



UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA
Work From Home/Telecommuting Guidelines

May 2020

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GUIDELINES COVER SHEET

Title	University of Rwanda (UR) Work From Home Policy or Telecommuting Policy / Telecommuting Policy and Procedure
Approving Authority	Senior Management Council
Approval date	11 th May 2020
Effective from	11 th May 2020
Developed in	May 2020
Guidelines Summary	To provide a framework under which UR employees will be able to work from home under various circumstances and for different reasons but still meet the University aspirations.
Reason	Provide guidelines for working from home.
Related Policies or References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government of Rwanda Directives on COVID-19 pandemic - World Health Organization Directives: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public consulted on 2nd May 2020 - Remote work guideline for Government Employees provided by Rwanda Information Society Authority on 4th March 2020
Guidelines Custodian	Deputy Vice Chancellor for Strategic Planning and Administration (DVC-SPA)
Contact Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Administration and Human Resources Division -Campus Human Resources Directorate -Head of Campus
Consulted organs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UR Staff Appointed task team UR Senior Management Council



1. Guidelines brief and Purpose

For a variety of reasons, employees may be required or request to undertake some of their duties away from their assigned physical place of work. Following the COVID-19 outbreak, the University wishes to build on the experience of working from home in developing an approach to working where it may be mutually beneficial for employees to work from home or at another remote location while still delivering on expectations. This has prompted the University to develop the framework for Working From Home (WFH) which outlines the guiding principles and expectations of the University (UR) and ensures a mutually beneficial relationship between employees and the university.

The purpose of these Guidelines are to ensure that the employee, students, customers, colleagues and the institution do not under-perform or are disadvantaged by new ways of working.

2. General Objective of the Guidelines

To provide guidance for telecommuting or working from home. The University considers telecommuting or working from home to be a viable, flexible work option when the employee can perform fully and the tasks are done efficiently, effectively and quality is not compromised. Telecommuting is appropriate during and after COVID-19.

3. Specific Objectives

1. To improve the wellbeing of employees and promote a results-driven working environment
2. To create a conducive working environment for UR employees with flexibility in working patterns
3. To support UR staff to deliver with minimum supervision and contribute to excellent institutional performance

4. To have established practices that enable to be responsive in implementing any emergency preventive measures that may be issued by Government of Rwanda including the current pandemic of COVID19 and other pandemics that may require staff to work from home in future

5. To ensure that the University services and functions are not compromised by changes in working patterns and locations, and where they are to optimize arrangements.

4. Scope

These Work From Home Guidelines apply to all UR administrative and academic staff. Therefore, the approval to work from home will be based on nature of job duties, performance, productivity and the capacity of a staff member to work in this way, and all arrangements are at the discretion of the line manager.

All employees can apply to work from home and a line manager or the employer can request an employee to work from home if warranted. The employees whose duties will not fit for working from home will be required to report to the workplace at agreed times, and in some instances on a daily basis, in order to meet organizational objectives.

The work from home guidelines provides a framework for line managers, where possible, to find ways for employees and those working with UR to complete their work away from campuses of the University:

- Full-time, permanent members of staff
- Full-time contracted members of staff
- Visiting lecturers, consultants and others engaged with UR

Work from home arrangements have to be agreed by line Managers, and cannot be assumed by employees and those working with UR.

5. Reasons that may require an employee to work from home

Work from home essentially means that an employee is working remotely from a location that is not a UR campus. In the future this may become reality as institutions reduce high-cost office space and utilities, institute hot-desking and all virtual meetings, reduce transport on roads, mission and travel costs, and save time for busy people who have lives beyond work. Working from home may be a temporary arrangement and may be long-term, it may be task-driven and it may be a regular weekly phenomenon.

At this time of writing the guidelines a UR employee (both under statute and under contract) may be compelled to work from home because of government instructions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, and this practice of working from home can be arranged for the following reasons:

1. Contagious diseases or pandemics such as Covid-19 or where the health authorities and Government of Rwanda instruct us to do so
2. Congestion, for shorter and longer periods of time, when there is no enough space at the workplace
3. When it is determined that the nature of all or some of the employee's responsibilities can be performed from home
4. Medical condition (certified by medical doctor) which may hinder mobility of an employee between home and place of work
5. Any other unforeseen reason that may have short- or long-term consequences that are agreeable to the employee and the line manager, and supported by the employer
6. An employee working on a specific short-term task for which focused effort is required in order to deliver to a tight timeframe.
7. A line manager may agree with a staff member that they may work from home a set number of days each week.

6. Criteria to determine UR employees' eligibility to work from home

Employees, their supervisors and managers shall consider the following criteria when considering work from home arrangements:

- i) Nature of employee's duties
- ii) Data security
- iii) Impact on staff in the same unit and other employees
- iv) Portability, connectivity, availability, and safety and security of facility requirement for an employee to work from home
- v) Conditions of employee's home or alternative designated place of work must be favourable to ensure productivity
- vi) Past performance of an employee

7. Procedure for approval for working from home

The following procedure will be followed before granting approval to work from home:

1. After considering reasons and criteria specified in 6 and 7, the line manager shall notify an employee of the requirement to work from home
2. Head of units should demonstrate remote work plans and schedules for their units
3. In case an employee wants to work from home, s/he shall file an electronic request to her/his line manager with a copy to Human Resource Management office
4. Employee's direct line managers shall approve the request considering all criteria and conditions outlined in these guidelines
5. An employee and the line manager shall agree on the work plan, deliverables and reporting pattern, and duration (e.g. until further notice or for the next 30 days). Work plan and deliverables must be in line with the annual plan and performance contract signed between an employee and the line manager

6. If the work from home arrangements will last longer than the time period agreed, UR employee and line manager are expected to meet, discuss details, deliverables and set new targets and timelines.
7. Arrangement for working from home between staff and line manager shall be approved by the Vice Chancellor upon recommendation by Principal or Head of Campus for Campus based staff or by Deputy Vice Chancellor for staff based at the UR Head Office.
8. Any underperformance should be dealt with in the usual way but may also prompt to reverse working from home for an employee.

8. Compensation and benefits

The Work From Home Guidelines do not affect an employee's compensation and benefits nor doesn't undermine the work deliverables.

9. Performance monitoring

- i) In addition to the existing performance management modalities, the University shall put in place ICT infrastructure that tracks employee's performance and shall set guidelines to ensure employees work at optimum levels.
- ii) Line managers are expected to keep in touch with their staff to ensure that they meet their goals and targets on time. In addition, deliverables should be clear and in line with and UR strategic and annual operational plans.
- iii) Line managers shall conduct weekly virtue meetings to verify the progress of the work to be done. Where necessary, face to face meetings may be conducted
- iv) Line managers shall refrain from assuming that staff are aware of what they are expected to do

- v) Line managers need to consider a series of measures to ensure business continuity
- vi) Line managers shall identify posts with their respective deliverables and determine whether they can be performed at the workplace or at home
- vii) Essential services that require physical presence of an employee shall be identified and by line managers and ensure that the employees report to the workplaces as required
- viii) Line managers shall ensure that UR staff are supported to work either at office or from home.
- ix) Both staff working from home and those working in offices shall agree with line managers weekly, monthly and quarterly performance pledges and modes of reporting. Administrative staff shall be provided with individual templates to plan and report their work on a weekly basis and this will form the basis for their evaluation
- x) Office of Human Resources Management should share tips and best practices for working from home for staff
- xi) Electronic mailing and filing systems shall be used
- xii) Where more staff wish to work from home than is possible to maintain services, line managers shall ensure that a rotate of staff workplace attendance is agreed
- xiii) The official mode of communication is via email because of its traceability. However, for quick communication, staff are also encouraged to use other channels (especially text forms such as SMS or WhatsApp).

10. Code of conduct and work ethics for Working From Home

For effective productivity and ethical standards while working from home, UR employees shall uphold the following code of conduct and work ethics:

- i) Availability:** UR staff are expected to be available online to attend to office matters, and should work from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM as it is stipulated by ministerial order N°02/Mifotra/15

of 09/06/2015 determining weekly working hours in public service and modalities of their respect.

ii) Responsiveness

UR employees working from home are expected to respond to a co-worker and line manager immediately during working hours for productivity expectations. They should respond to co-worker's emails and telephone calls for effective feedback.

iii) Productivity

The productivity of employees working from home will be measured by the expected outcomes of work agreed with their line manager. Productivity can be measured in a number of ways, whether it is on the time spent on the project, number of cases resolved, number of clients'(students, staff and external stakeholders) interactions. Line managers need to determine how they shall evaluate their subordinates on the basis of the action plan.

iv) Accountability

All UR employees are expected to be results oriented and accountable in order to achieve excellent organizational performance. Staff shall sign consent form for monitoring online activities using technologies such as facial recognition software.

vi) Security

Staff working from home shall ensure that work data is protected as per the University data protection guidelines/policy.

vii) Confidentiality


Staff shall maintain the highest level of confidentiality in the execution of their duties and responsibilities.

11. University Data Protection and security

The security of the University's information and documents, including research data will be the responsibility of the employee. All employees working remotely must ensure that the computer they access is secure even if it is shared by family members. Employee shall ensure that UR's information remains private and confidential even after leaving the University. Therefore, staff working from home shall ensure security and confidentiality of work files and the use of electronic signatures should be used whenever possible.

12. Commencement.

These guidelines will be implemented from the date of approval by Senior Management Council until further notice and may be changed as need arises.


Prof. Philip Cotton
Vice- Chancellor

