Section One: Introduction

This document sets out the principles of hybrid for staff, which have been introduced to support the transition back to campus, once restrictions allow, and are intended to provide a ‘stepping stone’ for a move to more agile ways of working in the future.

Hybrid working is the term for a blended approach to working location that we will be using during the interim phase (expected to be fully in place by 1 September 2021).

Under hybrid working, your terms and conditions of employment remain the same. It is the location where work is carried out that will be different to the pre-pandemic base, due to the circumstances described above.

The University prides itself on its campus experience for students. This experience is underpinned by having an active community of employees, students and associates working collaboratively in the campus environment. The importance of being a campus university should underpin plans for hybrid working, so the expectation will be that all of us will spend some of our working week on campus. One of the values which underpins the University Strategy is ‘Inclusivity – We are a community where everyone can contribute and be appreciated for who they are’. Being present on campus and collaborating with teams and other colleagues is an essential element of bringing this to life.

Planned phased return to campus

The University is planning a phased return to campus for all teams and services when the current restrictions allow and when Government guidance encourages people to return to the workplace rather than working from home.

The health, safety and wellbeing of the University community is, and remains at the heart of decision making, and a phased return forms just one part of extensive measures that have been introduced to keep people safe. It is anticipated that we will still need to maintain social distancing when we begin to transition further back to campus and potentially for a period thereafter. The consequence of this is that there will be insufficient office space across all campuses to enable everyone to return 100% of the time whilst also meeting social distancing requirements. It is anticipated that this will be limited to up to 50% of normal occupancy by way of office space, which may be less where identified by individual office risk assessments and/or where 2m social distancing is required.

New ways of working model – ‘hybrid working’

These ‘hybrid working’ guidelines have been prepared to support the return to campus, where there will be the need to balance operational requirements and social distancing restrictions, which are expected to be in place from 1 September 2021. There will be continued limitation as to the amount of time spent on campus for roles where it is not essential to be on campus all the time and, therefore, it is likely that some time spent working from home will continue for part of the working week.

Continuing to limit the numbers on campus at any one time will also:

1) Ease the burden on facilities (eg public transport, catering, toilets) and maximise the available space and services for student facing and research related activities and services.
2) Allow the Covid-secure procedures to continue to operate effectively.
3) Continue to support the wellbeing of our staff and students.
4) Further reduce the opportunity for transmission of the virus from the external environment.

Please see the 'Managing the Return to Campus: Schedule, Principles and Approach' for more information.

Key principles of hybrid working

- Hybrid working is an interim measure intended to support the return to campus whilst Covid-19 restrictions remain in place. It will enable us to continue to limit the amount of time spent on campus for roles where it is not essential to be on campus all the time and is a stepping-stone to agile working.
- The overriding requirement is to ensure the safety of our University community.
- Leaders and teams are empowered to take responsibility for managing their work and working patterns in an appropriate way, with due consideration for individual preferences, which include being outcome focused to ensure that any core business/service hours and/or functions are covered.
- Where you wish to work fully from campus, this will be considered, however, office space will be dependent on the social distancing requirements/maximum office capacity being met. You may, therefore, be offered a working location, which is not your pre-pandemic office environment.
- There may be ad-hoc circumstances (e.g. to cover a period of sickness absence or annual leave) where hybrid-working arrangements may need to be altered (e.g. for another colleague to be in the office more often) at short notice.
- Adopting hybrid working will not change your formal/contractual place of work to being at home. Travel to and from the office at any time will not be part of the working day, nor will you be able to claim expenses associated with travel to campus from home.
- It is not necessary for you to work from only one location each working day. For example, you might work from home in the morning and attend campus in the afternoon. Such arrangements should be agreed as part of the operational requirements. However, for clarity, any time spent travelling to/from campus to/from home that breaks up the working day will not be classed as working time.
- Formal meetings, including University Committee, Board, School or team meetings should remain virtual for the foreseeable future and until UEB has approved a change to this format. The format of smaller or informal meetings should be a matter for local discretion and within health and safety guidelines.
- Your wellbeing, regardless of where you are working, is paramount, and you should raise any concerns or issues with your manager. You can also access the various wellbeing resources, which are available to you.
- All remote working must be carried out within the UK; this is to satisfy HMRC’s tax regulations relating to residency and to avoid any liability for tax under other national taxation requirements.

Section Two: Planning and discussing new ways of working

As planning begins for adopting these new ways of working, you are encouraged to consider how hybrid ways of working could operate. Managers may discuss ideas for new ways of working within teams and individually to enable them to make decisions, balancing individual circumstances whilst also ensuring operational needs are met.

You should discuss any specific circumstances with your manager to enable them to take these into account when developing and adopting hybrid working arrangements, this could include:

- If you have limited space at home, co-habit with others who are also working at home, have issues with internet connectivity etc, you may ask your manager to consider whether you can work more/all of the time on campus.
If you have significant underlying health concerns and have had clear medical advice to continue to self-isolate. These circumstances should be managed in accordance with the latest Government guidelines and advice can be sought from the Human Resources Employment Relations Team (hrer@nottingham.ac.uk). This may include making an Occupational Health referral for advice on whether working on campus is recommended.

If you have significant anxieties or concerns about returning to campus for whatever reason and what support you may need to transition back to campus.

If you feel your mental wellbeing would benefit, or if your job role would be better suited to working on campus more/all of the time, you may ask your manager to consider whether you can work more/all of the time on campus.

Section Three: Practical considerations for working remotely

Below outlines some practical considerations, expectations and best practices for working remotely.

What equipment do I need when working remotely?

Adopting a hybrid working approach will require equipment both in the workplace and at home. For many, arrangements have already been made to work at home effectively including equipment taken from campus or items of your own. In the interim, it may be agreed to retain equipment at home that was taken from the office during the lockdown period and ‘hot desking’ whilst working on campus (noting local cleaning protocols that will need to be in place to ensure this is a safe working practice).

The “click & collect” service for IT equipment that can be loaned to staff for use at home will continue. Details of the “click & collect” service can be found on the Workspace. Further advice and guidance can be provided by the DTS Service Desk.

You can use the Homeworking checklist to ensure that you have covered all the working environment aspects of working from home, which refers to the DSE Equipment Set Up and DSE Equipment Request Process. If you need further assistance, please contact your DSE Assessor. Further information about creating an ergonomic workstation/supporting homeworking can be found in Appendix 1 and you are encouraged to utilise these resources to support you whilst working remotely. If you have any questions, or are not sure about your workstation, you should refer to the Homeworking Checklist in the first instance.

The Addendum: Dual location working guidance for staff who need additional assistive support explains that it is not intended that everyone working from home have the same kit as they have at work. The University will not provide an allowance to purchase equipment. Any issues about equipment needs should be raised with your manager.

If you have any reasonable adjustments put in place within your working environment, consideration should be given to whether any adjustments are needed for you to work remotely. Completing a DSE assessment will help to inform whether any particular equipment is needed at home as well as on campus. Please refer to the Addendum: Dual location working guidelines for staff who need additional assistive support for further advice.

You can transport light equipment such as a laptop between locations and may wish to bring in your own keyboard, wrist rests and mouse (if working across dual locations) to avoid using communal ones that are set up in the campus work areas.
Do you have suitable/reliable internet access?

Any hybrid working arrangement must be supported by you having a sufficiently strong and reliable internet connection when you are working away from campus. It is your responsibility to set up and fund this connection. If you live in an area with regularly poor connectivity, or have an inherently unreliable internet provision, then it is probably not suitable for you to work remotely due to lost productivity. In these circumstances, managers may need to work with you to maximise the amount of time you are on campus bearing in mind it is likely that there will be sufficient workstations available to work on campus full-time.

Do you have a suitable confidential and protected working space?

Some work that is carried out remotely will be confidential. You need to be aware of what information is confidential and that there are controls in place to make sure that it is not shared and to ensure the requirements of GDPR are always met. There is a podcast on information security, which you should be familiar with, particularly to ensure that confidential and sensitive information (whether on laptops/other devices or hard copy information) is not unnecessarily transported to multiple locations and that any information is stored securely. You should avoid leaving University laptops or other devices unattended in vehicles.

You must be able to work in a space where you are not distracted and can concentrate on your work. Not everyone will have a space that they can dedicate to remote working and that is not a pre-requisite. However, you must have somewhere to set up your IT equipment and where you have ‘protected time’ without distractions to carry out your work.

You must ensure that you conduct O365 Teams conversations in appropriate environments when working remotely/in a shared space to ensure that any personal information is not inadvertently disclosed to others. Using headphones whilst working in a shared environment is encouraged and you should ensure that any particularly confidential/sensitive conversations conducted on O365 Teams are undertaken in a private environment.

You must ensure that you can work in a way that they are not distracted by activities around you. For example, not carrying out childcare duties whilst working (other than in circumstances of School Closures due to Covid – see below).

Where can you work remotely?

Generally, it is expected that you will work from your home when working remotely. However, there might be circumstances where you work from various locations at different times eg parents’ home, partner’s home, coffee shop etc. Providing the working conditions set out below can be met, there is no restriction on the location of remote work (although there may be restrictions in place in line with current Government guidelines, which should adhered to). You should avoid transporting sensitive and personal information (as described above) to multiple locations.

If you choose to work remotely in a location which is some distance from campus, you should be aware that if you are asked to attend campus, you must be able to do so with minimal notice eg to cover for absence or to attend work in person at short notice. Any additional costs incurred when attending campus that was not planned will not be reimbursed by the University, nor will the time be covered as part of your working day.

School closures/home schooling/caring responsibilities

During emergency school closures, or where school bubbles are sent home, the requirement for protected working time ie working without distractions, is not intended to apply, and flexibility should be adopted.
However, under normal circumstances, the expectation is that wherever you are working you are not distracted by other domestic activities eg looking after children, including during the school holidays. It is expected that you will be able to concentrate on work activities for the agreed hours each day and that you can attend any on-line meetings without interruption.

If a child is unwell and cannot attend school or a childcare setting, the Special Leave policy can be used. These same principles apply if you have other caring responsibilities. Whilst some flexibility can be afforded, this must be minimal and not significantly interrupt your ability to concentrate on work during your normal working hours.

Best practice when working remotely

Below provides a reminder of some good practices when working remotely:

- Social engagement ie catch-ups within teams remains an important part of working life, either virtually or in person
- Ensure your remote workstation is fit for purpose (further information and guidance on good ergonomic workstations can be found in Appendix 1)
- Continue to create the right conditions to work remotely effectively and efficiently (ie away from distractions and with the right heating and lighting etc)
- Meeting etiquette should still apply in the same way as it would do in an office environment (ie not undertaking domestic tasks whilst in meetings, ensuring that appropriate clothing is worn and not undertaking other tasks during meetings ie answering other calls/checking emails if avoidable)
- If informal meetings/calls take place eg ‘walking meetings’, you should ensure you are aware of, and protect your own safety.

Section Four: Confirming hybrid working arrangements

Any hybrid working arrangement is informal and temporary under the arrangements for returning to campus. Once discussions regarding new interim ways of working have taken place, ways of working will be implemented and you and your manager may wish to record a note of what these new temporary arrangements are for your records.

Once return to campus dates have been finalised, managers will confirm the return to campus processes, including the requirement for you to complete an Individual Return to Campus form and undertake the relevant Health and Safety training.

Impact on contractual working arrangements

Hybrid working is not intended to make permanent changes to your individual contractual working arrangements. These are expected to remain the same, except where formal changes to working hours have been approved via flexible working requests or via the Temporary Reduction in Hours/Temporary Unpaid Leave Scheme.

Where you work part-time, or have specific working arrangements already set out in your individual contract of employment, there is no expectation that hybrid working will change these. It is, however, recognised that in some teams, variations to normal working arrangements (whilst still working contracted hours of work) have already been made on an informal basis, including allowing flexibility at either end of the day and working outside the normal 9-5 working pattern. It is fine for these to continue during the period of hybrid working if operational requirements continue to be met.
Flexible working

If you wish to vary your working arrangements, you may make a flexible working request, which will be considered under the Flexible Working Policy.

Section Five: Reviewing hybrid working arrangements

Your hybrid working arrangements will be regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to meet operational, team and individual needs and that working practices remain in line with the Government and University guidelines so they may, therefore, evolve and change during this interim period. At any point, you or your manager can request to make changes to the arrangement if it is not working effectively.

Section Six: Health and wellbeing considerations

It is important not to forget usual wellbeing arrangements to ensure you are aware of the various HR policies, which remain in place whilst adopting hybrid ways of working.

Annual Leave

You are encouraged to take annual leave regularly. Annual leave should be booked via normal local processes.

Sickness Absence

If you are unwell, you should report sickness absence through the normal procedures regardless of where you are working. If you are not well enough to work, you should not continue to try to work whilst unwell regardless of where you are working.

Special Leave

The University's Special Leave Policy will continue to apply (up to 5 days paid leave to deal with domestic emergencies such as care arrangements or illness of an older dependant or child). Whilst hybrid working provides greater flexibility for attending hospital and GP appointments, the Special Leave Policy provides information about where time can be given if hospital or GP appointments occur during the normal working day, if it is not possible for you to make it up at another time.

Work-life balance and workload

You are encouraged to ensure you separate your working time from home time. Resources on managing remote working and working from home guidelines should be referred to. Hybrid working should not assume a long hours working culture and, therefore, any concerns you have should be raised with your manager.

Section Seven: Where hybrid working arrangements cannot be agreed

There may be circumstances where a preferred hybrid working arrangement is operationally unviable. Ultimately, managers will determine what the most appropriate hybrid-working arrangements will be.
Appendix 1

Ergonomic resources – supporting employees who work from home

- NHS Guidelines - How to sit correctly
- Ergonomics - Infographic
- Care first Guidelines - Working at Home
- Care first Guidelines - Avoiding Eye Strain
- Care first Guidelines - Good Posture
- Working Comfortably at Home - A guide to using DSE at home
- UoN Health and Safety Guidelines - Working at Home Safely