

UITS Restart Task Force fall '21 return-to-campus guidance

Rationale

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on a return to in-person work on campus in fall 2021 and how to address remote and flex work. The document provides overall principles for the department as well as specific questions UITS leaders should consider in assessing remote and flex work.

Evolution

The principles and guidance in this document are intended to help us navigate the return to mostly in-person work in fall 2021. We are intentionally taking a conservative approach now to test and evaluate with the possibility to allow more remote days and options later.

Principles

Our resilience during the pandemic demonstrated that we could work remotely when we all are distributed remotely. This document considers the complexity of the hybrid work environment while also supporting IU's mission.

UITS will follow the [university's remote work policy HR-06-80](#). The university's position is that in-person work is the default and is encouraged, and that remote work will require approval. UITS specifics on the policy are:

- Staff requesting one to three days/week of remote work will need approval of their manager and their director.
- Fully remote work requests require manager, director, AVP/officer, and vice president approval.
- Managers should scrutinize four-day remote work requests and ensure there is a very compelling reason and benefit to the university and the staff member. Given the number of days the staff member would be in the office, four-day remote arrangements will be evaluated as if they were full-time remote.
- Requests for out-of-state remote work require approval from a senior executive officer or that official's delegate, in consultation with the Office of the Vice President for IT and University Counsel, IU Human Resources, and the Office of the University Controller.
- For out-of-country remote work, only a senior executive officer, in consultation with University Counsel, is authorized to approve and only if it is mission critical.

A [remote work arrangement](#) (RWA) request form is now posted on One.IU. All requests should be submitted by [July 15, 2021](#), so that UITS leadership can understand the volume of requests for logistical planning purposes as we return to campus in August. (Note: The RWA app will remain available after July 15 and modifications or new requests can be made after that date.)

NOTE: Existing remote work agreements (prior to March 2020) do not need reapproval but will need to be routed through the request system for reporting purposes.

Space utilization will be an ongoing consideration. Lease agreements and other decisions around space may depend on the number of staff working on campus.

UITS will develop a process for managing approvals and for the continued re-evaluation of remote and flex employment agreements per HR-06-80. Staff and people leaders should use this process going forward instead of the previous remote work agreements.

Guidance

Goals

Staff interested in working off campus should discuss with their supervisors to assess if doing so is feasible within their job function as it supports IU's mission. In this conversation they should also discuss and set SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely) goals that can be used in the periodic evaluation of remote work agreements.

Criteria for remote work

IU's default is a return to full-time, in-person work. Criteria for determining eligibility for remote work as stated by HR-06-80 are:

- Requests for remote work as an accommodation for a disability will be addressed through the university's [accommodations request process](#).
- Existing remote work agreements in place prior to March 2020 do not need reapproval but will need to be routed through the request system for reporting purposes.
- Remote work is not a substitute for child, elder, or other dependent care.
- Staff working remotely are responsible for ensuring their internet connectivity is adequate to support remote work. Remote work privileges may be revoked due to insufficient connectivity.

Additional UITS criteria:

- Staff wishing to return to campus to work in person full time may do so.
- People leaders will determine some job categories must be in person for some fraction of the time, up to and including full time. This can be based on the nature of the work and the constituency served.
- People leaders may set limits on the number of days staff can be remote each week, in order to set a minimum level of in-person interaction.
- People leaders may make in-person attendance for some meetings and events the default, even for remote employees.

Equity in opportunity

People leaders at all levels of the organization should consider if their approach is fair and equitable across staff with similar jobs. For example, a manager should consider if their policies are equitable across their staff, while a director should consider if staff with similar jobs under different managers in their divisions have similar opportunities.

Diversity

The creation of new, fully remote positions provides us with an opportunity to attract diverse talent. Retention of fully remote talent may represent a unique challenge. To address the retention challenge, people leaders should consider how we hire, onboard, manage, and promote employees to fully support their integration, growth, and sense of belonging at the university and on UITS teams.

When hiring, people leaders should also consider whether to include language in job postings to indicate if a remote candidate would be considered and if it can help attract a diverse pool of talent.

Place and space

HR-06-80 states that remote employees will share office or desk space if they have occasion to work in-person. Within UITS, staff working in person full time and flex staff working four days a week in person will be given preference on office or desk location. Full-time, remote staff will not have an assigned workspace. Flex staff working three days or fewer in person and remote staff may need to share desks or offices or use a desk hoteling system. All of this may change over time and is dependent on space.

Currently, divisions will largely remain within their previous desk area footprint. They will be responsible for determining what hardware and furnishings will help staff in shared workspaces do their best work.

Far-remote work agreements should be considered carefully, as these employees may not have the same opportunity to return to the office that their flex and remote counterparts have.

Training

Staff working remote will be required to take the LinkedIn Learning course [“Remote Work Foundations.”](#) Managers of remote workers will be required to take [“Leveraging Virtual and Hybrid Teams for Improved Effectiveness”](#) and/or [“Managing Skills for Remote Leaders.”](#) All UITS employees (staff and people leaders who are part of remote work agreements) will need to show their supervisors the certificates they have earned by taking the course.

Team building and travel

Divisions should consider social dynamics of hybrid teams. In particular, it’s important to plan how team-building activities and meetings will be managed with hybrid groups comprised of off- and on-campus employees as well as how to sustain a sense of belonging within their teams and with all of UITS and the university. People leaders should consider when activities require staff to attend in person, or if a remote option will be available.

Questions to address

Based on these principles and guidance, staff and their supervisors should develop remote work agreements that meet university guidelines (i.e., workdays, hours, location, etc.) and also address the following:

- What goals and metrics will be used to evaluate the remote work agreement?
- Do all staff with a similar job function within the people leader’s portfolio have similar opportunity? If not, how are decisions around opportunities being made equitably?
- Will meetings, retreats, and team-building activities encourage remote employees to attend in person, or will there be an option for remote employees? Who will be responsible for the costs of travel to in-person events?
- What is the process and criteria if the employee or the supervisor wishes to change from off-campus to in-person work?

If you have questions, please [email UITS HR](#).