

## University of Gloucestershire Agile Working Framework

### Purpose

1. This framework details the University's approach to agile working - that is, how we balance working from home and working on campus in a way that meets the needs of individuals, teams and the University. It was developed in light of the University's experiences of home working during the Covid-19 pandemic and as a result of employee feedback from staff surveys. As such, this framework will continue to be reviewed and adapted on a regular basis to ensure it meets the University's needs.
2. The University recognises that agile working can be beneficial to individual staff members, through support for flexible working practices and enhanced work/life balance, and to the University itself, by supporting staff wellbeing and ensuring that the experience of working at the University is attractive to applicants and existing staff alike. Agile working also presents some challenges, and specifically challenges to ensuring that all University students are well supported, that all University services are delivered effectively and efficiently, and that all staff and students feel engaged fully in the University community. It is these various benefits and challenges which the framework seeks to balance.

### Scope

3. This framework applies to all staff including those on fixed term or part-time hourly paid contracts.

### Definition

4. The University considers agile working as enabling employees to work from the most suitable location for the task in hand, including working from home or another suitable non-University workplace as well as on campus. Agile working recognises the impact of work location on University business and on teams as well as the impact on individual employees.

### Principles

5. The University confirms that agile working will be adopted as a permanent University framework. We will not revert to the pre-Covid expectation that staff should generally work their full hours on campus, with only limited exceptions or home working permitted. This framework sets out the principles and methods that will apply, taking account of the results of the staff survey and experience of agile working to date.
6. As a multi-site, campus-based university, Gloucestershire has always required of its staff a level of agility and flexibility in working across campuses in order to respond to business need and to deliver the best service possible to our students. Through our Estates and IT strategies we will enhance over time the technology that we provide, and the working environment that we provide on our campuses, to support a more agile way of working while making effective use of the space we have. The University will aim to facilitate remote working by, for example, moving from a desktop to a laptop first approach over time and by ensuring employees are trained to use the most appropriate software e.g. Teams. Longer term, the University will look to reduce the size of the estate required for staff offices, with more shared use of office space and appropriate facilities such as spaces for private conversations within an open plan area and for joining virtual meetings.

7. The campus experience remains core to how we will ensure the best possible experience for our students and as such, the requirement for the majority of staff to be present and active on campus on a regular basis remains.
8. An important aspect of the student experience is to feel a sense of community through developing relationships of understanding, confidence and trust with their lecturers and other staff, through participation in face to face teaching and other events, access to in person support services and other physical facilities, as well as through impromptu activities and conversations and opportunities to socialise. Whilst some of these activities can be undertaken remotely, and some may even be enhanced by being accessed virtually, it is still considered that a real sense of community is best achieved through human contact and interaction between students and between students and staff. A sense of community is as valuable to staff as it is to students and that is best developed by people meeting regularly face to face on campus.
9. Wherever staff are working, it is important that everyone takes personal ownership for developing and maintaining connections. This is important within teams but also between teams and with students. Connectivity is a vital part of the experience our students expect from their time at university and many of our staff want, and facilitates collaboration, innovation and effectiveness. Irrespective of where work is undertaken, on campus or remotely, all staff have a responsibility to ensure they stay connected both with their immediate team, with their students, and the wider University. That includes providing contact details and being available for colleagues and students whether on or off campus.
10. The delivery of a high-quality student-centred teaching and learning experience, supported and supplemented by access to support services, is at the forefront of all University business. All work arrangements should best serve the needs of our students and wider community.
11. There is no “one size fits all” approach. Business needs must come first and individual staff preferences will be considered alongside these business and operational needs. Different working patterns will suit different teams, depending particularly on the extent of face to face services to students that the team is responsible for delivering.
12. In determining how business needs are best met in any given team, it will be necessary to balance the consequences of each individual’s preferences and choices, so that the team can still function effectively, with a fair distribution of roles and responsibilities across team members. No-one has a right to assert their individual preferences and priorities if the consequence is that other members of the team are put at a disadvantage, there is a lack of team connection or some team members face additional workload pressures, for example because they are picking up more than their fair share of cases where a student drops in for an informal chat because they need guidance or support.
13. It is not just about being able to complete the operational tasks and duties of the role remotely or on campus, it is also about the contribution that all colleagues make to the social functioning of the University, being available, and supporting each other and our students. For example, it would be expected that you come onto campus not only to undertake a task such as attend a meeting or deliver an academic session but to also use the opportunity to spend time on campus engaging with and being available to colleagues or students.

### **Agile Working Arrangements in Practice**

14. Given the importance of the student experience and engagement by both students and staff with campus life and culture, the presumption is that the great majority of staff will be present on campus for part of the working week.
15. Some staff will need to be present on campus for their entire working week, because the nature of their role means they can only carry it out on campus - for example, some roles in Estates. At the other end of the spectrum, there may be exceptional circumstances in which an individual requests full time remote working on the basis that they can successfully carry out their entire role remotely. Such requests would need to be in writing and considered on their merits by line managers, with the appropriate approval by the head of area and HR. Any such requests would be decided in line with business, team and role requirements.
16. The University will not require any member of staff to work remotely if they do not wish to.
17. For the great majority of staff, the nature of their role means that, if they wish to do so, they will be able to undertake a mix of on campus working, working from home or remotely from another location within the UK for some days of each week. How many days that is will depend on individual and team roles, and where they are best carried out to meet the University's business needs and to sustain and develop team cohesion. There is no universally applicable right number of days: this needs to be worked out within each team. Some colleagues have asked if the University could state an expectation. Based on experience to date, our presumption is that 3 days on campus and 2 days working from home could be an appropriate balance for many teams. But as noted above, the right balance will vary from team to team depending on circumstances.
18. Managers will need to discuss with their team and decide the appropriate balance of campus/office and home/remote working, taking account of business needs, and the effective functioning and wellbeing of the team, as well as preferences and circumstances of individual team members. That should include discussing whether it is best for all members of the team to be in the office on the same days each week, so that the team can use those days to undertake work which is best done together. The arrangements should be kept under regular review, with all members of the team able to have their say about the effects on team cohesion and performance as well as their own individual experience.

### **Contracts and Conditions of Employment**

19. The normal contractual place of work for all occasional or regular remote workers will be the University campus as specified in the contract of employment. Staff may be required to attend campus on any of their working days.
20. Academic staff terms and conditions of employment recognise that the presence of academic staff on campus is not necessarily required in order for them to fulfil the whole range of their duties. It is the role of academic line managers to determine, in the light of this framework and depending on each individual's workload allocations, the appropriate balance of on-campus and home/remote working in each case.
21. The University reserves the right to terminate non-contractual remote working agreements for business reasons at any time with reasonable notice.

22. The contractual “normal place of work” remains the University and all staff will be expected to meet the cost of travelling from their home to campus or claim the cost of travel to another location less the cost of travelling to campus. Further details of the University’s Travel expense policy can be found [here](#).
23. This framework takes account of its potential impact on protected characteristics. An equality impact assessment was completed in conjunction with the development of this framework and can be viewed on Staffnet: [EIA for Agile Working Framework](#)

### **Practices and Practicalities:**

24. Agile working arrangements presume that employees are able to work independently without close supervision and have agreed with their line manager their work objectives and deadlines. Employees should arrange regular reviews of the work undertaken to keep line managers informed of priorities and any relevant issues.
25. Agile working relies on effective communication within and between teams. This needs to be more intentional given that the potential for casual or ad hoc conversations may be reduced.. Effective communication is the responsibility of all parties: the team, managers and employees..
26. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that they:
- keep abreast of University strategies and activities
  - remain “visible” and “accessible”, letting others know when and where they are working and how they can be reached whether working on or off campus
  - are available during normal working hours on email, phone and MS Teams
  - keep their manager informed of priorities and other relevant issues
  - provide a mobile number for emergencies
  - use outlook calendars to show where they are on a given day
  - use email signature strips with contact details
  - use out of office messages explaining when they will next be available, and who to contact in the meantime
  - Inform students if in an academic or student support role of your availability to meet face to face versus on line so they have a choice.
27. For remote working arrangements, employees need to consider the equipment, furniture and other resources required to carry out their role effectively. It is the responsibility of employees working remotely to ensure that they have:
- reliable internet connection and phone signal to perform their role
  - access to an appropriately equipped working environment including appropriate IT equipment, desk, chair
  - installed MS Teams
  - other software requirements
  - anti-virus and security software that is maintained
  - operating system maintained and up to date.
28. Staff are responsible for ensuring that the same expectations, practices and assessments to ensure Health and Safety are applied in home and other off-campus working as apply to on-campus working.

This includes ensuring that home/remote working environments are safe and secure, adequate in terms of space, lighting, layout and conditions, appropriate to the nature of the work being conducted, and free from distractions.

29. Requirements for photocopying, printing, postage, files and storage should be discussed and agreed with the line manager. Any printing required for work should be undertaken in the office wherever possible.

### **Security and Data Protection**

30. Staff who work remotely will be responsible for ensuring that data relating to confidential University work and to individuals is stored securely and is not accessible to others. Electronic data should be password-protected.
31. Any disposal of confidential documents must be done through the University's arrangements.