COVID-19 – Work from Home/Telecommute Arrangements

Approved by the President’s Executive Committee as of March 16, 2020

Background

In an effort to protect the health and safety of both the campus and broader community, the University of Saskatchewan supports work from home/telecommute arrangements in situations where work can be performed from home (or at an alternate location). The university is not currently mandating employees to work at home. However, People Leaders are encouraged to discuss with their employees those instances where work from home/telecommuting arrangements should be considered in light of the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation. Key considerations for People Leaders are whether or not working from home/telecommuting is compatible with the nature of the work, operational needs, maintaining appropriate service levels, employees’ job responsibilities and existing technology/technological infrastructures. Such arrangements are to be approved by Departmental/Unit Management prior to entering into said arrangements.

The University of Saskatchewan continues to monitor the coronavirus and will review and modify the work from home/telecommuting principles, criteria and guidelines in response to the ongoing changes related to COVID-19. The work from home/telecommute arrangement will be available until further notice.

The most up to date information on COVID-19 can be found at https://updates.usask.ca.

Principles, Criteria & Guidelines for Work from Home/Telecommute Arrangement

- The University of Saskatchewan encourages departments and units to consider ways of implementing social distancing as a method to minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus. One such option for social distancing is a work from home/telecommute arrangement.

- While the university currently intends to remain open and operational, People Leaders may assess options for employees to work from home/telecommute. If feasible, work from home/telecommute arrangements may be initiated and necessary supports and tools for such arrangements will be facilitated on a priority basis.

- For additional information, please visit: https://updates.usask.ca/work-remotely
• People Leaders may enter into work from home/telecommute arrangements with employees for the purpose of maintaining operations and services and for the proactive risk-mitigation in reducing the population of individuals on campus and the associated risk of potential COVID-19 exposure.

• Work from home/Telecommute arrangements are to be compatible with employees’ job responsibilities (i.e. identify which roles and work activities can or cannot be performed remotely), as determined by People Leaders.

• When entertaining work from home/telecommute arrangements, People Leaders are to consider the nature of the job/work, operational needs, the ability to maintain the quality of services to members of the university community (and public, if applicable), existing technology/technological infrastructures (i.e. employees already have the laptops, devices, systems and programs in place), potential associated costs, performance and productivity of the employee and the ability of the employee to work independently.

• HR Strategic Business Advisors (HR SBA) are available to support People Leaders in determining appropriate and/or necessary work from home/telecommute arrangements.

• Through regular check-ins, People Leaders/Direct Supervisors will continue to ensure: regular hours of work, work performance expectations, work assignments and outcomes are clearly identified and that employees remain accountable for maintaining regular hours of work, the work assigned and the outcomes expected (i.e. tracking and monitoring work activities and productivity as necessary and appropriate) through the duration of the work from home/telecommute arrangement.

• Employees need to be available and responsive during regular hours of work.

• Employees will ensure their Outlook Calendar schedule is updated, including working locations (e.g. working at home, on campus, at alternate off-campus locations).

• Employees entering into work from home/telecommute arrangements are to participate (via teleconference, video conference, face-to-face) in meetings as required by management.

• Employment legislation, policies and procedures, collective agreements, handbooks, contracts, etc. remain in effect for the duration of the work from home/telecommute arrangement.
**K-Grade 12 School Closures**

- With the announcement of the closure of all pre-K to Grade 12 schools, indefinitely and effective March 20, 2020, work from home/telecommute arrangements may be an appropriate arrangement for employees for a short-term and/or long-term period as employees explore possible alternate options for childcare.

- Options for work from home/telecommute arrangements (for the purpose of addressing childcare needs and maintaining core/critical university operations and services) are to be discussed and determined between employees and their People Leaders, applying the above principles, criteria and guidelines.

**Technology Options**

- ICT’s first priority is supporting the move to online academic delivery and assistance for new work from home users is limited.

- Most IT services for students and faculty do not require anything special for user access from off campus. Try the services you commonly use first to determine if that is sufficient for you to complete your work.

- Employees that need additional tools to access some services should use either remote desktop protocol (RDP) or virtual private network (VPN). Users with university laptops should take them home and use VPN. Users with university desktop computers should use RDP on their home computers for access through their university desktop. These tools need to be set up while on campus before they will work. There are setup guides for RDP and VPN. When planning to work remotely, be sure to install all software you need and any updates/patches required before starting a work from home/telecommute arrangement.

- Those with university phones have options to pick up messages via email or forward their phones to personal numbers. When returning calls, it may be important to mask your number to prevent that from being shared.

**Sickness/Possible Exposure to COVID-19**

- If you are sick, it is imperative that you stay home and do not spread your illness. Even if your illness and symptoms are not consistent to that of the COVID-19 virus (symptoms may include fever, cough, difficulty breathing), please stay home and monitor your symptoms. **Sick employees should not be required to work from home.**
- **Effective immediately**, if you have travelled outside of Canada, you should not come to campus for 14 calendar days after your return from travel and should monitor yourself daily for symptoms (may include fever, cough and difficulty breathing).

- If you have travelled or attended an event within the past 14 days, and then received notification that you may have been in contact with a fellow traveller or attendee who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 by laboratory testing, please self-isolate for 14 days and monitor yourself daily for symptoms (may include fever, cough and difficulty breathing).

- If you have arrived from countries for which the Government of Canada has issued travel health advisories for COVID-19 in the past 14 days, or you have been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 by laboratory testing, please self-isolate for 14 days and monitor yourself daily for symptoms (may include fever, cough and difficulty breathing).

- Employees who are off work to care for immediate family members experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (may include fever, cough and difficulty breathing), or “like” illnesses and symptoms, may remain at home to care for their immediate family members.

- Employees with pre-existing medical conditions, who are at increased risk if in contact with the COVID-19 virus, are strong candidates for participating in the work from home/telecommute arrangement.

- Wellness Resources ([https://wellness.usask.ca/](https://wellness.usask.ca/)) support is available to People Leaders and employees for instances where employees are ill due to contact with the COVID-19 virus.

- Safety Resources ([https://safetyresources.usask.ca/](https://safetyresources.usask.ca/)) support is available to People Leaders and employees regarding any health and safety concerns that may arise during a work from home/telecommute arrangement.

- The appropriate medical/sick leave provisions will apply based on the applicable collective agreement or employee handbook. However, should other paid leave options need to be considered, People Leaders are to discuss alternate options available with their respective HR SBA.