UNIVERSITY OF THE BAHAMAS

Policy on Working Remotely

POLICY NUMBER:	POL AC-23-001
REVISION NUMBER:	New
TITLE:	Policy on Working Remotely
DATE OF APPROVAL:	February 15, 2023
SUPERSEDES:	None
DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION:	March 1, 2023
STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S):	Improve Operational Efficiencies.
FREQUENCY OF REVISION:	Every two years
PROJECTED DATE OF REVISION:	February 15, 2025
PURPOSE OF THE POLICY:	To detail the arrangements for working remotely and establish the procedure, eligibility, requirements, and other conditions that apply. This policy applies to staff only and not faculty. Maximum of two (2) days per week, and five (5) days per month or other agreed time subject to the University priorities and the approval of the Vice President.
ACCOUNTABILITY:	VP Human Resources
RELATED POLICIES:	
APPENDICES:	Appendix A- Working Remotely Application Procedures Appendix B- Remote Working Plan and Agreement Form Appendix C – Developing a Proposal for Working Remotely Appendix D - Occupational Health and Safety Ergonomic Guidelines While Working at A Work Station Appendix E Guidelines for Working Remotely During a Crisis

1. **Overview**
   The University recognizes the importance of supporting flexible working arrangements that help attract and retain a highly engaged workforce. Working remotely is a voluntary/mandatory in cases of disaster, emergency or infrastructural maintenance and co-operative arrangement between an employee and the University and will be considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure business continuity.

2. **Definitions**
   2.1   **Remote Working Plan and Agreement** – An agreement between employee, and employer setting out an understanding of the employee's remote working arrangement.

   2.2   **Working Remotely** is an authorized work arrangement that involves an employee working for a finite period, at a location that is not the regularly assigned place of employment.

3. **Purpose**
   The purpose of this policy is:
   - to provide guidance regarding arrangements for working remotely from the University;
   - to set out, procedures, eligibility, requirement, criteria, and other conditions that apply.

   The policy is not intended to address the ad hoc, one-off arrangements for remote working for short periods to complete specific agreed pieces of work, nor is it intended to change existing arrangements or working practices.

4. **Working Remotely:**
   - Is granted at the University's discretion and requires the approval of the supervisor/HOD and Vice President following consultation and discussion with the employee. It will not alter an employee's general terms and conditions of employment;
   - Maybe voluntary or required, but is not intended to create a situation where the employee feels obliged to work excessive hours; It may attract overtime pay in accordance with the overtime policy;
   - Will require employees to remain productive and responsive during their scheduled work hours;
   - Will require the employee to have access to IT assets and ensure proper maintenance of a remote workspace that is secure and will adequately protect sensitive information and equipment of the University;
   - Requires a workspace that is free of safety and fire hazards, with minimal interruptions; (not including, power/network service disruptions);
   - Is not intended to be a substitution for in-home child or dependent care;

   It is expected that where remote working arrangements are agreed that colleagues will be present for meetings when required and for any Committee, Senate, Faculty, Staff and Team meetings.

4.1 **Managers and Staff Employees**

4.2.1. Regular periods of working remotely must be formalized in a **Remote Working Plan and Agreement** (RWP Agreement) (Appendix B). The RWP Agreement must clearly outline the duties to be performed whilst working remotely, the mechanisms for monitoring output, and any supervision arrangements prior to the arrangement being put in place.

4.2.2. Initially, a remote working arrangement may be for a trial period. If, following a review and the arrangement is to be continued, the RWP will specify the agreed period (up to 6 months) and stipulate the timeframes for regularly reviewing the arrangement to ensure that it is working effectively. A RWP may be extended for a further period (up to 6 months) where the Supervisor/head of department (HOD) is satisfied that the arrangement is working effectively.

4.2.3. In voluntary situations either party may terminate a RWP Agreement. At least one weeks' notice must be given indicating the cessation of the RWP Agreement.

5. **Medical / Emergency/Sick Leave during Remote Working:**
Employees may apply to work remotely during planned medical leave if the employee's condition and ability is validated in writing by a physician. The request is subject to review and approval following the process outlined in the **Working Remotely Application Procedures for Voluntary Arrangements** (Appendix A.).
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6. **Transferability:**
Approved RWPs do not carry over to any new position which the Manager or Staff member may be transferred to or promoted into. In the case of a transfer or promotion, a new application to request to work remotely must be submitted.

7. **Updates:**
Ongoing organizational changes may require that a RWP be reviewed, extended, or terminated where it is considered no longer suitable for work to be carried out remotely due to changed operational requirements or circumstances in the work area.

8. **Document Change History**
    8.1   The history table documents significant changes so that the evolution of the policy is recorded.

Revision	Date	Changes to Policy/Comments
New	February 2020	Distributed for review and approval
Edited	April - October 2022	Updated with recommendations from other stakeholders
Edited	February 2023	Updated with recommendations from Academic Council

1. Appendix A: Working Remotely Application Procedures for Voluntary Arrangements

Applications for remote working arrangements must be submitted in writing (which can include sending an e-mail) along with the Remote Working Plan and Agreement Form (RWF) to the supervisor/HOD. Prior to making a written request to work remotely, the employee may consider the guidelines provided in the **Developing a Proposal for Working Remotely,** (Appendix C).

Consideration of the Request

As soon as practical, and/or within one month of receiving a fully completed request, a meeting with the employee is scheduled to discuss the request; it may be necessary to explore alternative arrangements that might suit both the employee's needs and the needs of the University.

In considering the request, the University will take into account a number of criteria including (but not limited to) those outlined in the **Developing a Proposal for Working Remotely** document (Appendix C)

Within 14 calendar days of the meeting, the supervisor/Department Head will write to the employee with a decision, which will be recorded on the form and returned to the employee and HR. The University (Head of Department and Human Resources VP) will either approve the employee's request, specifying the new working arrangements and effective date, refuse the request, giving the reason for refusal, or offer an alternative working arrangement which can be accommodated. This may include an agreement to a temporary change and/or the offer of a trial period.

Every request will be considered based on its merits and with consideration of the impact on the University.

If multiple requests are received from employees within the same team/department/school, they will be considered in the order they are received.

In the event where there are several employees who are already working remotely and the department/school is unable to accommodate any further flexible arrangements, the supervisor/HOD may consider calling for volunteers from within the area to review their working arrangements in order to create capacity for additional arrangements to be considered.

Approval of the Request

If the University approves the request or offers an alternative working arrangement, the Human Resources Department will write to the employee to detail the new working arrangement and confirm the date on which it will commence.

Refusal of the Request

The University can refuse an application for working remotely. If an application is refused, the individual will receive, in writing, from their supervisor/HOD, the reason on which the request has been denied.

Withdrawal of Application
Employees wishing to withdraw an application must do so in writing to their supervisor/HOD.

Appendix B

Remote Working Plan and Agreement Form

This Remote Working Agreement is used when it is agreed that an employee may work remotely.

Employee Name:	
Job Title:	
Department:	
Supervisor:	
Arrangement requested by:	☐ Employee ☐ Employer
Location where remote working will be performed:	
Remote working arrangement effective dates:	From: To:
Review Dates	Click or tap to enter a date.

Work Schedule (Outline daily hours for the work week)

Day	**Sunday**	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**	**Saturday**
Time	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Equipment and Technology Access

The employee and employer agree to work together to ensure that the remote worksite is safe and ergonomically suitable (as outlined in Appendix C). The employee and employer must specify any equipment or technology access required by the employee as outlined in the IT Asset Deployment & Return Form found in the Policy on University-Owned Mobile Devices

Compliance Checklist

Policies and Procedure Acknowledgement	Employee Initials
I have read and understand the Policy on Working Remotely and the associated procedures.	
I have read and understand the departmental remote working procedures.	
I have read and understand the Policy on University-Owned Mobile Devices, and access to the university's network resources.	
I agree that I shall maintain the workspace in a safe condition and that the University will not be held liable for any damage or injuries to either myself or any third party due to gross negligence or misuse of university equipment, by myself or another party.	

Employee's Signature: _____ Date: _____

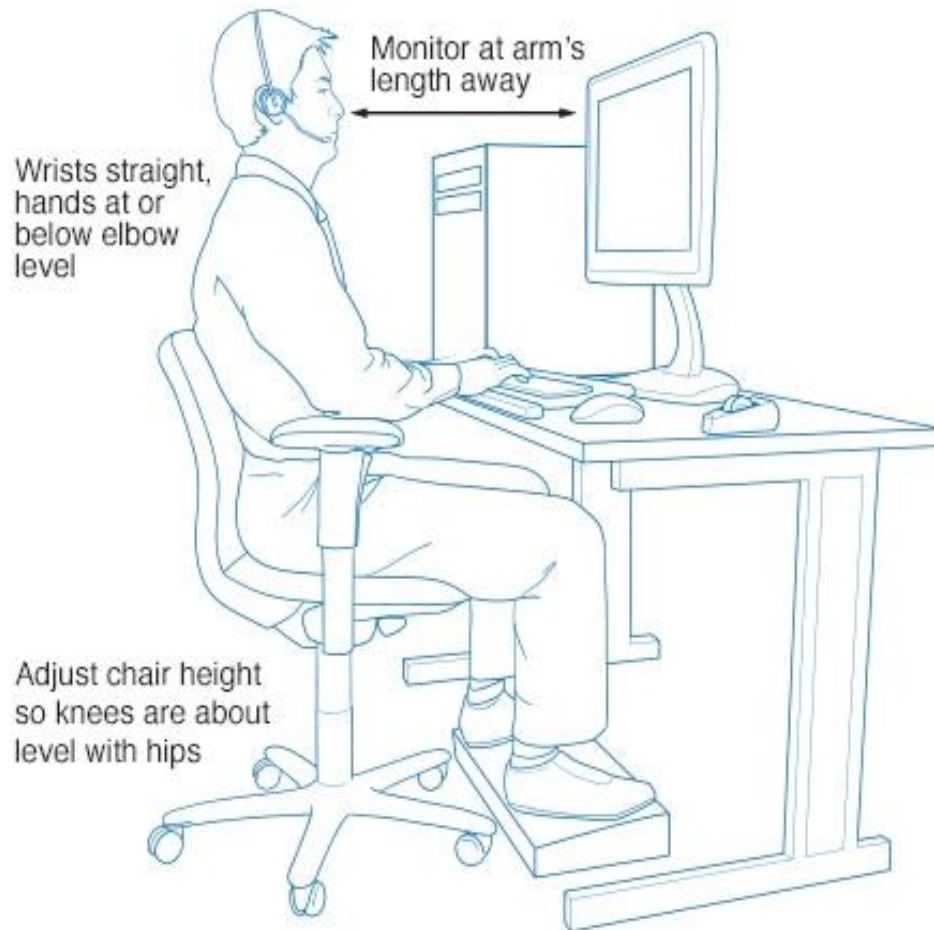Chair/Unit/Dept Head Signature: _____ Date: _____

Vice President/President's Signature: _____ Date: _____

VP/Human Resources' Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Developing a Proposal for Working Remotely Request

1. Determine what arrangement would best meet your needs:
   - Where do you propose to work (home, alternate site)?
   - What schedule would you like (days and hours on campus, days, and hours at remote site)?
   - Which of your duties do you propose to be performed at the remote site? Which do you propose to be performed in the department?
   - If only a minor adjustment could be made to your work arrangements, what adjustment would be most valuable to you? (Examples: remote one day a week; be available to come in on short notice; suspend remote during busiest times of the year.)
2. Anticipate what problems this arrangement may cause for the University (Include the effect to your own assignment and how your role affects others, both within the unit and externally.)
3. Try to work out potential solutions to these concerns:
   - How will you communicate with your supervisor, co-workers, clients?
   - How will materials be kept readily available to those who need access?
   - How will you be able to respond to emergencies or other unexpected events in your department?
   - How will you assure the security of university materials and equipment?
   - Can you provide a workplace that is as safe as your departmental work site, so as to minimize the likelihood of injury?
4. Outline ways in which your proposed arrangement might benefit the University.
   - Will you be more productive? In what ways, and how will this be measured?
   - Will your department be able to free up equipment?
5. Produce a plan that addresses your own concerns and, to the extent that you can, those you anticipate from your supervisor, co-workers, and clients.
6. Request a meeting with your supervisor to explain what arrangements you would like and why. Discuss possibilities with your supervisor; actively listen and be prepared to revise your plan. (Flexibility goes both ways!)
7. Develop a plan and timetable for monitoring the effectiveness of the arrangement.

Appendix D

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ERGONOMIC GUIDELINES

WHILE WORKING AT A WORKSTATION

Monitor at arm's length away

Wrists straight, hands at or below elbow level

Adjust chair height so knees are about level with hips

Include laptop design.

Are the ergonomic assets available? i.e., screen covers, keyboard wrist support device, adaptive mouse, leg step up, adjustable chairs and or portable back chair support etc.

Tip 1	**Correct Posture:** Sit upright but comfortably Always support the upper and lower back (lumbar) while sitting Align feet firmly on the floor, use a footrest if required Adjust chair to the fit of your body **Benefit:** This position helps to keep your spine, vertebrae, muscles, and pelvis protected It also assists with normal breathing patterns.
Tip 2	**Equipment:** **Screen/Monitor** Keep the top of the screen/monitor at the eye level, this will assist with comfortable and clear vision Keep the screen/monitor an arm's length away from the body Use glasses if needed and adjust the font size if required Do not strain neck and chain by overextending the body to see what is on the screen/monitor. If your screen is too far away, cause the neck to start "turtling," or craning. **Keyboards** Keep keyboard and mouse leveled on a smooth and flat surface Keep the forearms and wrists straight but relaxed Use an approved wristband if required **Mouse** Keep the mouse aligned with the keyboard Keep the mouse fitted comfortably to the hand to minimize or eliminate undue pressure on the wrist and forearm
Tip 3	**Take Breaks, Eat Healthy Meals, and Drink lots of Water!** Stretch and walk around at least every two hours to prevent health issues resulting from prolonged sitting.

Appendix E

GUIDELINES FOR WORKING REMOTELY IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

The University recognizes that in crisis situations (i.e., weather, health, natural disaster, etc.) employees may need to temporarily work remotely. The following guidelines have been developed, specifically for employees who can work remotely, to mitigate potential disruption and provide a means to allow continuity of university operations.

In all instances a discussion on the practicalities of working remotely must take place, between the supervisor/HOD and the employee. Considerations must also be given to the nature of the crisis, the nature of the duties that the employee is required to perform and if those duties can be fulfilled working off site. Additionally, there must be consultation with the IT department to ensure that there is an appropriate level of data security, particularly in instances where there will be direct access to the university's network resources.

Supervisor's Responsibilities

The supervisor must:
1. Ensure the employee is working in accordance with, and adhering to the University's policies and procedures, as is possible due to conditions of the crisis;
2. Define reporting schedules and communication acknowledgement procedures;
3. Schedule, as needed, teleconferences with employees who are working remotely;
4. Where practicable, provide equipment and tools required to perform the tasks required (does not include workstation furniture, additional services, or costs)
5. Accurately document the ownership and usage arrangements of the equipment and assets

Employee's Responsibility

The employee must*:*
1. Be contactable during the normal working hours (i.e., via email/phone) and available for teleconferences, scheduled on an as needed basis; (with or without the use of UB devices)
2. Maintain and supply accurate and up to date records of work performed to the supervisor, and/or department head at agreed upon frequency
3. As much as possible ensure that the remote location is free of safety and fire hazards, and to practice the same safety habits as if on campus
4. Ensure the well-being of the University's equipment.
5. Abuse of the remote working policy will result in recission of the approval.

Information Security Requirements

1. As much as practicable ensure that work is done on secure, password-protected internet connections. Do not access any confidential or sensitive information from a public Wi-Fi network.
2. Follow protocols and relevant policies regarding confidentiality and information technology, computer security and data protection as you would in the office.
3. All university documents must be stored on the university's approved cloud storage system (currently the Microsoft OneDrive system).