PRIFYSGOL BANGOR UNIVERSITY

INTERIM HOMEWORKING POLICY

Rev.	Date	Purpose of issue / description of change	Review date

Policy Officer	Senior responsible officer	Approved by and date	Equality impact assessment and date
Director of HR	Deputy Director of HR (Operations)	Return to Campus Working Group (21.07.20) University Executive (28.07.20)	24.07.20

Scope

This policy can (in principle) be applied to all university employees, regardless of contract type or duration, although it is recognised that because of the nature of some roles, homeworking would not be practical.

Definition

For clarity, home-based work or working from home means performance of duties, from a home or private setting.

Introduction

This policy has been developed in response to COVID-19, and is an interim policy on homeworking in response to government recommendations relating to COVID-19 to enable social distancing, and for employees to work from home wherever possible.

Where it is reasonably practicable for staff members to work from home then they must not be leaving home for their work. The most effective way of the University ensuring physical distancing it is to enable staff to work from home, some or all of the time. The expectation is that staff members should be working from home unless the nature of their role means this is not possible, or they are actively engaging with students in on campus delivery.

In response to the closure of the campus, and the gradual re-opening of campus, this policy is designed to assist staff members to work from home safely and effectively and to set out the steps that should be taken if homeworking is embarked upon over a prolonged period of time.

The University recognises that that the impact of COVID-19 means that:
- The University has been required to close its physical buildings and spaces to staff, students and visitors, therefore, the only way for the organisation to continue to operate, is if as many staff as practical are able to work from home.
- Working from home should therefore be supported where possible.
- Some staff will have enhanced caring responsibilities (for example, due to school closures) that may make it more difficult to attend work or carry out work from home.
- Staff with underlying health conditions (or those with relatives/members of their household with underlying health conditions), may wish to minimise the risk of infection and therefore prefer to work from home when possible.
- That regardless of the location from which the work is being carried out, its duty of care towards the health, safety, and wellbeing of its staff members remains.

Ordinarily, working from home on an interim basis:
- Does not alter an employee's terms and conditions of employment.
- Does not attract subsidy.

- Does not by default mean that equipment will be provided by the University for use at home.

As this policy has been developed in response to COVID-19, this is a temporary variation to normal working conditions and the University will be continually assessing the situation over the coming weeks and months.

Homeworking and Caring responsibilities

Undertaking caring responsibilities while working from home would not normally be considered possible. However, we recognise the exceptional situation facing the University. If individuals are required to provide care, the arrangements should be discussed with the relevant manager including the impact on the role, its objectives and/or the hours that are able to be worked and any alternative arrangements, for example adopting a different working pattern.
At times, it may be appropriate for staff members to use one or more of the special leave policies (available on the policies section of the HR web-pages) or use annual leave, and this should be discussed and agreed with the manager.

Working from home safely

It is the policy of Bangor University, so far as is reasonably practicable, but in accordance with the relevant legislation, statutory requirements and good practice, to ensure the health and safety of staff, students and visitors to the University

Working from home can be seen as a positive way of working but it needs to be ensured that this will not cause detrimental health effects. Working with Display Screen Equipment (DSE) which is not designed or set up properly could cause unnecessary aches and pains. It is important that staff members have a safe working environment.

It is the responsibility of the staff member to set up the workstation correctly. There are a number of resources available to assist, these are provided on the Health & Safety Services web-page, and cover topics such as workstation exercises, hacks for fighting digital eye strain. The 'home workstation' is where individuals choose to work when working from home. It is likely to be where you use DSE which includes conventional desktop computers as well as laptops and tablet computers.

Computer workstations or equipment can be associated with musculoskeletal pain, fatigue and eyestrain. This doesn't mean that working on DSE is risky as these problems can be avoided by following effective practice, setting up the workstation properly and taking frequent breaks.

It is expected that staff working at home will generally be carrying out **low risk computer-based or written activities** rather than higher risk activities such as manual handling or laboratory work. If individuals are planning to carry out anything other than computer-based or written work, further guidance and approval should be sought from the line manager,

Principal Investigator or Academic Lead in order to ensure that risk assessment and control measures are put in place.

It is expected staff will adopt the same principles as used on campus with regard to setting up the workstation and taking regular breaks. Individuals can also carry out their own DSE Self-Assessment to identify any problems. The training and assessment tool can be accessed via this link to the Health & Safety Services web-pages

A guide for working from home has also been developed, and is available on the Covid-19 University web pages.

 The University would not normally provide office furniture (e.g. desks and chairs) to enable interim homeworking. If no space is available that meets the guidance in the DSE, the staff member should discuss options with their line manager. Where a member of staff, who otherwise would be able to work from home, is not able to do so because of a disability or other health condition, they should discuss with their line manager to explore what reasonable adjustments may be provided.

Working safely also extends to the safe use of Information Technology, and numerous resources have been developed by colleagues in IT Services, collated in one web page titled top tips for when working from home.

Any technical issues can be reported to the IT Helpdesk (helpdesk@bangor.ac.uk). If staff members feel their equipment is limited then this should be discussed with the line manager. Any requests for University loan equipment should ultimately me submitted by the Service Head or College Manager. The University is unable to help with home network issues which should be raised with the supplier / provider.

Wellbeing whilst homeworking

Homeworking is a form of lone working. As such the University has created a number of resources in relation to staff wellbeing, these are available on the wellbeing section of the HR web pages and cover a number of topics within the theme of wellbeing.

Connecting to IT systems, like email, from home is essential for staff who work at home. This ability to connect can make the boundaries between 'working' and 'not working' more fluid. This has benefits for work-life balance but can also be detrimental if not managed well. Staff members should be mindful of this and disconnect from work systems outside of their working hours. There may be exceptional circumstances where they need to remain connected but this should be the exception rather than standard practice.

All employees are advised to take at least a 30 minute rest break for every 6 hours worked. Many staff working from home forget or choose not to take a break but this is not advised as it can affect health and productivity. It is recommended that individuals take a 5 – 10 minute break from the screen in every hour, this could be a change of task away from the screen.

It is important to establish a work schedule when working from home. Many homeworkers find that they work long hours as there is no clear signal to the end of the day. It is important for individuals to set themselves time limits so that they do not find it difficult to end their day.

Staff members should usually be available for contact by email and Teams as normal during their working day, and where possible the frequency and methods of communication agreed with the Manager concerned. Where this is not possible e.g. due to caring responsibilities as above, the staff member should agree the working pattern with their line manager.

Staff should make it clear to colleagues how best to contact them, keeping Outlook calendars and Teams status up to date and sharing this as widely as possible is good practice.

Under no circumstances should students be invited to visit a member of staff at home when remote working, nor should any member of staff provide a personal address for correspondence (e.g. to assess coursework).

Some individuals may have existing reasonable adjustments which will translate into home working, however there may be a need to re-evaluate what adjustments are needed in a remote working situation. Some reasonable adjustments are tangible, for example accessible software, while some will be more dependent on work practices or procedures.

Individuals may identify additional support needs working from home, for example a lack of structured routine may cause challenges and support may be needed to develop a workable routine from home. Such support needs and any challenges faced should be discussed with the Manager concerned. Additional advice can also be sought from Human Resources or Occupational Health.

Where a staff member feels that they have a reason to come onto campus, this should be discussed with the Line Manager in the first instance.

Although working from home, the University's Employee Assistance Programme, delivered by Care 1st, continues to be available to them.

Links with other Policies

An individual who is working remotely from home is still governed by the same terms and conditions of their contract of employment. This policy is not intended to have any express or implied contractual commitments for staff, and its continuation or otherwise is at the discretion of the University. Other policies remain in place and should be adhered to during any period of remote working. Although not exhaustive, these include the following;

Sickness Absence Policy and procedure - It remains important that staff members communicate with their Line Managers, and keep them informed and updated as to their health and wellbeing. Should staff members be self-isolating (either because they have developed symptoms or a members of their household has developed symptoms) they should

inform their Line Manager. Unrelated to Covid-19, should any staff member become unwell, this should be reported to the Manager in the normal manner, and is noted within this policy. This homeworking policy should therefore not be used by staff members who are unwell, in such cases the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure will apply.

Information Security Policy
Data Protection Policy

Financial considerations

The University's policy is not to make any additional payments to staff who work at home. This will continue during the global health crisis when the numbers of staff working at home will be higher than normal. We appreciate that, in the first few weeks of these arrangements, your utility costs may be higher while you are working at home, however many colleagues will also be saving on travel to work costs.

During the period staff are required to work from home because the University's campuses are closed, individuals may be able to claim tax relief from HM Revenue and Customs where they have incurred additional costs arising from homeworking. If approved by HMRC, this amount can be offset against their employment income, therefore reducing the amount of tax paid. This measure only applies where there is an employer requirement to work from home. It is up to each individual staff member to decide whether they have an entitlement to claim and to retain the appropriate supporting evidence and to make the claim themselves. The University cannot provide tax advice and will not be held accountable for any wrongly submitted information. Any claims should be made through the HMRC portal using own digital account. Full information is available on the HMRC website. Please note that the University is unable to provide advice or support on personal taxation of staff members.

In relation to insurance it is the employee's responsibility to assess the personal implications of home-based work with respect to household insurance.

Where the role requires the employee to be located outside of the UK **or** the employee lives outside of the UK **and** this is the case for over 3 months per year, prior approval must be sought from the Manager, Finance, and HR to ensure compliance with relevant employment law and international taxation arrangements. If additional legal/financial advice is required costs will be paid by the employing School or Department.

Review

This policy represents a temporary position, and the University will be continually assessing the situation over the coming weeks and months, and as such the policy may be reviewed, for example in light of changes to Government guidelines.