

## Hybrid Working – Guidance for Managers

When implementing hybrid working, you as a manager, in consultation with your team, will decide what the best arrangements are based on working priorities and, as far as possible, taking into account team members' personal preferences.

The University's Hybrid Working Policy recommends that department leaders and line managers should reflect on the appropriate balance of on and off campus working for their teams, and set expectations based on the needs of the individual, team, and role. This expectation should be suitably adjusted for individuals who work part time.

While hybrid working will vary depending on individual teams' needs, there are a few key points to keep in mind:

### **Trust and clear expectations**

These are key for both team members and managers. Setting clear objectives, timescales for work completion and expected outcomes will all help to ensure that staff are working in a fair and cohesive manner with positive results. Monitor workloads to ensure they are reasonable and equitable. Further resources are available [here](#).

It will be important for teams to retain some face-to-face interaction to be effective. Setting clear expectations about how much face-to-face time is required at the start of any hybrid working arrangement will help to avoid potential conflict around this issue further down the line.

You may wish to agree a defined minimum level of communication with hybrid or fully remote employees to make sure that you touch base on a regular basis, particularly if their work is quite solitary, for example once per week.

### **Business needs take precedent**

While hybrid working aims to support a healthy work/life balance, not all roles or aspects of roles can be carried out remotely. You should discuss with your team members how best they can continue to deliver their role wherever they're working, and any aspects of their role which may require a presence on campus.

### **Effective communication**

Regular communications between the team, on a one-to-one and a collective basis will help make hybrid working a success. Opportunities for teams to meet together on campus are beneficial for connectivity. When lots of team members have different working arrangements, communication styles can, initially, require a bit more thought and planning. Timely and effective communication with your team, whatever their working arrangements, is vital to ensure that they:

- feel part of the team;
- understand how their work fits in with the team's objectives and how the team's work fits in with the organisation's objectives;
- receive regular knowledge updates and information about organisational developments; and
- receive regular feedback on the quality and quantity of the work they are producing.

## **Flexibility**

Flexibility is key. Continuous review and regular, open feedback will help you identify effective working patterns for your team.

- Do be flexible - employees may need to request to change their hybrid arrangements over time.
- Do bear in mind that homeworking employees may need help to work out a structure for their day and handle distractions at home.
- Do appreciate the risk that some hybrid or remote workers may overwork because they can access work at all times, and make sure to speak to them about this.
- Do ask questions to spot if an employee is struggling to balance work and home life.
- Do trust employees - managing people remotely means giving them autonomy over how they complete their work.
- Don't rely solely on emails to communicate with employees - speaking to them frequently is essential to uncovering any issues.

## **Hybrid working isn't a substitute for formal flexible arrangements.**

Where team members need more specific arrangements in place, the University's [Flexible Working Guidance](#) may be appropriate. At all times, for both the success of the University and [the enjoyable working life of the staff member](#), it is important that a good balance of productivity is maintained for the hours colleagues spend at work.

## **The right tools and technology**

The right tools and technology are essential to getting the best out of hybrid working. This means continuing to use platforms such as phone or video calls (e.g. MS Teams), online collaboration tools, and instant messaging to keep in contact. You should also ensure your team members have an appropriate remote working environment and on campus environment in which to work.

Consider what type of tools or technology is the most suitable for each particular communication bearing in mind what you want to say. Is it sensitive in nature and as such requires a particularly thoughtful and tactful delivery? Is it something that you need to communicate urgently?

- *If you want to tell an employee that they did not deliver on a particular project, consider doing this in person or via video conferencing to ensure that you are able to take on board their reaction as you deliver your feedback. You do not want them to feel demoralised so it is important to notice how your feedback is being received, articulate what the employee did well and listen actively to what they say about why they tackled the project in a particular way. Delivering this type of feedback over email can come across as harsher than you intended.*
- *A telephone or video call may be best if you want an employee to pick up an urgent piece of work. This will ensure that they are aware of its urgency and can reprioritise their other work accordingly. It also gives you the opportunity to get some buy-in from the employee by explaining why the work is important and why you are asking them to do it.*
- *An asynchronous tool (such as a cloud-based document), where everyone can add their views on a project at the same time or at a time that suits them, can work better than a meeting in some circumstances.*

### **Employee wellbeing**

The wellbeing of your team members should be a pivotal consideration at all times. Be alert to employee concerns of well-being and signpost support where available. Remind employees of support services such as [Occupational Health](#) and the [Employee Assistance Programme](#).

### **In summary**

Hybrid working will require effective communication, consideration of others and a flexible attitude from everyone involved to make it work. It's important that as a manager you are clear with your team on what is required of them, focusing on service needs as a guide for finding the right balance between remote and on-campus working.

Guidance, webinars, and support material on managing hybrid working can be found on our [Leadership and Management](#) webpages. The University's Hybrid Working FAQs may also be helpful.

If you have any queries or issues, you can contact your HR Business Partner for support.