

## **Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2021-2022**

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA), either as hybrid on-/off-site work or flexible hours, offer many benefits to both employers and employees, from improved work-life balance and job performance or satisfaction to attracting and retaining excellent staff. Moreover, these goals support UT's mission, which is to achieve excellence in undergraduate and graduate education, research, and public service.

Of course we know that on-site interactions and in-person instruction provide major advantages to our Longhorn community, but we also realize that the coronavirus pandemic has changed the way many of us work and live. Finding ways to optimally balance the needs of the university and individual employees and teams (where feasible for given roles) is a priority. That's why UT is launching a pilot program for the 2021-2022 academic year in which each college, school, or unit (CSU) is encouraged to develop FWA plans.

In that spirit, the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) has established the following preliminary guidelines that apply to all staff within the OVPR portfolio. Official guidelines, based on the findings and experiences from this pilot program, will be developed by summer 2022.

### **Implementation Timeline:**

**May 1- June 1:** Campus-wide FWA guidelines completed and shared

**June 1 – July 1:** CSU-specific guidelines developed and pilot FWA assignments begin, CSUs will solicit and compile unit and sub-unit requirements, position-specific requirements, team/project needs, and employee input, for Summer 21 work and for FY21-22.

**July 1 - August 1:** All individual FWA arrangements determined for FY21-22.

Based on Health & Wellness Committee guidance, remote employees may return to onsite work this summer with supervisor approval, according to the following recommended phase-in schedule. Note that these dates are subject to change based on evolving health guidance and vaccine availability:

Up to 50% of a unit's workforce starting on June 1

Up to 75% of a unit's workforce starting on July 5

Up to 100% of a unit's workforce by August 16

**July – August 16:** Prepare for FWA (i.e. order equipment, set up work stations, update/create office FWA calendars)

**August 25:** FWA pilot program start date.

## **FWA Eligibility:**

FWA eligibility will be based on the job functions and responsibilities of each position and business needs of the unit, as determined by the employee's supervisor and/or unit head. Certain positions, based on these criteria, may not be eligible for a flexible work arrangement. Supervisors have the discretion to approve or modify a FWA based on business needs. Employees are not guaranteed a FWA.

### **General Guidelines:**

- Employees must determine a consistent work schedule. A FWA agreement will be required for employees requesting work schedules outside of a standard schedule between 7am to 6pm, Monday through Friday. [Per HOP 5-2110 Work Schedule](#), offices must be open during the hours of 8am – noon and 1-5pm. Fully flexible work schedules will not be approved.
- All employees voluntarily requesting a FWA are required to complete a FWA agreement prior to September 1, 2021. The FWA agreement must include their FWA work schedule, work locations, and predetermined onsite and off-site work requirements. The new FWA agreement is expected to be released to the campus community soon.

### **Technology Resources:**

- A University issued computer must be used to conduct University business.
- All University-owned property at home must be logged on an inventory form, approved by the employee's supervisor, and submitted to the person managing the unit's inventory.
- Employees must have reliable internet service at remote work location.
- Employees must be able to provide a phone number to receive phone calls.

### **Performance:**

- Employees not meeting performance expectations during the last appraisal period are not eligible for a FWA.
- Employees that exhibit performance issues during the initial pilot period may have their FWA annulled.
- Transferring and new, probationary employees are eligible for FWA. However, special consideration should be taken to ensure adequate training and team building.

### **FWA Assessment:**

- FWA must be assessed initially after the first six months, then on an annual basis to determine whether any changes should be made.
- The FWA may be revised or cancelled if there is a substantive change in the employee's job duties or the unit's business needs. Supervisors are encouraged to give employees up to 30 days' notice before a new schedule goes into effect.
- Supervisors are encouraged to give employees a minimum of 3 days' advance notice if a meeting or event requires an employee to come in on an off-site day, but all employees recognize that performance of job duties, including attending in-person meetings on an off-site day, will take priority over FWA.

## Things to consider when determining a FWA:

- In-person interactions: Does the unit require some level of onsite coverage? Does the unit require periodic and/or regular in-person engagement? In-person interactions provide significant benefits that may not be fully replicated through exclusively online and remote experiences. Employees working remotely may become less connected with the University's mission, community, and culture over time without adequate in-person engagement.
- An employee's scope of work: Would visitors, students, or constituents be best served by on-site support and interactions? More generally, how important is onsite work to achieving the institution's goals? Does the position require on-site interaction with visitors, students, or colleagues? Does the work require onsite equipment, labs, or technologies?
- Team/Project requirements: Do teams need to meet onsite on a recurring basis? Do projects require collaborative work with other individuals or units that are best facilitated through onsite work? Do projects require regular or periodic onsite work, or require such work to be accomplished at a high level?
- Data privacy protections: Is the FWA plan conducive for work requiring sensitive data and/or privacy protections? Is it possible to assess performance when the work is performed remotely? Does the employee have a demonstrated history of sufficient productivity while teleworking?
- Facilities and Equipment: Employees should have no more than one primary onsite workplace and one unit-issued computer unless approved by the VPR or designate. Units should consider replacing assigned desktop computers with laptops to facilitate onsite and remote telework and enhanced business continuity preparedness. Units may consider providing shared onsite computers for those with desktop computers at their remote office.

During the FY21-22 pilot year, significant office assignment changes and renovations should not be implemented until assessment of the pilot year has been completed. Renovations will require VPR approval.

- FWAs are determined based on business needs and not determined based on an employee's personal responsibilities (e.g. childcare, elder care, pet care). To facilitate expected work performance and productivity, such costs and dependent care arrangements are the responsibility of the employee. Units should afford all employees the flexibility to meet intermittent childcare needs (e.g., illness, unanticipated school closures, etc.) but employees requesting remote or hybrid work arrangements are responsible for ensuring ongoing arrangements to allow for uninterrupted work time and focus.
- Employees and their supervisors are encouraged to explore training from the thirty-six (36) courses available on [hybrid and remote work environments in UT Austin's LinkedIn Learning](#) platform prior to the start of the Fall 2021.

## Approval Process:

- **Hybrid fixed FWA requests for two or fewer days per week:**  
Unit heads (AVP or Director) may grant approval for their employees to work remotely two or fewer days per week. VPR direct-reports will be required to obtain VPR approval.
- **Hybrid fixed FWA requests for three or more days per week:**  
Unit heads must obtain approval from the VPR for themselves or their employees to work remotely three or more days per week.
- **Permanent 100% remote telework:**  
Employee is required to provide a strong business justification and must receive approval from the supervisor, the unit's HR senior representative, and the unit head (AVP or Director), who must then obtain approval from the VPR.
- **Remote telework requests due to a medical condition or disability:**  
Employee must submit a request to the University's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator to initiate the ADA interactive process.
- **Domestic remote telework requests outside of Texas:**  
Employee is required to receive approval from the supervisor, unit's HR senior representative, unit head, and VPR.
- **International remote telework:**  
Employee is required to provide a strong business justification and receive approval from the Vice President for Research as well as the consent of, and coordination with, Texas Global, UT Legal Affairs, the Provost's Office, and Central HR. Additional costs or considerations resulting from country or regional taxes or employment laws are the responsibility of the employing unit.

## Definitions:

### Work Location

- **Onsite Work:** work performed on-campus or other official UT location.
- **Remote Telework:** work performed at a location that is not on-campus.
- **Hybrid Fixed:** a combination of onsite and offsite work with preset schedule for days working in each location (e.g., work onsite MWF; work remote TR).

### Work Schedule

- **Standard Schedule:** designated hours with standardized start and stop times. OVPR standard schedule is traditionally 7a – 6p, with employees working 8 hours/day within that time window.
- **Fixed Flexible Schedule:** designated hours that deviate from the standards.
- **Fully Flexible Schedule:** flexible work hours to accommodate project and/or temporary worker needs.

I have read, and understand, the University and VPR conditions for a FWA and agree to abide by them.

**Employee:**

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**Signature**

**Date**

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**Printed Name and Title**

**Supervisor:**

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**Signature**

**Date**

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**Printed Name and Title**