

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – REMOTE WORK

FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

1. What positions at BU SPH qualify for a remote work arrangement?

Each remote work arrangement is evaluated on a case-by-case basis and is responsive to business needs, the role and responsibilities of each position, and work functions. Characteristics of positions that may be considered suitable for remote work include:

- Limited interaction with internal and external contacts.
- Limited need for access to equipment and/or materials.
- Jobs that entail engaging in substantial independent work.

Suitability for remote work is determined through a collaborative process which considers multiple factors. For more information, please visit the [BU Remote Work Guidelines](#).

2. Who is an appropriate candidate for remote work?

Good candidates for remote work may include employees who possess:

- Successful performance history.
- Demonstrated time management and organizational skills.
- Initiative and dependability.
- Tech-savvy skillset.
- Ability to work independently.
- Strong understanding of role and expectations.
- Responsiveness over email.
- Effective communication and accessible to colleagues.

Suitability for remote work is determined through a collaborative process which considers multiple factors. For more information, please visit the [BU Remote Work Guidelines](#).

3. What is the purpose of the Remote Work Guidelines?

The purpose of the Remote Work Guidelines is to assist supervisors, managers, and unit leaders in thinking through relevant considerations in order to ensure effective remote work decisions.

4. What is the purpose of the Remote Work Agreement Form?

The agreement form details the remote work arrangement including work location, job duties and work schedule. In addition, it specifies operating parameters and

acknowledgments unique to the working arrangement. Finally, it documents approvals and agreement of all parties including the employee, supervisor and other signatories as needed.

5. Who initiates a request or takes primary responsibility for exploring a remote work arrangement?

Either the employee or the supervisor may suggest a remote work arrangement. The employee and the supervisor are encouraged to discuss their needs and to work together to develop the best possible arrangements in support of business operations. Supervisors have the authority to request approval of a remote work arrangement, or to postpone consideration of a remote work arrangement to another time.

6. If I have already been approved to work remotely through a previous telecommuting policy or some other formal process, will a Remote Work Agreement be necessary?

Yes. The Remote Work Agreement documents necessary aspects of the arrangement and must be completed. Employees should work with their supervisors to complete a Remote Work Agreement form.

7. What is a hybrid work arrangement?

A hybrid work arrangement involves splitting time between university and non-university work locations. For example, a hybrid work arrangement could have an employee work on campus three days a week and remotely two days a week.

8. I would like to approach my supervisor about a hybrid working arrangement (ex: three working days on campus and two working days remotely). Is a Remote Work Agreement required?

Yes. A Remote Work Agreement is required to document work arrangements where an employee routinely or intermittently performs work through an electronic connection away from any university location.

9. I am interested in working remotely. How do I approach my supervisor about this opportunity?

It is helpful to consider some of the factors that are utilized through the [BU Remote Work Guidelines](#). An interest in remote work is a great start and you may also find it helpful to think about:

- Business need-How might a remote work arrangement enhance operations and productivity in your unit?
- Position suitability-Do you require access to equipment, materials or files that can only be accessed on campus? Do you require extensive face-to-face contact with students, other staff or faculty, or the public?

- Employee suitability-Do you exhibit initiative and organizational skills with a positive performance history? Do you have a strong grasp of your role and expectations of the position?

Supervisory approach-Do you have a solid communication history with your supervisor? And, if you supervise, do you have a strong relationship/communication history with your direct reports?

These are some areas which you may find helpful to explore and assist in your framing when approaching your supervisor.

10. Can an employee change remote workdays?

Yes, if advance supervisor approval is obtained. An employee may not decide to change remote workdays without prior approval from the immediate supervisor. An employee must request and receive advance written approval (e.g. via email) from their supervisor in order to change remote workdays. Approval is at the supervisor's discretion pursuant to business needs. Please note that merely informing a supervisor that the employee is seeking to change remote workdays does not constitute inherent approval on the part of the supervisor.

11. How do I go about changing my remote workdays?

Once you have received permission to work remotely, your remote days would be set. You may seek to change these by communicating with your supervisor. The latter would have to establish how the change impacts business operations and may not agree to such change. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to assess how remote work or changes thereof impact our overall business operations, before deciding whether to approve remote work agreements or changes.

12. How many days a week am I permitted to work remotely?

Generally, the expectation for centrally funded staff positions is that they work at least three days a week on campus. While this generally also applies to research staff, for the latter, the expectation is that determinations are done at each group level in accordance with sponsored project needs and PI expectations for research support.

13. Do I get to keep my office if I am working partially remotely?

It depends. If your remote work arrangement is such that you spend most of your workweek (at least three days) on campus, then you may be permitted to preserve your existing office space. Otherwise, space changes may be warranted whereby you may share your office with another colleague, or whereby your office may be reassigned to occupants who make use of it on a more full-time, regular basis.

14. How do I proceed if my supervisor approves my occasional requests to change remote workdays in a given week?

Let us take as an example an employee who is expected to be working on campus premises three days a week and two days remotely. On occasions where the supervisor approves a change in your scheduled remote workdays, you are still expected to be on premises three days a week. For example:

Tom is scheduled to work remotely Monday and Tuesday and on campus Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. For a particular week Tom requests to work remotely on Wednesday. This entails that he would have to work on premises either Monday or Tuesday, to replace Wednesday as his remote workday. Tom may not work remotely all three days, i.e., Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

15. Do temporary changes to the remote work location warrant a change in the remote work agreement?

No. Temporary changes in location such as travel to a conference, or a short duration summer trip do not warrant a change in the agreement. Only regular recurring changes will require adjustments to the Remote Work Agreement.

16. Can two locations be listed for the remote work location on a Remote Work Agreement form?

No. For payroll tax purposes, the employee must choose one remote location.

17. I have an irregular work schedule. Do I need to specify these hours in the Remote Work Agreement?

A Remote Work Agreement specifies an employee's typical work schedule with an understanding that variations may occur.

18. Do remote work arrangements expire?

The Remote Work Agreements requires an end date. It is recommended that supervisors review the remote work arrangements on an annual basis (at minimum) to evaluate the success of the arrangement.

19. Under what circumstances can a supervisor change or terminate a remote work arrangement?

The supervisor can terminate or amend the agreement based on a number of reasons, including but not limited to, operational changes, staffing changes, leadership changes, performance, etc. If the termination or change to the arrangement is involuntary, the supervisor must provide notice in writing to the employee within ten business days of the change or termination.

20. What happens if an employee who is working remotely wants to return to their on-site role?

The employee should discuss this with their supervisor. All employee-proposed changes to an existing agreement are subject to department and/or university approval.

21. What happens if an employee with a remote work arrangement transfers to another department or unit?

An established remote work arrangement exists between the employee and supervisor within their respective unit. An employee who transfers to another unit would need to go through the remote work approval process in their new unit. A new Remote Work Assessment would need to be done by the supervisor and a new Remote Work Agreement form would need to be completed.

22. Is a request for a disability/reasonable accommodation determined under the remote work policy?

No. All requests for disability/reasonable accommodations are processed through the interactive process discussion involving the employee, supervisor, and EOO under the legal considerations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For questions regarding the accommodation process, contact the [Equal Opportunity Office](#).

23. While working remotely, on occasion, I may need to return to campus to conduct business. Can I be reimbursed for mileage between the remote work and campus locations?

It depends on whether you are working 100% remotely or partially-remotely (hybrid). For a 100% remote work arrangement that is considered a regular, recurring remote work arrangement, SPH will reimburse employees for travel to and from their identified campus or facility location if the distance exceeds a 60-mile radius and is authorized within the Remote Work Agreement. Mileage reimbursement will not be considered for hybrid, periodic, intermittent, or temporary remote work arrangements.

24. Can I work remotely during inclement weather?

Decisions on campus closures during inclement weather are made by the BUMC Provost and the Vice President of Human Resources, in consultation with the University Provost. The BUMC [Weather Policy](#) provides guidance on campus closures due to inclement weather. The Dean of the School of Public Health may decide on School-level action emerging from particular weather exigencies that affect our school-level programming. These campus or school-wide decisions will be communicated to the whole community in a timely manner. While individual circumstances may be discussed at the direct supervisor level, unless Medical Campus closure is directly communicated by BUMC Provost, or School-level action is directly communicated by the Dean, all employees are expected to operate on premises as assigned. No classes may be cancelled or offered remotely at the sole discretion of a faculty member. If unable to get to work, employees may notify their supervisor and arrange to take a vacation day accordingly.

25. Where do I direct further questions regarding remote work?

Please visit the [BU HR Remote Work website](#) to learn more about remote work resources. Additional questions may be directed to your department administrator or the Associate Dean for Administration and Finance.

FOR SUPERVISORS

1. How do I know if an employee is an appropriate candidate for remote work?

There are many factors to consider when exploring the possibility of remote work. Human Resources has developed [remote work guidelines](#) to assist supervisors, managers, and unit leaders in thinking through these factors.

2. Can a supervisor mandate a remote work arrangement for an entire unit or department?

Perhaps. If a department is considering a remote work arrangement for their entire workforce, the department head should engage with the Associate Dean for Administration and Finance as soon as possible to start a discussion of the business rationale for such a request and potential impact on business operations as well as space allocations for that unit, ultimately reaching an agreement on the best course forward.

3. How do supervisors evaluate multiple remote work arrangement requests?

It is essential that supervisors work with individual employees and consider the whole team objectively when evaluating remote work arrangements. When possible, supervisors should consider a group of proposals together to ensure that the process is consistent and transparent. Remote work should have either a net-positive or net-neutral effect on business results and the work environment.

4. How should a supervisor handle a situation where it may be appropriate to approve one person's request for remote work and deny the request of another?

It is essential that supervisors work with individual employees and consider the whole team objectively when evaluating remote work arrangements. When possible, supervisors should consider a group of proposals together to ensure that the process is consistent and transparent. Remote work should have either a net-positive or net-neutral effect on business results and the work environment. Supervisors are encouraged to be transparent in their decision-making process and to explain to all the business rationale for considering a remote work arrangement.

5. Are supervisors eligible for a remote work arrangement?

Yes. Suitability for remote work arrangement is based on multiple factors. Characteristics of positions that may be considered suitable for remote work include:

- Successful team performance

- Jobs that entail engaging in substantial independent work
- Supervisor has a proven track record of effectively managing staff remotely
- Minimal interaction with internal and external contacts.
- Limited need for access to equipment and/or materials.

That said, supervisors should be readily available to return to work on premises beyond the standard three business days whenever they are onboarding a new employee, organizing an event, or tending to a business need that necessitates their increased presence on campus.

6. Are employees in non-exempt positions eligible for remote work arrangements?

Perhaps. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) status is not a determining factor for remote work suitability. Regardless of FLSA status, characteristics of positions that may be considered suitable for remote work include:

- Jobs that entail engaging in substantial independent work.
- Minimal interaction with internal and external contacts.
- Limited need for access to equipment and/or materials.

It may be helpful to remember that non-exempt employees, regardless of work location, must record hours worked through the department's official timekeeping system.

7. What should I do if position updates are needed due to a remote work agreement?

The essential functions of a position are not expected to change as a result of a remote work agreement. Remote work arrangements should not negatively affect operations or service delivery for a given position/unit. If position updates are necessary, changes can be submitted using the standard position update process highlighted in the [Hiring Section](#) of the Staff and Operations Handbook. Please work with your departmental administrator or Associate Dean for Administration and Finance appropriate.

8. How do I modify an existing remote work arrangement?

Modifications to a remote work arrangement should be documented by the original signatories and captured on a new Remote Work Agreement form.

9. How do I end a remote work arrangement early?

If there is a desire to end a remote work arrangement early, an employee or a supervisor may begin the process. If as a manager you have determined there are business reasons warranting termination of the agreement, you must discuss with your departmental administrator/Chair and the Associate Dean for Administration and Finance, presenting the business rationale for such a decision. Subsequently, if all decision-makers are in agreement, you may inform the employee, allowing them a minimum of two weeks to effectuate schedule changes. For further information, please reach out to the Associate Dean for Administration and Finance.