Body to review this policy yearly to ensure any new developments are covered and protected.

Overview

Working remotely, such as at home, can offer increased performance of College work for agreed hours during the day. In addition, reducing employee mileage contributes to the College's commitment to reduce its impact on the environment. The flexibility and productivity available from remote working can be attractive to both the College and its employees. These arrangements are based on a management philosophy of trust and mutual benefit. Employees will retain access to an office workstation (or desk-sharing arrangement) at their normal place of work.

The College is mindful that working from home can be mutually beneficial where work needs to be done with minimum distraction or interruption.

Introduction

For a variety of reasons, and with varying degrees of frequency, employees may undertake some of their duties away from their normal place of work at the College. Whilst there is an expectation that staff will normally be in the workplace, it is accepted that there may be circumstances where working from home is mutually beneficial for the College and employee.

These guidelines define arrangements for working from home to perform College related work, set out entitlements, eligibility criteria and other conditions that apply, and have been developed to provide a clear approach to working from home.

The intention is that this will ensure fair treatment and consistency of approach, which is understood by all managers and employees. It provides a standard framework for reporting, monitoring and managing remote working in line with the College's procedures.

Eligibility

Employees are eligible to request working from home providing:

- They have at least 26 weeks service at the College.
- They have not made a statutory request in the last 12 months.
- Job duties can still be carried out (to be determined by the line manager).

Working remotely is voluntary and is not intended to create a situation where employees feel obliged to work excessive hours. Likewise, an employee working remotely must not create additional workload for other employees, or otherwise affect operational efficiency and effectiveness of the College.

Working remotely is not a contractual right through either express or implied terms. It will not alter an employee's terms and conditions of employment nor does it attract subsidy since the benefits are seen as being mutual. Working remotely does not normally mean that equipment will be provided by the College for use at home. Arrangements will be subject to review to ensure that they remain appropriate for all parties and may be modified through discussion.

Any workers with a customer facing role, or who are required to be on-site for physical labour, for instance, are unlikely to be eligible. Employees who carry out the majority of their work at a computer could be allowed to work off-site. This will be arranged after discussions with the appropriate manager, who will consider If the job duties of the requester permit working from home. The factors will be decided by the appropriate manager, but the following are also for the employee's consideration:

- Does the nature of their role make them eligible?
- What data privacy challenges does remote working pose?
- Will communication/collaboration with other team members be hindered?
- Do employees have access to the right equipment or software?
- Is the employee's home suitable as a working environment?

After the consideration of the above, if the line manager is satisfied the employee can perform a high-standard of work from a remote location, the request may be approved.

Employees are classed as working remotely/from home, or 'telecommuting', when tasks are completed outside of the College's premises. Employees may work from home:

- Full-time.
- On certain days.
- By dividing time between office work and a remote location.
- Ad-hoc (with prior agreement with their line manager).

Working remotely can be requested to be occasional or full-time. The reasons for working remotely can include:

- Overlong commute.
- Family commitments (childcare, etc.).
- Medical reasons.
- Better work-life balance.

If the College is forced to close, either in emergency or due to planned works, all employees are expected to work from home if at all possible.

Time Zones

Normal 'office' operating hours for the College are 8am to 5pm. In the event a member of staff will be in a different time zone and needs to work remotely, the manager will review the impact upon the College, and while every effort will be made to support the difference in working hours, it may not be possible to approve the request.

Working Remotely

Most of the work that employees would undertake remotely is either paper-based work or work on a computer, and as such should not introduce health and safety risks not already present in the home environment. If an employee believes this not to be the case, they should discuss this with their manager.

If using a computer (laptop, desktop, or other mobile device) the employee should refer to College guidance regarding the use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and the principles for setting up an appropriate workstation. Requesting the self-assessment DSE questionnaire from help@seh.ox.ac.uk is advised, but any remedial work required is strictly the responsibility of the owner of the remote premises, not St Edmund Hall.

The employee should refer to the safety guidance leaflet "Working Alone" available at www.hse.gov.uk.

Responsibilities

As the College remains a work base for the employee and access to a desk and equipment is provided on-site, the College will not normally provide the employee with additional IT equipment, phone, broadband connection or furniture to work from home.

The employee is responsible for ensuring that they have suitable telephone and broadband services where required, and for contacting the service provider in the event of any

technical issues. It is not possible for the College to provide IT support for equipment owned by employees (excluding support for the connection via VPN to the College, which is supported by the IT Office).

Employees who are using College supplied and supported equipment can receive telephone and internet-based support from the IT Office, but if the issue cannot be resolved remotely, the employee will be required to bring the equipment on-site, as home visits are not possible. The IT Office is available via help@seh.ox.ac.uk.

All employees are required to use their own computer equipment (and any supplied equipment) correctly and to take reasonable steps to maintain any equipment provided, removing defective equipment from use and reporting defects on supplied equipment to their manager or the IT Office. College equipment may not be used by others i.e. family and friends etc, or for the purposes of running non-College related business. Limited personal use is permitted, in line with the University IT Regulations (https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/it-regulations-1-of-2002)

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) applies to home working employees as well as office-based employees. Under the Act, the College is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of all its employees, wherever they work. At the same time employees have an obligation to ensure that they take reasonable care not to expose themselves and others to risks to health and safety.

Employees can make use of the Microsoft Office365 software suite at home, and on their own equipment (a maximum of 5 computers/laptops, and 5 additional mobile devices). This is available from www.office.com.

Employees must ensure that up-to-date security software is installed on all their personally owned equipment. Anitvirus and advanced security software is available from the IT Office by contacting help@seh.ox.ac.uk

Security

Appropriate security must be applied to all College information stored on a computer (including back-up arrangements) and there must be secure storage for any confidential information. Employees are responsible for ensuring the security of College property and all College (and University) information, files, documents, data etc. within their possession, including both paper and electronic material. Employees should discuss the security implications of working from home with their manager or the IT Manager.

In most cases it will not be necessary for employees to transfer private or confidential information from the College to home as these files should be stored and accessed by using either:

- The College's VPN system to remotely access the data using the Portal and the Staff Home Folder; or
- The Microsoft Office365 suite (email) system/SharePoint, where the data is held securely and any communication over the internet is encrypted.

Both of these methods avoid the need to store any data on the local computer.

Any computer or mobile devices used must also be password-protected.

All remote workers are required to adhere to the University Acceptable Use Policy as well as the College's Information Security Policy and Data Privacy Policy whilst undertaking College business.

It is extremely important to the College to preserve its reputation and the reputation of Oxford University and its integral parts. Compliance with legal and regulatory requirements with respect to this Information is fundamental. Failure to keep information secure is a serious matter and will be dealt with under the College's disciplinary procedure.

Communication

Good communication is an essential part of any successful remote working arrangement. Provision must be made to allow effective communication with work colleagues and, if required, external contractors during the working day.

Employees must be contactable throughout their normal working hours by their line manager and other College employees. The arrangements for contact should be agreed prior to working from home. Chorus, the University's telephone system, is accessible via a computer or mobile telephone and instructions for setting this up can be obtained from the IT Office. The employee's home phone number and home address may not be divulged without their express permission (either internally to other colleagues or to contractors).

Under no circumstances are arrangements to be made for other employees, students, contractors or representatives to meet with the employee at their home. All such meetings should be carried out at the College or a similar professional setting in order to maintain the necessary level of professionalism and safety.

Compensation and Entitlements

In most instances, employees' employment terms are not affected by working remotely. The HR Manager is responsible for creating a new employment contract should this arrangement change a worker's compensation and benefits.

Insurance

The employee must understand that it is their responsibility to assess the implications for them of remote working, for example with respect to taxation, insurance, mortgage, rental or leasing arrangements. Remote working will be agreed on the basis that the employee has addressed any potential issues.

If there is an increase in the employee's home insurance premium, this will not be covered by the College.

College equipment would be covered by the College's own insurance.

The College holds liability insurances that provide cover for the legal liabilities of the College and its employees whenever they are engaged in College business. This cover applies irrespective of where the activity is taking place.

Travel

When an employee is working at or from home, journeys made to the normal office base will not be reimbursed as normal home to work rules apply.

In all instances, the terms of the Expenses Policy apply.

Costs and Expenses

No contribution will be made by the College towards normal household expenses attached to remote working, such as heating, lighting or council tax costs.

Where HMRC accept that an employee's home is a workplace, they may permit a deduction from earnings under Section 336 ITEPA 2003 "in the performance of the employee's duties". It is the employee's sole responsibility to inform HMRC and to claim for any tax relief they may have entitlement to.

To find out more, see HMRC's guidance: https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/employment-income-manual/eim32815

Annual and Sick leave

Requests for annual leave must be sent to and agreed by the line manager

following the normal procedure.

Employees working from home must inform their Line Manager if they are sick or unable to work in line normal sickness absence procedures.

Request Procedure

This guidance should ensure an appropriate and equitable response to employee requests for home working, with decisions taken and communicated in an efficient and fair manner. It is granted at the College's discretion and requires the approval of the appropriate manager(s) following discussion with the employee. It is recognised that some academic staff already work from home and do not need to seek agreement for each occasion of home working. However, they should be reminded of the guidance set out in this document.

An employee should approach their manager with a request for home working, and a rationale for why this request is being made (for example to enable them to complete a report). Normally this rationale will outline the benefits of working from home and the expected outcomes. If the request is supported then this will apply on an ad-hoc basis as and when required and as agreed between the employee and the manager.

A manager may refuse a request to work from home, but should aim to be as flexible as possible in accommodating such a request.

The manager will:

- Consider requests for home working and how this can benefit the College, individual and the environment and be flexible in their approach.

- Liaise with the IT Manager/HR Manager (where necessary) to discuss available arrangements.
- Notify employees of relevant arrangements, and will provide the employee with a copy of this home working guidance.
- Ensure that the employee is aware of expectations and the required standard of work.
- Provide feedback and to discuss and evaluate the arrangement.

The employee will:

- Abide by the requirements of this document, as well as all other College policies.
- Give suitable contact details to facilitate communication with the College as appropriate.
- Deliver the expected work outcomes.
- Understand and consider all the information within these guidelines, in particular their own responsibilities regarding health and safety, data security and confidentiality.
- Record the actual time worked on their time sheet (where appropriate)

The College will:

- Provide advice and guidance to managers and employees on how to effectively deal with home working.
- Assist managers with the fair and consistent application of the guidelines.

If an employee has decided to work from home, they should:

- Contact the relevant manager, who must approve the request considering the factors outlined above
- If working remotely is to be for longer than a week, then managers and staff should discuss how this affects the operation of the College, schedules, and other project deadlines.

If any employees are forced to work from home due to other circumstances, such as being ill or unable to commute, they should request to work from home as soon as possible. As above, this request will be approved by the appropriate manager.

Governance

This Policy will be reviewed regularly by the IT Manager and HR Manager. Any changes will be approved by the Governing Body.