Remote Working Pilot 2023/2024

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the basis on which eligible staff may avail of the facility to engage in a remote working arrangement on a pilot basis.

2.0 Introduction

The University has decided to extend the Remote Working pilot for another year. While certain benefits of remote working have been recognised, there still remains some unknowns regarding how we can provide an effective service provision and rich experience to both our student and staff community. DCU is not alone in this regard as the overall assessment regarding the effectiveness of remote working and how it can work in each organisation is still very much open for discussion. It is therefore prudent to continue the pilot, with some enhancements and review its effectiveness over the coming year.

Our new strategic plan - *Transformation for an Unscripted Future (link)* has a clear focus on enhancing both the student and staff experience of studying and working in DCU. The strategy design includes two pillars - *Pioneer a Transformative Student Experience* and *Value and Develop Our Staff Community which have the following objectives:*

1. Provide an enriching student experience, engagement opportunities, resources, supports, facilities and environment.

2. Enhance our staff culture, community and campus experience where staff & students connect & thrive.

This pilot policy is designed to take the above objectives into account and to combine the best of our on campus learning environment with the benefits of remote working, while continuing to deliver a high-quality education service and strengthen *Our DCU* community.

3.0 Policy Statement

The University is committed to promoting staff wellbeing and maintaining a healthy work-life balance for its staff community. The University also acknowledges the benefits of a remote working arrangement in certain appropriate circumstances.

The pilot is based upon four fundamental principles:

1. Ensuring the integrity and vibrancy of our DCU community and culture.
2. Ensuring the continuance of regular in person interactions across our DCU community.
3. Ensuring we continue to deliver a high-quality education experience, research impact and excellent service to our students, colleagues and other key stakeholders.
4. Ensuring the wellness of staff and promoting a balanced and healthy work-life.

4.0 Duration

This policy will operate on a pilot basis for a period of 12 months from 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024.

5.0 Scope

This pilot applies to all staff of the University, professional, library and technical grades. Academic colleagues already availing of existing remote working arrangements should refer to section 10.0 below.

The above collective is hereinafter referred to as "the University''. This policy does not apply to the DCU Commercial Group of Companies.

6.0 Principles

The principles of operation of this policy during the pilot are as follows:

- In line with the objectives of the University's Strategic Plan this pilot will operate with the aim to enhance our staff culture, community and campus experience where staff and students connect and thrive
- Any remote working arrangements will be reflective of the predominant on-campus working environment and the core University value of "*Student Focused.* Staff will be based on campus for the majority of their working week to ensure a sustained on campus engagement and experience
- Certain roles will not be suitable for remote working
- Staff are entitled to request remote working arrangement, but it is not a guaranteed right, it is a benefit
- Staff must be available to attend work on campus as and when required and set out by the University
- There is no entitlement to swap remote working arrangements with other staff members or to accrue remote working days if attendance on campus is required or if travelling on University business
- All other terms and conditions of employment are not affected

7.0 Role Suitability

Remote working will be facilitated where appropriate, but may not apply to certain roles or units, which are stakeholder facing or require daily on campus attendance in order to deliver on the full remit of the role. Roles which are not suitable for Remote Working Arrangements are determined by line management and Head of Unit.

Newly appointed staff may be required to work on site up to 5 days per week for an initial onboarding period. This will be determined by the line manager and communicated to the newly appointed staff member at the outset.

8.0 Remote Working Arrangement

Approval for a Remote Working Arrangement, up to 20% of the working week may be facilitated for the duration of the pilot. In addition, a working arrangement of up to 40% of the working week may be facilitated for periods up to 21 weeks per year.

Such weeks are determined by the Head of each unit in conjunction with HR and will take cognisance of the academic calendar, business needs and the service provision of the particular area.

The pilot acknowledges there may be some circumstances whereby staff will be required to be on campus on their designated remote working day determined by the University. Staff, subject to line manager approval, may request, in advance, to swap their designated day provided there is no disruption to service delivery. Please note the swapping of remote days may only be availed of on an irregular and exceptional basis.

9.0 Fair Application of Remote Working

There must be a fair distribution of how remote working is applied both in a Unit and across the University. Remote Working arrangements within a unit must be spread proportionally across the working week. It will not be acceptable for a large proportion of remote working arrangements to be on a Monday and/or Friday. To ensure a sustained campus presence it is essential that on campus facilities for both students and staff are sufficiently resourced at all times.

A specific day(s) each week or a day in a particular week might be excluded from remote working to facilitate Unit or Team weekly on campus staff meetings, attendance at workshops or other events.

10.0 Academic Grades

Our new strategic plan - *Transformation for an Unscripted Future (link)* has a clear focus on enhancing both the student and staff experience of studying and working in DCU.

DCU is primarily a campus based university. Remote working arrangements for academic staff will take into account the following principles regarding teaching, research and engagement with professional colleagues.

- Teaching which is approved to be campus based, must be delivered in-person, on campus. The mode of delivery of taught programmes is designed at programme level and is subject to University guidelines and approval processes in this regard. Timetables reflect the approved approach, and local or individual discretion cannot be applied.
- In line with established practice and expectations, Academic colleagues must be available on campus to meet students outside of scheduled teaching times to support learning and to fulfil tutor roles.
- Important and impactful conversations with students (such those on designated consultation days after results are published and those in which Programme Chairs advise students) are in person.

- The majority of an academic's activity relating to research student supervision and line management of research colleagues takes place in person.
- Academic staff are routinely available in person, for on campus engagement with professional and technical staff as well as with academic colleagues, i.e. they are present in the School outside of the above activities

Staff in academic grades who wish to avail of remote working will agree the proposed working arrangements with their respective Head of School in the first instance. Consideration for any such arrangement will take into account a number of factors including the needs of the School and Faculty, research (including supervision and line management), engagement and teaching requirements and other existing arrangements in operation.

Travel on university business creates a context of remote working which is distinct from that covered by this policy. Planning for such travel should however include putting arrangements in place which align with the above principles, and are approved by the Head of School.

Researchers will need to liaise with their Principal Investigator regarding remote work arrangements, any such arrangement should be in line with the general provisions of this policy.

The ultimate approval of all academic remote working arrangements within the Faculty will rest with the Executive Dean of Faculty.

11.0 Flexi

Staff availing of a remote working arrangement may be entitled to accrue or use flexi leave during the period of the arrangement. Should a staff member work a full day remotely it will be recorded as 7 hours in all instances for professional and library grades and 7 hours 15 minutes for technical grades.

Staff availing of both flexi leave and remote working should not clock in/out on a remote working day. Flexi is not accrued on a remote working day. In the instance a remote day is changed, the line manager will be required to manually adjust coretime to reflect the change.

Please note that it is not intended that these flexible start and finish times will become a shift pattern and therefore may only be availed of on an irregular and exceptional basis.

12.0 Availability & Rest Breaks

Staff availing of remote working must be available during normal hours of work. Staff should be available through phone, zoom calls and email. Staff must ensure their work landline is forwarded to their laptop (using the Avaya Workplace Softphone), mobile, or home landline.

Staff must ensure regular contracted working hours are maintained and ensure adequate rest breaks are taken in accordance with the Organisation of Working Time Act.

The 2021 Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) Code of Practice on the right to disconnect will apply to all employees undertaking a remote working arrangement.

13.0 Access to facilities

In order to avail of a Remote Working Arrangement an employee must be able to access:

- a satisfactory broadband connection capable of hosting video-based meetings
- university systems via the DCU Pulse Secure, Virtual Private Network (VPN) or equivalent secure IT network access mechanisms put in place by the University
- a suitable working environment
- any other facilities that are deemed necessary for the employee to fulfil their duties

14.0 Space Management and Allocation

As outlined in the *Space Management and Allocation policy* all office spaces and facilities are shared by the University. As desk and office space is at a premium across the university it may be a requirement for employees who are availing of remote working to operate in a shared space, or 'hot desking', basis during the period of the arrangement.

15.0 Employees on Part-time working arrangements

Eligible employees on part-time working arrangements may be considered for remote working on a pro rata basis where appropriate and possible.

16.0 Holidays or other University Closures

Where the University is closed for a bank holiday or another reason on a day when a staff member is due to be undertaking remote working that day cannot be transferred to another day in that week.

17.0 Applying for Remote Working

Employees in eligible roles may apply for remote working arrangements in line with the duration of this pilot.

17.1 Application Procedure

Employees who meet the eligibility criteria should discuss the proposed arrangement in the first instance with their Line Manager. As part of the application procedure the following information should be provided in the Application Form:

A. Proposed remote working location
B. Proposed start date for the remote working arrangement
C. Proposed days of the week to work remotely
D. If the employee made a previous request for remote working and the date of the most recent previous request
E. Employees must confirm that they have a suitable remote working environment and can meet all the obligations of their role.

17.2 Review of Application

The application for Remote Working will be reviewed by the relevant Line Manager, Head of Unit and HR. All applications will be reviewed in line with role suitability,

nature of the work, the ongoing effectiveness and normal performance expectations of roles and business needs. A response will be provided in writing to the staff member with 6 weeks of submission of the application

An agreed remote working arrangement will be reviewed on a regular basis. An arrangement may be terminated without notice should it be deemed to be not working effectively. The reason(s) for any such termination will be provided to the staff member.

17.3 Grounds for Refusal

In the event that an application for remote working is refused, the grounds for such a refusal will be communicated in writing to the applicant.

17.4 Appeal

The decision not to grant a remote working application or to cancel an existing arrangement may be appealed through the DCU Grievance policy.

18.0 Abuse

Should a staff member be deemed to have abused the remote working arrangement they may be subject to formal disciplinary action in line with *Statute No. 5 Suspension and Dismissal of Employees*.

19.0 Exclusions

Staff members who are in either formal or informal performance management processes may be excluded from remote working until such time it is deemed their performance has improved.

20.0 Health and Safety

Staff availing of the Remote Working facility should ensure that they have a suitable, safe working environment. To that end assistance is available from the DCU Health and Safety Office who can provide advice and guidance in relation to a safe working environment.

General Guidance for a safe working environment is available here:

As with working on campus, any incidents arising while working remotely should be reported as soon as possible to the University in the normal way.

21.0 Revenue Guidance

Guidance on claiming tax relief for utilities and broadband costs can be found on the Revenue website by searching 'Remotely working from home'. The information is currently available here.

22.0 University Policies and Procedures

All university policies and procedures must be adhered to when working remotely. In particular, staff members must be mindful of their Data Protection and Cyber-Security responsibilities.

23.0 Cancellation of Agreement

A remote working agreement can be cancelled at any time at the University's discretion, by providing at least two weeks' notice.

The agreement may also be ended by a staff member subject to mutual agreement with the relevant Line Manager. Notification of cancellation of the agreement should be forwarded to HR.

26.0 Assessment of Remote Working Pilot

The effectiveness of this pilot will be reviewed on an ongoing basis during the 12-month period of operation. Impact on productivity, the provision of service to students and employees and the effect on the integrity and vibrancy of *Our DCU* Community will be assessed. Following this assessment, the University will determine whether a remote working arrangement will continue in its present format or whether changes may be required.

27.0 Advice and Guidance - FAQs

Please refer to your HR Representative for advice and guidance on any aspect of this policy. Please also note that a comprehensive list of FAQs, which will be updated on a regular basis during the pilot can be found **here.**

28.0 Review

This pilot may be amended subject to the publication of the Workplace Relations Commission's (WRC) Code of Practice and any other relevant legislative changes.

Version Control

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