Remote Working
Policy

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Introduction

The DCU Strategic Plan - *Transformation for an Unscripted Future* has a clear focus on enhancing both the student and employees experience of studying and working in DCU. The strategy design includes two pillars - *Pioneer a Transformative Student Experience* and *Value and Develop Our employees Community* which have the following objectives:

1. Provide an enriching student experience, engagement opportunities, resources, supports, facilities and environment.

2. Enhance our employee culture, community, and campus experience where employees & students connect & thrive.

This policy is designed to keep these objectives at the heart of what we do by combining the best of our on-campus learning environment with the benefits of remote working while continuing to deliver a high-quality education service.

The University acknowledges the benefits that remote working arrangements can have for our employees in appropriate circumstances. The University is committed to supporting where possible work-life balance arrangements for our employees on the basis set out in the Work-Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 and the accompanying Workplace Relations Commission's (WRC) Code of Practice.

Purpose

This policy sets out the principles that will apply with regard to remote working arrangements in the University. The University will deal with each request objectively, fairly and reasonably, in line with the legislation, the procedures set out in the WRC Code of Practice on Flexible and Remote Working and this policy.

Scope

This Policy applies to all employees of the University, professional, library, and technical grades. Academic colleagues already availing of existing remote working arrangements should refer to the 'Academic Grades' section.

The above collective is hereinafter referred to as "the University''. This policy does not apply to the DCU Commercial Group of Companies who may operate their own policies/arrangements.

Policy Statement

1) Principles

The principles of operation of this policy are as follows:

- In line with the objectives of the University's Strategic Plan this policy will operate with the aim of enhancing our employees culture, community and campus experience where employees and students connect and thrive.
- This University will deal with each request objectively, fairly and reasonably, in line with the legislation, the procedures set out in the WRC Code of Practice and this policy.
- Any remote working arrangement will be reflective of the predominant on-campus working environment and the core University value of "*Student Focused.* Employees will be based on campus for the majority of their working week to ensure a sustained on campus engagement and experience.
- The needs and requirements of the University comes before individual preference.
- Certain roles will not be suitable for remote working.
- In line with legislation and the WRC Code of Practice, employees are entitled to request remote working arrangement. A remote working arrangement is not guaranteed.
- The appropriateness of a role's suitability for remote working will be determined on a case-by-case basis and will be re-evaluated where required.
- Employees may be approved for up to 2 days of remote working per week (or an appropriate pro rata amount for those part time). No employees can avail of more than 2 days of remote working in a week during any period.
- To ensure its continued feasibility employees must be available to attend work on campus as and when required and set out by the University.
- Certain roles may only be suitable and may only be approved for remote working during certain periods of the year.
- There is no entitlement to swap remote working arrangements with other employees or to accrue remote working days if attendance on campus is required or if travelling on University business.
- All other terms and conditions of employment are not affected.
- The University will not penalise you for proposing to or having exercised your rights to request Remote working or a request to return to a previous working arrangement.

2) Role Suitability & Newly Appointed Employees

Requests for remote working will be facilitated where appropriate, but may not apply to certain roles or units, which are stakeholder-facing or require daily on-campus attendance in order to deliver on the full remit of the role. Evaluation of

the suitability of roles for remote working arrangements are determined by line management and Head of Unit.

The criteria set out in the legislation and Code of Practice are not exhaustive, and the University reserves the right to take additional criteria into consideration when assessing the suitability of a given role for remote working, as appropriate.

Newly appointed employees may be required to work on site up to 5 days per week for an initial on boarding period. This will be determined by the line manager and communicated to the newly appointed employees at the outset.

For particular roles, it may be possible to facilitate remote working at particular times of the year, for example outside of teaching semesters. The extent to which this is possible will be determined by line management and Head of Unit.

3) **Fair Application of Remote Working**
Employees may request up to 2 days of remote working per week (or an appropriate pro rata amount for those part time). Remote working days will take cognisance of the academic calendar, business needs, and the service provision of the particular area.

There must be a fair distribution of how remote working is applied both in a Unit and across the University. Remote Working arrangements within a unit must be spread proportionally across the working week. It will not be acceptable for a large proportion of remote working arrangements to be on a Monday and/or Friday. To ensure a sustained campus presence it is essential that on campus facilities for both students and employees are sufficiently resourced at all times.

A specific day(s) each week or a day in a particular week might be excluded from remote working to facilitate Unit or Team weekly on campus employee meetings, attendance at workshops or other events.

The policy acknowledges there may be some circumstances whereby employees will be required to be on campus on their designated remote working day determined by the University. Employees, subject to line manager approval, may request, in advance, to swap their designated day provided there is no disruption to service delivery. Please note the swapping of remote days may only be availed of on an irregular and exceptional basis which are subject to approval.

4) **Academic Grades**
Our strategic plan *Transformation for an Unscripted Future* has a clear focus on enhancing both the student and employees experience of studying and working in DCU.

DCU is primarily a campus-based University. Remote working arrangements for academic employees will take into account the following principles regarding teaching, research and engagement with professional colleagues.

- Teaching, which is approved to be campus based, must be delivered in-person, on campus. The mode of delivery of taught programmes is

designed at programme level and is subject to University guidelines and approval processes in this regard. Timetables reflect the approved approach, and local or individual discretion cannot be applied.

- In line with established practice and expectations, Academic colleagues must be available on campus to meet students outside of scheduled teaching times to support learning and to fulfil tutor roles.
- Important and impactful conversations with students (such those on designated consultation days after results are published and those in which Programme Chairs advise students) are in person.
- The majority of an academic's activity relating to research student supervision and line management of research colleagues takes place in person.
- Academic employees are routinely available in person, for on campus engagement with professional and technical employees as well as with academic colleagues, i.e. they are present in the School outside of the above activities.

Employees in academic grades who wish to avail of remote working should be aware that academic timetables cannot take account of personal preferences for particular days on or off campus, and the scheduling of faculty meetings/events that require attendance is similarly constrained.

Employees in academic grades who wish to avail of remote working will agree the proposed working arrangements with their respective Head of School in the first instance. Consideration for any such arrangement will take into account a number of factors including the needs of the School and Faculty, research (including supervision and line management), engagement and teaching requirements and other existing arrangements in operation.

Travel on university business creates a context of remote working which is distinct from that covered by this policy. Planning for such travel should however include putting arrangements in place which align with the above principles and are approved by the Head of School.

Researchers will need to liaise with their Principal Investigator regarding remote work arrangements, any such arrangement should be notified to the Head of School and in line with the general provisions of this policy.

The ultimate approval of all academic remote working arrangements within the Faculty will rest with the Executive Dean of Faculty.

5) **Flexi & Remote Working Arrangements**
Flexi-time and remote working are both flexible working benefits which are provided where appropriate, to facilitate a more flexible system of attendance and way of working for our employees, within certain defined limits.

5.1) Flexi & 1 day per week remote working
Eligible employees who enjoy the benefit of a 1 day per week remote working arrangement, may be, in line with the provisions of the Flexi-leave policy, entitled to:

- have access to flexible start and finish times in line with the flexi-leave policy;
- build and accrue flexi time (when attending on site) and use flexi leave during the period of the arrangement.

Eligible employees availing of both flexi leave and a 1-day remote working arrangement should not clock in/out on a remote working day. <u>Flexi leave or time are not accrued on a remote working day.</u>

5.2) Flexi & 2 days per week remote working

Employees who enjoy the benefit of a 2 day per week remote working arrangement are not eligible to build or accrue flexi-time or use flexi-leave. Eligible staff can still avail of flexible start and finish times but this should be managed locally, and not through Core FlexiTime system. Remote working days should be recorded on Core.

6)   Access to Facilities
In order to avail of a remote working arrangement an employee must be able to access:

- a satisfactory broadband connection capable of hosting video-based meetings;
- university systems via the DCU Pulse Secure, Virtual Private Network (VPN) or equivalent secure IT network access mechanisms put in place by the University;
- a suitable working environment; &
- any other facilities that are deemed necessary for the employee to fulfil their duties.

7)   Space Management and Allocation
As outlined in the *Space Management and Allocation Policy* all office spaces and facilities are shared by the University.

As desk and office space is at a premium across the University it may be a requirement for employees who are availing of remote working to operate in a shared space, or 'hot desking', basis during the period of the arrangement.

Please note that the Space Management Committee will take into account remote working arrangements in faculties/schools and units when evaluating space requests with a view to utilising hot desking arrangements in order to create additional workspace capacity.

8)   Holidays or Other University Closures
Where the University is closed for a bank holiday or another reason on a day when an employee is due to be undertaking remote working that day cannot be transferred to another day in that week.

9)   Sick Leave
Sick leave is important to ensure employees have the opportunity to rest and recover from illness.

Remote working cannot be used in place of sick leave. If an employee is not well and cannot attend the office for work they should not be considered fit to work from home.

A remote working day should not normally follow a period of sick leave due to illness (irrespective of duration of absence).

10) **Health and Safety**
Employees availing of the Remote Working facility should ensure that they have a suitable, safe working environment. To that end assistance is available from the DCU Health and Safety Office who can provide advice and guidance in relation to a safe working environment.

General Guidance for a safe working environment is available [here].

As with working on campus, any incidents arising while working remotely should be reported as soon as possible to the University in the normal way.

11) **Costs**
You are responsible for all utility costs associated with working from home as part of remote working, including Wi-Fi, heating and electricity. You are also responsible for travel to office costs. You may be able to claim tax relief or other allowances for any household expenses incurred as a result of working from home. It is your responsibility to apply directly for these where they exist.

Guidance on claiming tax relief for utilities and broadband costs can be found on the Revenue website by searching 'Remotely working from home'. The information is currently available [here].

12) **University Policies and Procedures**
All university policies and procedures must be adhered to when working remotely. In particular, employees must be mindful of their Data Protection and Cyber-Security responsibilities.

13) **Requesting Remote Working**
The University will consider all requests for Remote working in an objective, fair and reasonable manner. The University may consider both the suitability of the role for Remote working as well as the applicant's suitability to work remotely.

The procedure to request can be found in the accompanying procedure document.

14) **Term of Arrangement**
The duration of an approved remote working arrangement will normally be continuous. Each arrangement will be regularly reviewed/monitored by the line manager to ensure it continues to meet business needs and individual performance standards.

Regular reviews offer an opportunity for employees and managers to assess how well the arrangement is working and address any challenges at the earliest opportunity. Should any issues arise, they should be promptly discussed and

resolved through ongoing communication and engagement between line manager and employee to ensure the remote working arrangement remains effective and beneficial for both parties.

In the case where an employee wishes to cease their current remote working arrangement, they should inform their line manager and DCU People as soon as possible.

15) **Cancellation of Arrangement**
In line with the WRC Code of Practice a remote working agreement can be cancelled or paused at any time at the University's discretion in certain circumstances, before or after it has started. Whereby the University is satisfied that the arrangement would have, or is having, a substantial adverse effect on the operation of the University business, area or role. For example, because of:

- seasonal variations and or increases in the volume of the work concerned, or
- the unavailability of another employee to carry out duties due to leave
- the nature of the duties of the employee in the employment, or
- any other matters relevant to the substantial adverse effect on the operation of University business, area or role.

In such circumstances, the University will give to the employee written notice of termination of an arrangement, with regard to the requirements of the WRC Code of Practice.

Where the University proposes to give notice of termination, it will:

- notify in writing of the proposal to terminate the arrangement, and
- include details of the grounds for terminating the arrangement, and
- give 7 days after receipt of the notice to make representations to the University in relation to the proposal, and

Where possible, the University will engage with employees to consider whether any alternative arrangements other than cancellation may be feasible depending on the particular circumstances of the specific situation.

The agreement may also be ended by an employee subject to mutual agreement with the relevant Line Manager. Notification of cancellation of the agreement should be forwarded to DCU People.

16) **Abuse**
Should an employee be deemed to have abused the remote working arrangement they may be subject to formal disciplinary action in line with *Statute No. 5 Suspension and Dismissal of Employees*.

17) **Exclusions**
Employees who are in either formal or informal performance management processes may be excluded from remote working until such time it is deemed their performance has improved.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Employee

- Read this policy and be aware of their obligations. Advice and clarification on the details of the policy is available by contacting DCU People directly and/or speaking to the line manager.
- Follow the request process as outlined in the procedure.
- Employees must confirm that they have a suitable remote working environment and can meet all the obligations of their role while working remotely.
- Make themselves available to work onsite for critical onsite activities when required.
- Comply with obligations under Health & Safety and ensuring a suitable & safe Workspace.
- Those with an approved request must ensure they record their remote working days through the Core Portal.

The Line Manager

- Read this policy and be aware of the obligations under Work-Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 and the accompanying Code of Practice.
- Seek advice and support from DCU People on the details of this policy.
- Ensure a discussion takes place with the employee before a request is made for remote working and seek advice from DCU People when you have questions or concerns on an application prior to signing off.
- Review all employee requests in line with role suitability, nature of the work and the requirements of the code of practice.
- Ensuring the fair application of remote working and the operational model within their School/Unit.
- Ensuring that the high level of in-person service provision is maintained with remote working in operation.
- Upholding the principle that employees will spend the majority of the (five day) working week on campus.
- Ensure remote working days are appropriately recorded in the Core portal.

DCU People Team

- Help ensure that employees are aware of the content of the Remote working policy.
- Ensuring that Remote Working is fairly and consistently applied, as much as possible throughout relevant areas of the University.
- Empowering and assisting Line Managers in ensuring the effectiveness of remote working in their areas.
- Engaging with Line Managers and Heads of Units in ensuring that any remote application cannot in any way adversely affect either the student or employee service provision in their Unit.

- Liaising with Heads of Units in monitoring the effectiveness of remote working across the University.
- Retaining appropriate records in line with legislation and the WRC Code of Practice.

Contact

Any queries regarding this policy should be directed to an employee's line manager and or your People Team Representative.

Review

This policy and its effectiveness will be reviewed every 2 years or as soon as practicable after there has been a substantial change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Version Control

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End.