

## Community Comments and Responses Regarding an Approved Administrative Policy

### *Policy on Remote Work* (02.116.3)

A draft version of this administrative policy was posted for community comment from October 15-29, 2025. Below are the comments submitted, together with responses that may have been provided in whole or in part by the policy owner, the Administrative Policy Committee (APC), and/or policy development staff. The *Policy on Remote Work* became effective March 18, 2026, and can be found here: [https://web.uri.edu/policies/find/?\\_sf\\_s=remote%20work](https://web.uri.edu/policies/find/?_sf_s=remote%20work)

Comment #	Respondent's Capacity	Community Comment	Response
1	Staff	What does "initial onboarding period" refer to? Is it your first 3 months of employment at URI or the first 3 months of employment in your current position?	The initial onboarding period refers to the beginning of employment at URI. For clarity we inserted 'upon hire at the University'.
2	Faculty	How this policy does/not apply to faculty should be clarified	The first sentence of the Policy Statement states that the policy does not apply to faculty. No further clarification is needed.
3	Faculty	You may want to define "short term and long term" agreements. Is it simply anything less than 1 year is short or is any remote work (even a week). Is it only 1 year agreements that need approval from the unit manager and from HR and less than a year can be approved by the unit manager only? Clarity around the approval process needs to occur as it's a bit confusing. Is it correct that renewals only need to be approved by the unit manager (unless significant) and what constitutes significant. Maybe adding an example would allow some clarity to departments around the university.	Short term and long term are defined on the top of page three of the policy. Accompanying policy procedures will enhance clarity around the approval process.
4	Staff	I wanted to comment that I feel like the updates to the policy are clear. I like that the renewal is on an annual basis, rather than every six months as that makes both the process for the employees and the EA's (or whoever is processing all of them) more straightforward. In addition, I think that the reduction of the waiting period from 6 months to 3 months is beneficial. I have no concerns about the changes and I think the policy is clear.	Thank you for your feedback and for taking part in the policy development process.

5	Staff	The policy is clear.	Thank you for your feedback and for taking part in the policy development process.
6	Staff	<p>As a full-time staff member at URI, the 6-month limit on Remote Work Arrangement (RWA) was cumbersome and at times came at an inopportune moment in the academic year to have to worry about the administrative burden of renewing RWAs. Extending the RWA to a yearly renewal cycle is a positive change that adheres to industry standards and will lower administrative burden on divisions within the University. Information on the auto-renewal was a bit unclear, but a welcome addition to lower administrative burdens of renewing RWAs. Overall, very positive improvements in the Remote Work policy.</p>	<p>Thank you for this feedback. In response to this comment, we clarified by inserting: "If a remote work arrangement does not need to be changed or discontinued, it will automatically renew each year."</p>
7	Staff	<p>As a former employee of RIDEM and RIDOH -- both which broadly began approving remote work for many of their employees during COVID and continue to do so today -- and now as a current URI employee, my chief concern with the remote work policy at URI is that it is not applied fairly. It is important to acknowledge that as powerful as such policies can be relative to increasing both morale and productivity, the opposite is true for those who are denied, particularly when the denial is based simply on a supervisor's preference to see a body sitting at a desk. In addition to employee disengagement and the resultant decline in productivity, unfair implementation creates an atmosphere of discord in the workplace, as colleagues whose supervisors arbitrarily deny access to remote work come to resent those whose supervisors grant approval.</p> <p>I believe that the way to resolve this is to take the final decision should be shared between the supervisor, who may simply prefer to see a body in a seat, and another member of the organization. While the policy is constructed as such -- with reference to the supervisor and to the unit manager -- sometimes the supervisor and unit manager are one in the same. This is entirely unfair to the employee, who is now denied simply based on one person's preference. Rather than referring to the unit manager, I think the policy should be written to reflect the second level in the employee's chain of command.</p> <p>I believe that the policy should include some measures by which to weigh a request for remote work. What does the employee do? What percentage of the employee's workday</p>	<p>Approval decisions for long-term arrangements are shared by the unit manager and the Office of Human Resources.</p>

		<p>involves desk work? Field work? What percentage of the employee's workday involve front-line customer service that requires face-to-face interaction? There are considerations, but a checklist would serve to provide some transparency in the supervisor's decision process and a level of consistency between organizations.</p> <p>Finally, I believe that denials should be subject to a final QC review to confirm that the policy is being implemented fairly and equally to ensure the absence of bias in policy implementation.</p>	
8	Staff	<p>I am concerned about the proposed language on p. 4 that states "jobs that are primarily student-facing, and jobs that incorporate the delivery of services to the University community or the general public, are generally not eligible for Remote Work." This would seemingly encompass every job at the university - I'm hard-pressed to think of someone who works here who does not provide services for the university or the public. It is unclear whether this language means such positions are ineligible for full-time remote work, or whether current arrangements that allow for hybrid work (such as 4 days in office and 1 day remote) would be allowed to continue at the discretion of the director of such a department.</p>	<p>Thank you for your feedback. In response to this comment, we inserted "in-person" to read: "... in-person delivery of services to the University community or the general public."</p>
9	Graduate Student	<p>Members of our lab regularly work internationally for field work. Requiring a formal remote work approval process for each trip would put just our lab at 12+ requests a year. This seems like a waste of time. Additionally some of our field opportunities come together in a manner of weeks. How can we ensure a remote work request would be approved in time?</p>	<p>To be approved in time, all trips and dates should be shared as soon as practical so that the remote work request(s) can be considered.</p>
10	Faculty	<p>I am concerned about the change in the policy for international workers, as the draft of the policy states that international remote work will no longer be allowed for non-faculty employees. Who specifically does this policy apply to? Will it affect postdocs, research associates, and graduate student workers? I regularly work with international postdocs and research associates who are leading field efforts in remote countries for funded grants, and their ability to work internationally is crucial to our ability to do our research. A change in this policy preventing international remote work would therefore directly affect</p>	<p>Thank you for sharing your concerns. This policy applies to all staff, which includes postdocs, research associates, and (depending on their category) graduate student workers. We understand the necessity of conducting field research in conjunction with grants, and we aim to be compliant with international labor and employment laws, which are often much more restrictive than US labor and employment laws. In most cases, URI would not be able to comply with international labor and employment laws, particularly for long term international remote work.</p>

		<p>our research lab group. I'm also concerned about this policy and the effects it will have in the current political environment where international visas are routinely being denied/revoked/etc. It seems like having the flexibility to have people work remotely who have to be international would be extremely helpful and beneficial as we navigate ever-changing federal policies.</p>	<p>In response to this comment, we added: "For an exception consideration, please submit a remote work arrangement request with comprehensive explanation as to why the international work is critical to the mission of URI."</p>
11	Union	<p>It is well known that access to work-life balance policies such as remote work have been found to increase both morale and productivity. However, we must acknowledge that the opposite is true for employees who are denied, particularly when the denial appears to be arbitrary. In addition to employee disengagement and the resultant decline in productivity, unfair implementation within a unit creates an atmosphere of discord, as colleagues whose supervisors arbitrarily deny access to remote work come to resent those whose supervisors grant approval. Finally, without a clear and objective approval process, the organization risks potential accusations of bias against the supervisor, Unit Manager, or the University.</p> <p>With fairness in implementation of the Policy for Remote Work long being our chief concern, we are providing the following comments in response to the University of Rhode Island's request for Comments on the proposed revisions to the Policy on Remote Work.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In removing "short term" and "long term" from the definitions section in the proposed revised Policy on Remote Work, the reference to "calendar days" has been deleted. We ask that this reference to calendar days be restored to eliminate likely confusion (i.e. calendar days vs. business days).</li> <li>2. The proposed revised Policy on Remote Work indicates that while the supervisor is involved in discussions with the employee to evaluate the potential for granting a remote work request, the Unit Manager is also to be included in these discussions, with the Unit Manager responsible for approving and denying requests for remote work. We believe that this combined, ACTIVE involvement of both the supervisor and Unit Manager is key to eliminating some of the potential bias in the approval process and ask that the</li> </ol>	<p>Thank you for taking the time to provide detailed feedback on the proposed revisions to the Remote Work Policy. We understand and appreciate the importance you place on fairness, transparency, and consistency in the application of remote work arrangements. These are values we share and strive to uphold within the framework of University policy.</p> <p>We have taken your suggestion of adding "calendar days" to the definitions of short-term and long-term remote work, so there isn't confusion around how that time is calculated. We also added the direct manager and unit manager as approvals for Long-Term remote work, so the concern of one supervisor removing the privilege based on bias is lessened.</p> <p>The VPHR and AVP for Labor and Employee Relations have had several productive conversations with the PSA leadership with regard to the remote work policy and procedures to follow. We agree that there should be an emphasis on consistency and equity of application of the policy, and we have devised some ideas for the procedures that will assist us in ensuring such. We intend to bolster our procedures with a checklist to assist managerial decision-making on remote work arrangements, and an opportunity for an HR review of remote work agreements that are declined.</p> <p>We remain committed to supporting equitable application of university policies and appreciate your engagement in these discussions.</p>

	<p>proposed revised Policy on Remote Work incorporate the following:</p> <p>a. That the Unit Manger does not delegate their role and responsibilities as outlined in the Policy on Remote Work to the employee’s supervisor.</p> <p>b. That in cases where the Unit Manager and supervisor are one in the same, the role of the Unit Manager shall be elevated to the next individual in the requesting employee’s chain of command.</p> <p>3. We ask that a brief evaluation checklist be created to guide Supervisors and Unit Managers in their discussions with the employee in evaluating whether their tasks can be arranged to support a request for remote work. Some of these considerations are referenced in the policy, but a checklist would serve as an objective, thorough, and consistent evaluation tool to help eliminate bias in the process.</p> <p>4. We ask that HR implement a review process to confirm that denials are free from bias. Examples of suspected inconsistencies would include but not be limited to cases where:</p> <p>a. an objective evaluation as described in #3 (above) was not performed;</p> <p>b. the employee was denied the opportunity to discuss the request with the Unit Manager;</p> <p>c. the Unit Manager deferred its role to the Supervisor; or</p> <p>d. the distribution of approvals and denials of remote work requests within the Unit suggest that supervisor preference based on non-objective factors or personal bias is impacting the review process.</p> <p>5. In cases where requests for remote work are denied, we ask that HR require Unit Managers to provide the employee with a written record of the denial that</p> <p>a. clearly states the business reasons for the denial, and</p> <p>b. walks through the steps taken to review the request and how the decision was reached.</p> <p>6. We ask that in cases where employees believe they have been denied for one of the reasons identified in #4 (above), HR allow for the employee’s union to represent the</p>	
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