



UNIVERSITY OF
LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Policy and Procedure for Blended Working

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles around blended working and the procedure to apply for blended working arrangements.

This policy shall be reviewed 18 months after its implementation.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 *To whom does the policy apply?*

This policy provides a procedure for all staff employed by the University of Limerick to apply for blended working arrangements, having due regard to national and sectoral policy to ensure consistency.

1.2.2 *In what situations does the policy apply?*

Blended working can be considered for staff whose roles can be fulfilled on a blended basis. The University recognises that blended working will not suit all roles and a blended model comprising of remote working and onsite work may be permitted provided that the needs and objectives of the University are met.

1.2.3 *Who is responsible for ensuring that the policy (and any associated procedure) is implemented and monitored?*

The implementation and ongoing compliance of this policy will be the responsibility of the direct line manager, with the Dean's/Head of Department/Divisions playing a key role in the implementation of this policy and procedure. Policy review and adherence will rest with the Director of HR.

1.3 Definitions

- The term "**blended working**" refers to working arrangements that involve a combination of working on-site from the work premises and working remotely, from the employee's normal home address, based on an agreement between the employee and their direct manager, and approved through the application process.
- The term "**remote working**" as available under a blended working arrangement refers to a situation where an employee conducts their duties from an alternative work location, usually from the employee's normal residential address but may also include working whilst travelling on approved University business. The work location must be specified in the application form. For the avoidance of doubt, it does not include working from a second location or holiday home/location, cafe, or another public establishment.

- The term(s) “**business needs/needs of the University**”, refers to work standards and performance levels not being compromised to facilitate blended working. When considering a blended working request managers must ensure that the model works primarily to deliver the best possible experience and service to the students and other stakeholders of the University, whilst for staff combining the benefits of working from home with the benefits of face-to-face interaction that working on campus will bring to team working.
- The term “**remote working DSE questionnaire**” refers to the document completed by the employee and returned to their manager prior to commencing remote working.

2 Context

2.1 Legal and Regulatory Context

The following legislation informs this policy:

- The Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997
- Data Protection legislation/regulations
- Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015
- Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 together with various relevant regulations
- Terms of Employment (Information) Acts, 1994 – 2014
- Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Right to Disconnect (2021)

3 Policy Statements

3.1 Principles for Blended Working

The University recognises that working in a blended way can have benefits for both individual employees and the University. To ensure we all have the best experience everyone has a responsibility to play their part in making this a success. The introduction of blended working in UL (University of Limerick) requires us to establish new ways of working and associated policies and procedures. It is with this in mind that the following principles will be applied when an application is made for blended working arrangements. These include but are not limited to:

- All UL employees are entitled to request blended working, however, for face-to-face, in-person/student/other on-site activities, blended working may not be an option.
- The University reserves the right to refuse blended working requests and/or to modify or cease a blended working arrangement, which may previously have been in place based on the requirements of the University and/or satisfactory performance.

- The University is committed to providing a quality on-campus service to students, employees, and the wider campus community. Therefore, requests to work 100% of contracted hours on a remote basis will not be facilitated. The nature of the role and the needs of the School/Department/Team/Unit/Division will inform the decision on whether blended working is suitable for the role. Where roles are considered suitable for blended working, employees may make an application to work up to 40% of their contracted hours remotely and 60% of their contracted hours onsite e.g., an employee on a full-time contract may work up to 2 days remotely, 3 days on site. At all times, the requirement to maintain the service provision of the University is primary in the final decision.
- The University recognises that in line with operational needs there may be circumstances where it may be appropriate for employees to work on site for more or less than 60% of their contracted hours. In such circumstances, an employee may agree with their line manager to work more or less than 60% of their contracted hours onsite during these defined periods. Monitoring and recording time both onsite and off-site will be a matter for local management and a record of days worked onsite and remotely must be maintained and will be subject to audit.
- Employees who are already availing of flexible working arrangements may request to avail of blended working. An application for blended working must be considered, in conjunction, with minimum office attendance requirements, on a case-by-case basis.
- Reliable broadband connection is vital for effective home working. It is the responsibility of the employee to demonstrate that they have adequate broadband capacity and may be required to provide evidence of same. If adequate broadband capacity is not available, the employee's request for blended working cannot be facilitated.
- Should a blended working arrangement be agreed, standard work hours and existing contractual terms as per contract of employment will be expected to be maintained.
- Where blended working arrangements are in place, a manager may require an employee at short notice to attend work on-site outside of this agreement in line with the business need of the department/school/team/unit, either on a temporary or ongoing basis.
- The primary location of work for all UL employees will remain as per their UL contract of employment.
- A shared workspace may form part of the blended working arrangement and dedicated offices/desks/workspaces may no longer be provided.
- Once agreed, blended working arrangements will apply for the employee's current role in line with their current contractual terms. Should an employee move roles within the University, they will need to make a new application for blended working as the role and position will be different and may or may not be suitable for blended working.
- Blended working applications outside of the Republic of Ireland jurisdiction will not be facilitated.
- To ensure fairness and equity to all employees on an ongoing basis, blended working will not be guaranteed indefinitely to any employee, as rotation may be required, to support delivery of service to the University stakeholders, and the overall needs of the University.
- The health and safety of all employees is of paramount importance. Both the

employer and employee have responsibilities in this area which apply regardless of the location where the work is being carried out.

- Employees who avail of blended working arrangements may not avail of the flexitime scheme, which is operated through Core.
- Each application for blended working will be for a maximum period of 12 months and will be subject to regular review.
- Blended working will be guided by relevant prevailing legislation, government policy and revenue guidelines.
- This policy is not intended to confer any legal or contractual entitlement on an employee to work remotely.

4 Related Procedures for Blended Working Policy

4.1 Purpose of this procedure is to:

- Clarify the process for employees on how to apply for blended working arrangements.
- Clarify the role of line managers and employees in the effective implementation of this policy and procedure.
- Clarify the role of Human Resources in the effective implementation of this policy and procedure.
- Ensure consistent and fair treatment of employees who wish to apply for blended working arrangements, in line with university needs.
- Ensure clear objectives and expectations are set out upon approval of a blended working application.

4.2 Application Procedure for Blended Working

- Employees who wish to have an application for blended working considered, should have an initial discussion with their line manager to assess suitability of their role for blended working.
- Following initial discussion with the line manager, employees should complete the blended working request form.
- Employees should complete the remote working DSE questionnaire for remote workspace.
- The line manager's decision to accommodate requests must primarily be based on university needs whilst also considering the needs of the entire division/unit and working patterns of staff.
- If a request for blended working cannot be facilitated, the manager must state on the form the rationale for this decision to refuse the application.
- Where an application for blended working is refused, the applicant may wish to request a formal review. Prior to seeking a formal review, the applicant should have an informal discussion with their line manager. If the matter cannot be resolved through informal discussion, the applicant may seek a formal review by writing to the Director of Human Resources. The Director of Human Resources or their nominee will consider each application for review on a case-by-case basis.

4.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility of Managers

- When assessing blended working applications, managers must consider;
 - the needs of the University
 - suitability of the role for blended working arrangements. Some roles by their very nature will not be suitable for blended working arrangements
 - The need to facilitate collaboration, team building and engagement with colleagues and other stakeholders
 - The requirement for a reliable broadband connection/speed
 - Employee suitability. Demonstrated delivery of results, engagement, acceptable time, and attendance record
 - Whether the remote work location, as far as is reasonably practicable, meets the safety, health, and welfare obligations for their employees
- Both the manager and the employee must agree the blended working pattern, i.e., days worked in the office and days worked remotely prior to commencing blended working.
- Ensure employees are available and working during contracted working hours be they working in the office or working remotely.
- Agree regular means of communication and clearly communicate and document expectations, objectives, key performance indicators and timelines for delivery of work, whilst encouraging close cooperation between team members.
- Carry out regular one to one meeting with the employee to provide opportunities to deliver and capture feedback and provide developmental support if required. If possible, this should be done face to face on the days that the employee is working in the office.
- Regularly discuss the remote work environment to ensure continued compliance and ensure that the staff member is provided with suitable equipment.
- Review the completed remote working DSE questionnaire and once signed off, forward to the Healthy and Safety Unit (hnsbookings@ul.ie) to progress the facilitation of an ergonomic assessment.
- Conduct an annual review of the blended working arrangement with the employee and if necessary, capture any issues/concerns/gaps/successes, which may require attention and be discussed in advance of any future application.
- Ensure compliance with legislative requirements including but not limited to Organisation of working time act, GDPR, Data Compliance, University Policies & Procedures.

Responsibility of Employees

- Both the employee and the line manager must agree the blended work pattern, i.e., days worked in the office and days worked remotely, prior to commencing blended working. Employees must be available to attend on site when required to meet business need.
- Provide supporting documentation regarding broadband speed/connection.
- Employees must ensure that when working remotely they can work free from disruption and have adequate care arrangements in place for dependents that may be at home during working hours.
- Employees who have been approved for blended working will be required, on occasion, to attend on site outside of the agreed pattern, to avail of training/team

building opportunities/on site meetings and are expected to attend if requested by their line manager.

- Complete the remote working DSE questionnaire as required and ensure they have the correct equipment and are using it correctly.
- Advise their manager of any accidents in the workplace, remote or on site.
- The University is not responsible for any injuries to the employee or any third parties outside of the designated workspace or during the employee's non-working time.
- It is the responsibility of the employee to designate a remote workspace, which is a dedicated space in their home. No work should be performed outside of the designated workspace unless work is being conducted whilst travelling on approved University business. The designated workspace must be kept in a safe condition, free from hazards to both the employee and equipment. Equipment provided by the University is for the sole use of staff members whilst working remotely.
- Stay in contact with their line manager and colleagues on a regular basis.
- Set up formal and informal channels of communication and adhere to them.
- Employees must ensure that they are clear on what is expected of them in their role and seek support from their manager when needed.
- Employees must ensure that they are engaged in development opportunities to enhance their skills,
- The employee is responsible for all utility costs associated with working from home as part of an approved blended working arrangement, including Wi-Fi, heating, and electricity. The employee is also responsible for travel to office costs.
- The remote working location must be based in the Republic of Ireland. Where an employee plans to move location, this should be discussed in advance with the line manager. This is to facilitate a new risk assessment and other considerations in advance of the move.

Responsibility of Human Resource Division

- Policy and procedure compliance.
- Recording of blended working applications.
- Manage review process.
- Provide support for managers/employees in relation to the implementation of this policy and procedure.
- Regular reviews of the Blended Working Policy and Procedure will be conducted by the HR Division to ensure
 - the business needs of the organisation are consistently met and align to University strategy.
 - There is no discrimination under the Employment Equality Acts, or other employment provisions.
 - The policy and procedure are applied in line with the provisions of this policy and procedure.
 - Continued development of this policy and procedure to reflect the impact of new ways of working.

Termination of Blended Arrangement

- Blended working arrangements will automatically terminate at the end of the approved 12-month period. If an employee wishes to apply for an additional period of blended working, then they will need to make a new application 3 months prior to the termination date.

- Any blended working arrangement may be terminated by the employee or the manager subject to four weeks' notice. Some examples as to why a manager may terminate or not renew a blended working arrangement include but are not limited to, business needs, insufficient team engagement, poor performance, poor broadband connectivity, health, and safety issues.

5 Related Documents

The following documents are related to this Policy and Procedure:

University of Limerick Job Share procedure
 Shorter Working Year Scheme
 Online Blended Working Form

6 Document Control

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