

## College of Engineering Remote Work Policy

**Date implemented: 20 July 2021<sup>1</sup>**

### **Summary Statement:**

In Chancellor Blank's message on May 19, 2021, she stated that: "We best fulfill our teaching, service and research missions when we work, learn and connect together in-person. On-campus interactions build connections between employees, facilitate quick exchange of information and help integrate new staff into office culture and operations." The Chancellor also instructed schools and colleges to use a phased approach to bring employees back to campus with the expectation that the process will be completed by August 23, 2021, and that schools/colleges develop a remote work policy that is consistent with [UW-Madison Remote Work Policy<sup>2</sup>](#). The College of Engineering Remote Work Policy was developed based on input from and discussions with numerous stakeholder groups.

While the College of Engineering recognizes that remote work<sup>3</sup> presents a number of potential benefits to the organization and its staff, there are numerous additional factors that need to be considered as we determine the remote work policy for the college. These key factors include but are not limited to a) the students who are pursuing a B.S., M.S. or Ph.D. degree, b) the faculty who depend on staff to aid them as they educate the students and conduct research, c) the high value attained from the personal interactions that occur when employees are physically located on-site, as well as the efficiencies, camaraderie and team building that come from the day-to-day interactions, and d) understanding how to best manage and supervise in an environment in which only some fraction of the employees are on campus at any given time. The college recognizes that to remain competitive in the recruiting and retaining of excellent staff, and to support the culture and climate the college strives to achieve, it must adapt and provide workplace flexibilities with the caveat that operational needs of the position, the department/unit, the stakeholder groups, and the college are met.

The College of Engineering has a reputation for producing well-educated engineers who are extremely well prepared to enter the work force, which is the reason company recruiters return to the College of Engineering year after year. We have recognized the value of design-centric, experiential learning instruction, the importance of teamwork, and the value of extra-curricular programs for the success of our students. Our tutoring services help our students achieve their potential, our advisors guide them through the engineering curricula and provide guidance on career pathways, etc. The majority of our students want these experiences to be in-person for educational success, for their well-being, and to build friendships and networks that will last a lifetime.

In weighing the input received from different groups and recognizing that this operational change brings new opportunities and challenges, the college will pilot remote work for selected operational units from August to December 2021. Based on the outcomes of the pilot program, the college will determine if remote work should be extended to other operational units and if the duration of a remote work agreement can be extended from six months to one year.

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<sup>1</sup> Policy will be discussed with CoE APC during fall semester of AY 2021-22 and may be amended following those discussions.

<sup>2</sup> UW policies can be found in the [UW Policy Library](#).

<sup>3</sup> Remote Work is the accepted term the campus uses for telecommuting or related requests. In this document remote work and telecommuting are synonymous.

This document describes how the College of Engineering will implement the [UW-Madison Remote Work Policy](#) and, specifically, the request and decision-making process that employees must follow to be considered for remote work.

### **UW-Madison Remote Work Policy Applicability:**

As outlined in the [UW-Madison Remote Work Policy](#), the guidelines apply to all employees who are in the following employment categories: Academic Staff, University Staff, Limited Employees, Temporary Employees, Post-Degree Training Appointments, and Student Hourly Employees. It is important to note that affiliates categorized as Zero-Dollar Appointments are also included. In the case of Faculty and Graduate Assistants (i.e., Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, and Project/ Program Assistants) the guidelines apply only to out-of-state or international remote work.

### **Medical Requests:**

In accordance with campus policy, the requirements of this policy apply even in the case of medically related absences. If a faculty or staff member has a serious health condition, they should work with one of our Divisional Disability Representatives <https://oed.wisc.edu/divisional-disability-representatives-ddr/> to determine which accommodations are appropriate and necessary.

### **College of Engineering Remote Work Policy**

#### **Pilot Program**

The College of Engineering will pilot a remote work program between August and December 2021. The unit/job functions included in the pilot program are:

- Research Administrators
- Accountants
- Communications/Editor staff
- Human Resources
- Payroll
- IT
- InterPro

To put the scale of the pilot program in perspective, approximately 30% of the academic and university staff are eligible for remote work. The largest groups of academic staff who are not eligible for remote work are research and instructional staff. These two groups account for over 50% of the academic staff in the college.

Remote work will be for no more than two days per week. Following consultation with the Dean, the department chairs and associate deans will set the number of remote work days for eligible employees. The number of days will depend on the job function, the employee, and the ability of the unit to meet its mission. Department chairs and associate deans may request authority to permit remote work for more than two days per week for their unit. However, this permission will be granted rarely and only when there is clear justification from a mission/business necessity perspective.

The success of the pilot program will be determined by the Dean following consultation with the College of Engineering Leadership Council, the Academic Planning Committee, Engineering Committee for Academic Staff Issues and other key stakeholder groups. Key metrics that will be used in determining the

success include the ability of the unit to meet user needs of their services; the success of the academic departments and the college in meeting their instructional, research and service missions, the impact of hybrid work on the climate and culture of the department/unit, and overall employee satisfaction with a hybrid work environment.

The decision on the success of pilot program will be made prior to the end of the fall semester 2021.

### **Remote Work Request Process:**

The process detailed in this policy is to be used for any remote work requests that include off-campus work that follow a regular, repeated schedule. For any proposed arrangement where an employee would regularly perform some or all duties remotely for a period lasting more than a week, the supervisor and the employee must follow the process outlined in this document prior to the proposed start date. For any proposed temporary remote work arrangement lasting five days or less, the employee is expected to contact the supervisor and receive supervisor approval of this workplace flexibility request via email or other written documentation prior to the proposed start date.

#### *For Supervisors: Preparing to Lead and Manage in a Hybrid Work Environment*

It is recognized that supervisors of units will need additional skills to manage and lead units in which some fraction of the employees may be working remotely for part or all of the week. To prepare to lead in this work environment, supervisors should:

1. Seek appropriate training on how to lead and manage in a remote/hybrid environment. Some opportunities include:
  - a. **OHR Training:**
    - i. <https://hr.wisc.edu/professional-development/programs/reuniting-campus/>
  - b. **InterPro:**
    - i. <https://interpro.wisc.edu/online-degrees/epd-video-series/episode-1-remote-team-guidance/>
  - c. **School of Business (Fee)**
    - i. <https://sbdc.wisc.edu/grow-your-leaders/managing-remote-teams/>
  - d. **Continuing Studies (Fee):**
    - i. <https://continuingstudies.wisc.edu/classes/lead-distance-manage-virtual-staff/>

Supervisors should identify appropriate training opportunities and discuss them with their department chair or the relevant associate dean.

2. Determine the operational hours of your unit. The hours must be such that they meet the needs of the relevant stakeholder groups, the department, college and university.
3. Determine a common platform for email, calendaring, video conferencing, chat, etc. that will be used throughout your unit. The training opportunity provided by InterPro provides a helpful example of why this is important.
4. Determine how you will assign duties to ensure they are distributed equitably between on-campus and remote employees.
5. Determine, in consultation with your department chair or relevant associate dean, how you will equitably assess the performance of employees working on-campus and remotely. The assessment will need to go beyond the individual employee performance evaluation to assess how the performance of the individual impacted the users of the services provided by the unit.

6. Determine, in consultation with your department chair or relevant associate dean, the quantitative metrics that will be used to assess the effectiveness of your unit in meeting its mission and in enabling the success of the department or larger unit. Being able to quantify the success of your unit will be important in your evaluation with your department chair/associate dean.
7. Determine how the unit will on-board new employees.
8. Determine space needs and utilization to account for a hybrid workforce. This should consider sharing of offices, multi-occupant spaces, etc. for staff that will be working partly or fully remotely.
9. If the functionalities provided by your unit are listed as being suitable for remote work, you are encouraged to use the resource [UW–Madison Remote Work Suitability Assessment Guide for Managers](#) to determine if a staff member is suitable for consideration for remote work.

Supervisors may find the following [resources](#) helpful as they prepare to operate in a hybrid work environment.

*For Employees: Exploring the Possibility of Remote Work*

Employees can find information about remote at [Remote Work: Guidance and Resources for Employees](#)

The College of Engineering has determined that the following job functions within academic and non-academic units are included in the pilot program

- Research Administrators
- Accountants
- Communications/Editor staff
- Human Resources
- Payroll
- IT
- InterPro

Employees providing these job functions and wishing to be considered for remote work should:

- a. Consult with their supervisor to determine if your position is eligible for consideration of remote work. Your supervisor may use the tools provided in the [UW–Madison Remote Work Suitability Assessment Guide for Managers](#) to determine if you are eligible for consideration.
- b. Eligible employees who are interested in working remotely will need to complete the appropriate [campus form](#) and submit it to their supervisor. During the pilot phase, the remote work agreement is valid until December 31, 2021.
- c. Supervisors will forward their recommendation to their department chair or relevant associate dean for their review.
- d. Department chair or relevant associate dean will review the request materials and forward approved request materials the appropriate campus group for review or, if no additional reviews are necessary, to the Dean.
- e. Following review and approval by all groups, the Dean or designee will review and approve/deny the request based on operational needs and business necessity of the College. The Dean’s Office decision will be communicated to the department chair or relevant associate dean.
- f. The supervisor will be notified of the decision by the department chair or relevant associate dean and share this decision with the employee.
- g. Reconsideration of any remote work request will comply with the [UW-Madison Remote Work Policy](#). Upon reconsideration the decision of the Dean is considered final and cannot be appealed.

### *Remote Work Agreement*

Following the approval of a remote work request, the supervisor and employee will formalize the arrangement using the campus Remote Work Agreement. During the pilot phase, the remote work agreement is valid until December 31, 2021. Employees working remotely must agree to the following:

- Agree to use the units preferred platform for email, calendaring, video conferencing, chat, etc.
- Agree to keep their calendar up-to-date and to share it with others in the unit.
- Agree on the number of days per week, the days and core hours that will be maintained. The expectation is that on-campus and remote work employees will be available during the standard operating hours of the unit. That is, there will be no difference in the work hours for on-campus and remote employees.
- Verify they have access to a remote work environment that is appropriate and supportive for successful work, such as a professional workspace. Here it is important to note that the college will provide only one workstation/laptop for the employee regardless of location of work. No other office equipment or office supplies will be provided for use at the remote work location.
- Verify they have at the remote work place the technology needed to work remotely. This includes high speed, reliable internet access that allows the employee to participate in remote meetings with video.
- Agree they are responsible for the cost of providing high speed internet access.
- Agree to attend, at their expense, all required in-person meetings of the unit, college and university announced and scheduled a minimum of 24-hours in advance of the scheduled meeting time.
- Agree to complete the tasks assigned by the supervisor and, where relevant, complete them by the due date.
- Agree to the assessment techniques for measuring success for on-campus and remote work tasks.
- Agree to follow campus and College standards for cybersecurity. Today, this means that employees working remotely should use the VPN connection to the campus network as this should maximize computer security. It is highly recommended that employees only use their primary work computer when working remotely. If the employee uses a secondary computing system, the employee should use the VPN connection to connect to their primary system and the campus network.
- Verify that their remote work site is safe. Specific questions related to remote workplace safety will be included in the campus remote work agreement form.

All College of Engineering Remote Work Agreements must be approved and signed by the employee, supervisor, Department Chair or relevant Associate Dean, and the Dean. A record of completed remote work agreements will be maintained by college HR.

### *On-going Review and Approval of Remote Work Agreement*

Following the pilot program, Remote Work agreements will be reviewed by the employee, the supervisor, department chair/associate dean, and the Dean's Office a minimum of every 6 months. Supervisors should review with employees the effectiveness of the Remote Work Agreement on a regular basis, preferably during the [PMDP](#) process review periods. If there are any performance concerns related to the remote employee or the performance of the department/unit as a result of remote work, the supervisor, department chair or associate dean can modify or revoke the agreement as long as the employee is provided with reasonable notification (minimum 7-day notice). If a supervisor modifies or revokes a remote work agreement, the employee may request a review of the decision by the Dean's Office, as provided in the [UW-Madison Remote Work Policy](#). As the end date approaches for an existing agreement, the supervisor should work with the employee to make any changes to the agreement and determine if the agreement

should be renewed or terminated. Department chairs or the relevant associate dean will review renewed agreements and submit their recommendation to the Dean for approval.

### **Out-of-State or International Remote Work**

If remote work is being considered for out-of-state or international locations, that will require separate campus review and approval as these arrangements involve increased costs and compliance risks to the College of Engineering and the University. These requests will be approved based on business necessity and have an even higher threshold for approval by the college and the campus. It is important to note that remote work arrangements may still require employees to come on-site occasionally for meetings and other work-related duties. Employees shall be physically present on campus for activities as deemed necessary by their supervisor, department chair/associate dean, college and university, and may include, but are not limited to, team meetings, group retreats, and teamwork tasks that may be more efficiently conducted onsite. Such events cannot be attended virtually. Workspace will be provided to staff when working on campus. Travel and other costs related to these visits will not be reimbursable.

### **Health and Safety**

All campus health and safety guidelines will be followed. Units with shared spaces should discuss how the guidelines will be implemented in their units and what additional procedures, if any, will need to be followed. Units should work with the College's Director of Safety, Information Technology/CAE and other appropriate units in the College to address health and safety needs.

Employees working remotely will need to verify, through the campus remote work approval process, that their remote workplace meets the required safety standards.