

Policy on Remote Work

Policy Title	Policy on Remote Work
Policy #	02.116.2
Policy Owner	Vice President for Administration and Finance
Contact Information	Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Assistant Vice President for Human Resource Administration at (401) 874-5270
Approved By	Administrative Policy Committee
Effective Date	June 7, 2022
Next Review Date	No later than June 30, 2027
Who Needs to Know About this Policy	All non-faculty employees of the University of Rhode Island
Definitions	<p>IT Endpoint Protection. The practice of safeguarding data and systems with respect to the use all IT devices (laptops, phones, tablets, etc.) though the installation and maintenance of anti-virus, anti-malware, and similar software as well as the maintenance of system patches and updates on endpoint devices, and the use of VPN for accessing University IT systems.</p> <p>Long Term. Greater than thirty (30) calendar days in duration.</p> <p>Remote Work. Work activities regularly undertaken off the University campus, generally at an employee's home or an alternative location, that are similar in character and output to work undertaken while at a University location. Remote Work arrangements may be full-week or partial-week arrangements.</p> <p>Remote Work Agreement. An agreement between the employee and the University outlining the terms of a Remote Work arrangement. Details in the policy body provided below.</p> <p>Short Term. Less than thirty (30) calendar days in duration and generally non-recurring within a fiscal year</p> <p>Unit Manager. For the purposes of this policy, an Academic Dean in any of the colleges, or if outside of the colleges, a direct report to a member of the President's Leadership Council.</p>
Statutes, Regulations, and Policies Governing or Necessitating This Policy	N/A

Reason for Policy / Purpose	This policy provides guidance and principles for Remote Work for all non-faculty employees of the University of Rhode Island
Forms Related to this Policy	Remote Work Agreement

Policy Statement

This policy applies to all University employees other than faculty (as defined by the University Manual § 4.11.10).

The University prides itself on providing an immersive educational environment for both its resident and non-resident students and easy access to all related services for these individuals. To best serve the University's students and ensure seamless operations, employees are generally required to be physically present during work hours at a University-controlled location. However, the University also recognizes there may be situations when Remote Work arrangements are appropriate to improve productivity and job performance as well as promote administrative efficiencies, reduce traffic congestion and the associated pollution and transportation costs, support continuity of operations plans, sustain the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified workforce by enhancing work/life balance, and for other personal, family, or medical reasons.

Requests for Remote Work arrangements may be made by individual employees, who must first discuss the option with their supervisor and Unit Manager. These arrangements may also be implemented due to recovery from an illness, to provide a reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities, or by the University in the case of emergencies, for business operational needs, or for other reasons. In addition, Unit Managers may assign Remote Work, in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, as well as employment contracts or existing bargaining unit agreements, to meet the immediate needs of the business unit or the University more broadly.

Remote Work arrangements are appropriate for some employees and some jobs but not all employees and all positions. No University employee is entitled to or guaranteed the opportunity for Remote Work since specified schedules or an in-person presence may be an essential job duty that cannot be accommodated via this work structure. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Unit Manager. Employees who are on Remote Work arrangements, like all employees, are expected to be cooperative and willing to adapt to meet the unit's needs, including management's and colleagues' work schedules.

This policy sets forth the circumstances under which Remote Work arrangements for employees may be approved. In the instance where any Remote Work arrangement, be it a voluntary request by an employee or an assignment by a Unit Manager, conflicts with the terms of a current collective bargaining agreement or other employment contract for that employee, that contract shall control the arrangement.

Remote Work arrangements may be implemented to best serve the University, the business unit, or the employee. These arrangements may cover entire units, specific job titles, multiple employees, or individuals. Additionally, Remote Work arrangements may be Short Term or Long Term. Short Term Remote Work arrangements require approval only at the Unit Manager level. Long Term Remote Work arrangements must be memorialized in a Remote Work Agreement and must be approved by the Unit Manager and the Office of Human Resources. Long Term Remote Work arrangements by non-faculty members of the President's Leadership Council must be approved by the President and the Office of Human Resources.

Remote Work includes work activities undertaken off the University campus, generally at an employee's home or an alternative location, that are similar in character and output to work undertaken while at a University location. Remote Work arrangements may be full-week or partial-week arrangements; however, employees are expected to be available to participate in in-person work activities at the University as needed.

Assigned Remote Work

The University, or any Unit Manager, may determine that employees are required to work off campus for a short period of time to accommodate unusual circumstances, such as a brief office closing for renovations, a temporary assignment in a remote location, or for other business operations reasons. In addition, the University may establish Remote Work as a condition of offered employment, or mandate Remote Work due to emergencies or other circumstances as determined by the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees or the University President (or their designee). Any employee given a Remote Work assignment under these circumstances does not need to complete a Remote Work Agreement though the employee is bound by the other policy elements covering equipment, work environments, conduct, etc. that cover an employee's responsibilities and obligations relative to working remotely.

Eligibility and Approvals (for voluntary Remote Work)

Remote Work is not an employee right, but an option that may be requested by the employee based upon the nature of tasks and responsibilities for a particular position or the needs of that employee's business unit.

Jobs that require heavy use of specialized equipment or information otherwise available only at University locations or who must be physically present on campus to deliver services to the University community are generally not eligible for Remote Work.

Remote Work arrangements are generally reserved for employees who have demonstrated self-motivation, self-discipline in work activities, and an ability to work independently in an efficient and productive manner.

Eligibility Criteria

1. The nature of the work is suitable for Remote Work, does not require extensive in-person interactions to complete tasks, and requires minimal or limited need for specialized equipment or material; and
2. The employee has demonstrated self-motivation, self-discipline in work activities, and an ability to work independently; and
3. The arrangement will not reduce the quality of services to the University, the University business unit, students, or other employees.

Remote Work options are not available for employees in their first six (6) months of employment, unless this arrangement is specified in their position description, offer letter, or employment contract, or under exceptional circumstances with prior written approval by the Unit Manager and the Office of Human Resources.

Remote Work arrangements must be approved by 1) the employee's Unit Manager and 2) the Office of Human Resources. Long-term Remote Work arrangements that involve residency outside of Rhode Island must additionally be approved by the Vice President for Administration and Finance (or their designee). Note that no employee may approve their own Remote Work Agreement.

See the "Remote Work Outside of Rhode Island" section below for information on approvals related to work arrangements with residency outside of Rhode Island.

Remote Work arrangements may be made for up to six (6) months' duration at a time, at which time the arrangement must be reviewed and approved by 1) the Unit Manager, 2) the Office of Human Resources, and, 3) for out of state or international arrangements, the Vice President for Administration and Finance (or their designee), prior to an additional six-month renewal.

A Remote Work arrangement may be revoked at any time by the Unit Manager should the employee's work performance fall below expected levels, should the employee fail to meet any of the terms of the Remote Work Agreement or this policy, or with four (4) weeks' notice, due to a change in business operations that requires the employee to return to a University location.

Equipment and Connectivity

Employees on Remote Work assignment must use University-owned and configured computer(s) and peripheral equipment to do their University work unless specifically authorized to do otherwise in the Remote Work Agreement. An inventory of this equipment shall be a component of the Remote Work Agreement.

The use of Virtual Private Network software is mandatory for accessing the University network and systems, and all work conducted as part of these arrangements must be done while the system is active.

All University policies and practices related to IT endpoint security must be adhered to as a component of all Remote Work arrangements. Unit IT specialists and the IT Service Desk are available to support employee requests relative to IT security. See in particular the University's policy on *IT Endpoint Protection* for requirements related to IT security on personally-owned devices. Personally-owned devices must meet the same IT security requirements as University-owned devices and employees with Remote Work arrangements who use personally-owned devices to conduct University business agree to the installation and maintenance of any device monitoring, device maintenance, security, or similar software, as well as appropriate patches and updates, to ensure that the personally-owned device is equal to any University-owned device in terms of IT security and endpoint protection.

Under a Remote Work arrangement all Internet connectivity, including necessary software and hardware and the related maintenance and associated costs, are the responsibility of the employee, unless specified otherwise by contract or the Remote Work Agreement.

Any equipment provided by the University must be safeguarded by the employee and returned at the end of the Remote Work arrangement to the Unit Manager in good condition, absent normal wear and tear. University equipment is to be used only for University Business and may not be used for personal business or by non-University personnel, except as allowed by the University's Acceptable Use policy or other policies related to personal use of University Resources. University-owned equipment will be maintained, serviced, and repaired by the University or its dedicated vendors.

If the use of personal equipment is specifically allowed under the terms of a Remote Work Agreement, that equipment, its maintenance, servicing, and repair, excepting endpoint protection systems noted above, are the responsibility of the employee.

Work Environment

Employees are expected to work in a safe and ergonomically appropriate environment. Such an environment shall include appropriate ventilation, lighting, and furniture for the tasks to be performed. Employees are expected to work only from their approved work location, which may be a private residence, University-owned location, or similar office / professional environment and not a public or retail setting or over any public network. This location shall be a component of the Remote Work Agreement.

When a Remote Work arrangement occurs at the request of an employee, the University is under no obligation to supply a remote location or any of its associated support services. The employee is responsible for all aspects of the Remote Work environment including necessary utilities, insurance, and furnishings. No University business involving the physical presence of other persons may be conducted in this remote location, but must instead be conducted at a University location.

Office supplies reasonably necessary to complete the assigned work may be picked up from a University location by the employee. Employee out of pocket expenses for office supplies relative to Remote Work will not be reimbursed except in special circumstances with prior written approval from the employee's Unit Manager.

The employee assumes all tax consequences that may arise as a result of their working from their home or other approved remote location.

Expectations and Conduct

A Remote Work arrangement changes the location at which an employee performs their work function, but it does not change the quality, quantity, or any other aspect of the expected work product and/or tasks. Employees engaged in Remote Work are expected to work the same business hours as if working at a University location. Employees are not to use the Remote Work arrangements to conduct personal business during business hours. Additionally, employees are expected to conduct themselves as they would while at a University location in terms of professionalism and their responsibilities to the University.

All University or state rules, regulations, or policies that reference activities or workplace behavior undertaken on University property will be extended to cover these same activities or workplace behavior at a Remote Work location as if the employee was physically present on University property.

Employees must be available by phone, email, or other means of electronic communication as determined by their supervisor during regular work hours. In all cases, employee reachability shall be substantially equivalent to on-campus working conditions, and the employee is expected to continue to respond to all message channels in a timely and professional manner. For assistance transferring traditional on-campus communication channels such as telephones to a remote environment, please contact IT Services.

Employees are expected to be available for in-person trainings, meetings, etc. at a University location with reasonable notification, such notification being similar in timing to peer employees working at a University location. A remote Work Arrangement does not relieve an employee from participation in on-campus trainings, meetings, etc., though specific arrangements may be made at the discretion of the Unit Manager.

When a Remote Work arrangement occurs at the request of an employee, any costs for travel to the University for these events are the responsibility of the employee and are not reimbursable travel costs unless otherwise arranged in an offer letter or contract, or approved in advance in writing for a specific event by the Unit Manager of the remote employee's work unit.

Long-Term Remote Work Outside of Rhode Island

Employees engaged in Long Term Remote Work arrangements have the responsibility to ensure that their home address is correctly listed in the University's Human Resources database, Employees working outside of Rhode Island, including at international locations, must be aware that local regulations regarding payroll periods, withholding, certain insurances (Workers' Compensation, Unemployment, for example), and other matters may differ from those regulations governing work in Rhode Island and employees should consult their financial advisors or accountants to ensure that they are compliant with any local regulations.

As noted above, Long-term Remote Work arrangements that involve residency outside of Rhode Island must additionally be approved by the Vice President for Administration and Finance (or their designee).

Remote Work as a Reasonable Accommodation

Requests for Remote Work as a Reasonable Accommodation for an individual with a disability are handled through the Office of Human Resources' disability accommodations process.

Remote Work as a Component of Employment

In certain instances, Remote Work may be included as a component of an employee's position at the University. In these instances, the specifics of a Remote Work arrangement will be set forth in the appointment letter, and the use of a Remote Work Agreement is not necessary unless the terms of any proposed arrangement differ from those in the appointment letter.

Remote Work Agreement

All Remote Work arrangements, except those noted above as Short Term, must be memorialized in a Remote Work Agreement that shall include:

1. The length of the arrangement
2. The location at which the Remote Work will be completed
3. Equipment provided by the University
4. Specifics as to the use of any personal equipment, if any
5. Any special circumstances or terms and conditions

The Remote Work Agreement must be signed by the employee and the employee's Unit Manager and filed with the Office of Human Resources, Attn: AVP of Human Resource Administration, and shall be reviewed and updated every six months at a minimum.

Exceptions

None

Policy Review and Revisions

(Versions earlier than the first policy number may be paper only)

Policy #	Effective Date	Reason for Change	Changes to Policy
02.116.1	June 2, 2021	n/a	n/a
02.116.2	June 7, 2022	IT security needs	Additional language regarding IT security and the use of personally-owned devices