

EvCC3180: TELECOMMUTING POLICY

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Policy Contact: Vice President of Human Resources

PURPOSE

Telecommuting refers to an arrangement where an employee works from home or from another non-College location away from the usual workplace through telecommunications technology. Depending on the details of the arrangement, telecommuting constitutes either a portion of the employee's work schedule or all of it. Telework can benefit not only the employee, but also the supervisor, the team and the College in general. Telework is consistent with institutional goals including:

- Maintaining an organizational culture that supports employee flexibility and mobility.
- Promoting a positive work/life balance.
- Reducing our impact on the environment and supporting the commute trip reduction program.
- Promoting continuity of operations during worksite disruptions, including modified and suspended operations, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Providing a supportive and productive work environment that attracts and retains employees.
- Providing flexibility to employees while also supporting responsiveness to student needs for virtual support.

Telework is designed to support a strategy that maximizes productivity and performance, regardless of the work location, when the duties of the position allow.

The College encourages and allows the use of telework arrangements and flexible scheduling within the bounds of good public practice, business operations, and resource limitations. Telework should be incorporated into the continuity of operations plans for each organizational unit.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, faculty, and staff of the College.

POLICY

Approval to telework is granted at the discretion of the department. The determination of whether an employee is eligible to participate and is approved for telework, will be made in accordance with this policy and the unit's business needs.

Position telework eligibility

Telework is available to all employees of the College and supports our goal of providing greater flexibility to maintain work life balance and support employee needs for care of their families. Eligibility and approval reside within the operational department and are intended to balance the telecommuting needs of each requesting team member, with a schedule that meets the operational needs of the department.

Types of telework

There are two types of telework arrangements for employees:

- **Occasional telework:** Occasional telework arrangements are approved on a case-by-case basis, are infrequent, and not regularly scheduled. Occasional telework can allow employees to attend to sporadic household appointment needs, continue to perform work during workplace disruptions, including suspended operations, or

provide uninterrupted time for project work. Occasional telework does not require a telework agreement, however approval must be documented, which can be done by email. Occasional telework is not appropriate as a substitute for sick time.

- **Regular telework:** Regular telework arrangements are for ongoing telework and must be supported by a telework agreement that specifies the requirements and details of the arrangement. The arrangement can last for a defined period or can continue indefinitely with regular review. Occasional telework becomes regular telework once it becomes regularly occurring. Departments are responsible for considering proposals objectively and fairly, while providing consideration to each employee based on their request.

Intersection with designation of staff employees who perform essential services

Compensation and time off practices for employees who telework are the same during suspended operations as during regular work periods. Essential employees and employees who may have occasional telework should be familiar with technology and other requirements of telework, should the need arise.

Employee eligibility

Departments have discretion to decide whether an employee is a candidate for telework. When evaluating a telework request, departments should consider specific position requirements, impact on a team, employee performance concerns, and whether the employee can effectively perform the job duties of the position while teleworking. Additionally, departments must also determine that the proposed teleworking arrangement follows applicable regulations, policies, and collective bargaining agreements.

A teleworking employee's conditions of employment are the same as those of non-teleworking employees, including compliance with all policies and rules of the College and state while teleworking.

Requirements for in-person attendance can override regular telework work schedules. Managers should discuss such instances with the employee (e.g., hands-on training, or participation in graduation). Expectations for timely completion of work to established standards, attendance at meetings, responsiveness to clients/customers, and other performance criteria are the same for teleworking and non-teleworking employees. Departments should apply the same performance standards to employees regardless of work location.

Employee readiness for telework

Some employees may be better prepared than others to manage the unique requirements of teleworking. When evaluating a telework request, supervisors should consider whether the employee has a record of satisfactory performance in the workplace and has demonstrated the ability to:

- Prioritize work to meet deadlines
- Accomplish job duties with minimal supervision
- Understand their role and expectations
- Be organized, highly disciplined and self-motivated
- Communicate effectively with clients, stakeholders, and team members
- Manage time effectively

Positions requiring in-person contact/customer service or that rely upon specific fixed locations and equipment or supplies to work on-site may be excluded from consideration for telework arrangements. While some jobs that may not seem appropriate for telework, departments can implement telework arrangements on a trial basis.

Establishing position based telework eligibility and criteria for employee readiness for telework helps maximize equity by giving employees in telework eligible positions the same access to telework based on whether their specific job

requirements are compatible with telework. It is important that departments establish fair and equitable processes to determine whether an employee is successful in using telework.

Manager and team readiness for telework

Before approving a telework request, consider any changes needed to ensure your team continues to meet its objectives. Ensure that the employee and work product will be as effectively managed as their on-site colleagues.

Telework as a disability accommodation

Employee requests to telework as a work accommodation are handled through the accommodation process. Employees should discuss concerns about accommodation-related telework requests with their Human Resources representative.

Telework request process

Review the request

Managers should work with the employee to evaluate their request to telework, considering telework suitability criteria and maintaining consistency and equity of decisions across their organization. If there is uncertainty about the potential effectiveness of a proposed telework arrangement, the manager may consider allowing the employee to telework on a pilot basis. A review period should be established, after which a decision can be made about regular telework.

There may be circumstances in which a request for telework cannot be approved. In order to demonstrate consistency and equity within the unit, it is important the denial is explained to the employee and is based upon policy, impact on unit operations, and/or the employee's past performance.

Document the telework arrangement

A telework agreement is a written plan outlining the understanding of, and commitment to, teleworking as mutually agreed upon by the employee and their department, and is required for regular telework arrangements. At a minimum, a telework agreement should follow the general provisions of the College's Teleworking Agreement and at a minimum define:

- A work schedule that specifies telework days and hours of work.
- Telework location and request process for approval prior to moving telework location out of Washington State.
- Required methods of communication specific to telework (e.g., Zoom, phone, email).
- The duration of the telework arrangement.
- Responsibility for telework equipment.
- Circumstances requiring on-site attendance.
- While employees should not use telework as a substitute for care of family or household members, when the College is in modified, institutional or localized suspended operations, a telework agreement should outline work expectations for working with family members at home, if applicable.
- Employee agreement to maintain a safe work environment.
- Relevant attestations regarding key policy considerations.

Employees and managers must sign and comply with the requirements of the telework agreement. The telework agreement may be terminated by the department at any time with thirty calendar days' notice, unless it is for alleged misconduct or an emergency, in which case, it may be terminated immediately. Changes to telework agreements for remote workers last as long as the employment relationship itself.

Telework agreements are meant to be responsive to the changing needs of the workplace, and should be reviewed and updated both as needs change and, at a minimum, annually.

Telework-related policies and practices

Furnishing equipment

The employee must establish an appropriate and safe work environment consistent with the guidelines outlined in the telework agreement. Teleworkers are expected to ensure that the expectations for information security are met and that College property is secured. The College assumes no responsibility for the teleworker's expenses related to internet service, heating, electricity, water, security, insurance, and usage of personal residence.

Ensuring equipment decisions demonstrate consistency and equity within a unit is essential for the success of telework arrangements. The employee and unit shall work together to determine whether the unit will issue an employee the equipment necessary to perform the job, or if an employee already has the required equipment, the unit may agree that the employee will use their own equipment. Telework arrangements will not typically result in the duplication of office equipment. Generally, the College will be responsible for the service and maintenance of College-owned equipment and an individual teleworker will be responsible for the service and maintenance of their own equipment. Units must maintain an inventory of College owned equipment used for telework and ensure it is returned at the end of the teleworking arrangement.

Work schedules and timekeeping

Employees and managers are required to comply with all timekeeping and overtime regulations defined by state or federal law (e.g., the Fair Labor Standards Act), collective bargaining agreements, Professional Staff Program, civil service rules, or College policy. Overtime eligible employees must receive approval from their management to work overtime. Managers must ensure accurate recording of hours worked. For employees who are represented by a union, refer to the applicable contract language addressing hours of work, overtime, and scheduling.

Working with family members at home

Telework generally should not be used to provide active care for a child or other dependent. However, during suspended operations, modified operations, or as communicated by executive leadership, working at home while providing dependent care is approved, provided norms and expectations are outlined in an employee's telework agreement for regular telework, or in email for occasional telework.

Related policy considerations

Teleworking staff must adhere to all departmental and institutional policies including, but not limited to policies regarding confidentiality of information, work schedules, work hours, use of equipment, ethics, performance, leave use and tracking of work hours. All time off and leave provisions under applicable policy, or the collective bargaining agreement for represented employees, continue to apply under a telework agreement.

Key policies include, but are not limited to:

- **College property and data security** – Teleworking employees must protect the security, confidentiality, and integrity of data, information, paper files, and access to computer systems. All college policies on information technology, internet access, and technology use apply to teleworking, as they would at a college work site.
- **Personal Use of College Equipment** – Reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that college property is used in compliance with policy and procedures.

- **Records maintenance and disclosure** – The work employees do while teleworking remains subject to College records retention policy and applicable regulations including the Washington State Public Records Act [RCW 42.56](#).
- **International remote work** – Remote international work guidance and process for approval is provided in the International remote work for staff and student employees webpage.

Workers' compensation – Work-related injuries at the remote worksite, during agreed-upon working hours, are covered by Workers' Compensation. Employees are required to report any work-related illness or injury to their supervisor immediately. Employees are required to fill out an accident report as an internal record of the incident within 24 hours of the event or claim.

RELEVANT LAWS AND OTHER RELATED INFORMATION

[RCW 70.94.551](#)

[RCW 42.56](#)

REVISION HISTORY

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APPROVED BY

President's Staff