



# Remote Working Pilot

## Introduction

The COVID crisis brought out the best in the DCU Community, as we came together in a response which embodied the values we espouse – Student Focused, Ambitious Open, Collegial, and Collaborative. As President of DCU I would like to recognise this extraordinary achievement and thank everyone for their hard work, dedication, and commitment throughout the pandemic.

As we move to the new academic year there is a consensus that we must learn from the experience of the last years. And rather than resuming where we were, we ought to move forward in a way which reflects the insights and innovations of the past year. And while people speak of ‘building-back-better’, we are still at a point at which the ‘better’ remains unclear, it is certain that the needs of students and staff are clearer than ever.

It is in that spirit that we have developed this ‘Remote Working Pilot’. It is an attempt to explore how we can balance the desire for a hybrid future with the particular needs of a community like DCU, and within the provisions of the Government’s draft ‘Right to Request Remote Working Bill 2022’.

Universities are particular institutions, and as our designation as ‘essential’ during the crisis indicated, the nature of our ‘service’ necessitates a physical presence on campus. We are a community of learners, and what we do is relational and not transactional. Our emergency response to COVID allowed us to deliver the essentials, but a lot of what we consider the rounded ‘DCU experience’ was absent.

A vibrant campus life is an integral part of both the student and employee experience within a university. As we move forward, it is important for us to strike an appropriate balance and to create an effective presence to allow staff and students to interact and collaborate in person, to support learning, creativity and innovation. Finally, it is also important that we continue to promote an environment of wellbeing for all our students and employees by ensuring the appropriate balance between the on campus and remote working experience and current research would indicate that in person interaction is a key component in maintaining both physical and mental health.

This pilot policy is designed 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.

Professor Daire Keogh

President

## **1.0 Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to set out the basis on which eligible employees may avail of the facility to engage in a remote working arrangement on a pilot basis in accordance with the main provisions of the (Draft) Right to Request Remote Working Bill 2022.

## **2.0 Definition**

Remote Working is a form of organising and/or performing work, using information technology, in the context of an employment contract/relationship, where work, which could also be performed at the employer's premises, is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis.

## **3.0 Policy Statement**

The University is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and acknowledges and values the dedication and hard work that our colleagues undertake. The University also acknowledges the benefits of a remote working arrangement in certain appropriate circumstances.

The guidelines outlined in this policy are being provided to support employees and line managers. The policy is designed on four fundamental principles which cannot be compromised:

1. Ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of employees.
2. Ensuring we continue to deliver a high-quality education experience, research impact and excellent service to our students, colleagues and other key stakeholders.
3. Ensuring the integrity and vibrancy of our DCU community and culture.
4. Ensuring the continuance of regular in person interactions across the DCU community.

## **4.0 Duration**

This policy will operate on a pilot basis for a period of 12 months from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023.

## **5.0 Scope**

The policy will be applicable to employees of the University within eligible roles in professional, library and technical grades.

### **5.1 Scope – DCU Commercial Group**

This policy does not apply to the companies within the DCU commercial group of the University who may, where appropriate, have their own separate remote working arrangements.

### **5.2 Scope - Academic & Research Grades**

Employees 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. In respect of teaching, it is relevant that delivery mode (online or campus) is designed at a programme level and is subject to university guidelines and approval processes in this regard. The ultimate approval of all academic remote working arrangements within the Faculty will rest with the Executive Dean of Faculty.

Researchers will need to liaise with their Principal Investigator regarding remote work arrangements, any arrangement should not be out of line with the general provisions of this policy.

## **6.0 Principles of Operation**

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

### **6.1 Benefit**

Any remote working arrangement is a benefit and not an entitlement and therefore will be subject to the discretion of the University.

### **6.2 On Campus Working Environment**

The university is predominantly an on-campus working environment, which recognises and values *Our DCU Community*. Remote working arrangements will need to follow the principle that employees will spend the majority of their working week on campus.

### **6.3 Service Provision**

Any remote working arrangement cannot in any way adversely affect either the student or employee service provision. The majority of the service provided to both students and employees will be in person. There may be occasions where attendance is required onsite on a day when an employee would normally work remotely, or a greater proportion of onsite work is needed within a given week. Critical onsite activity and attendance expectations will be determined by the Line Manager, subject to the approval of the Head of Unit. Employees are expected to make themselves available to work onsite in such circumstances. As a consequence, Remote Working arrangements will not be possible in the following instances (this list is not exhaustive):

- during busy periods on campus, which may vary depending on the service provision of the unit
- where, due to annual leave or other cause of absence, the resources in the department are insufficient to meet service demands
- where there is a in the in person service provision requirement
- during delivery of on campus training courses
- if an important event, meeting or other department/University activity requires attendance on campus
- participating or conducting interviews
- orientation and onboarding
- any other activity the university may feel is critical to the service provision

Please note you will not be entitled to swap your day for any of the above reasons.

#### **6.4 Eligible Roles**

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. Ineligible roles will be determined by line management and HR during the application period and overall duration of the pilot.

#### **6.5 Remote working arrangement**

If eligibility criteria are met, a remote working arrangement of up to 20% per week may be facilitated during peak periods. During off-peak periods it may be possible in certain instances (and applicable business areas) to facilitate a remote working arrangement of up to 40%.

Peak and off-peak are determined by each unit in conjunction with HR and will take cognisance of the academic calendar, student needs and the service provision of the particular area. It is important to note that off peak in all units would be for a limited period in the year.

All remote working arrangements, including changes to the existing arrangement, will be subject to application.

#### **6.6 Fair Application of Remote Working and the Operational Model**

Any remote working arrangement must suit the operational model for the unit to ensure the service provision is delivered at the required level. As we are an on campus, working environment it is essential that on campus facilities are sufficiently staffed at all times. HR will assist unit line managers to ensure this is in place

There must be a fair distribution of how remote working is applied both in a unit and across the university. Remote Working arrangements 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.

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

There is not an 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.

#### **6.7 Assignment of measurable work**

All work assigned during remote working will need to be measurable so that levels of performance and the quality of service provision can be continued and will be monitored to assure so. Line Managers will be required to outline to their Head of Unit the work assigned to their team members and the effectiveness of the delivery of this work. This will in turn help determine the effectiveness of the pilot.

## 6.8 Hours of Work

Employees on remote working arrangements will normally be expected to be available for all normal business during standard business hours (for library and professional grades) i.e. Monday to Friday 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. & 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Subject to advance Line Manager approval, employees may be able to avail of flexible starting and finishing hours as outlined in the flexi-time policy i.e. start time between 8am-10am and finish time between 4pm to 7pm.

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

## 6.9 Availability

Employees availing of remote working must be available during normal hours of work as outlined in point 6.8 above. Employees should be available through phone and zoom calls and email. Employees must ensure their work landline is forwarded to their laptop (using the Avaya app), mobile, or home landline.

## 6.10 Access to facilities

In order to access the Remote Working Scheme 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

## 6.11 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.

## 6.12 Right to Disconnect

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

## 6.13 Flexi-leave

Employees enjoying the benefit of a remote working arrangement may be entitled to accrue or use flexi leave during the period of the arrangement. Should an employee 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.

Please note that there will be no facility for swapping your remote working day on flexi.

#### **6.14 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.

#### **6.15 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.

### **7.0 Applying for Remote Working**

Employees in eligible roles may apply for remote working arrangements on a 6-month basis. Applications will initially be considered for a remote working arrangement of up to 20% for a period of six months.

Should an employee wish to avail of a working arrangement of up to a maximum of 40% during agreed off peak periods, they will need to submit a separate application once the off-peak period has been determined by the unit.

Remote working arrangements will be for a maximum period of 6 months.

Any application for remote working will be assessed based on the business needs. 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 employee.

### **8.0 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 percentage, and timing, of remote working arrangement
- (d) if the employee made a previous request for remote working and the date of the most recent previous request
- (e) A self-assessment of the suitability of the proposed remote working locations regarding specific requirements for carrying out the job such as data protection and confidentiality, minimum levels of internet connectivity, health and safety including ergonomic suitability of proposed workspace and any equipment or furniture requirements.

Please click [here](#) for application guidelines for Line Managers and Employees.

### **8.1 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 eligibility criteria and business needs. A response will be provided in writing to the employee with 6 weeks of submission of the application

### **8.2 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 employee. Potential grounds for refusal are outlined in **Appendix 1**.

### **8.3 Appeal**

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

### **9.0 Abuse**

Should an employee 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*.

## **10. Exclusions**

Employees 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.

### **11.0 Health and Safety**

The health and safety of staff is paramount. 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. The Health and Safety Office is available to inspect your working environment (physically or by way of a zoom call) and offer any relevant guidance.

Staff should take reasonable care to ensure they have an appropriate working environment and do not place themselves or others at risk while availing of remote working.

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.

Whilst the University insurance programme is primarily designed for on campus activities, it holds appropriate insurance cover for staff working away from campus.

Any staff member who has concerns in relation to their health and safety while working remotely under this policy should raise their concerns, in the first instance, with their line manager who will take appropriate advice from the Health and Safety Office or HR as appropriate.

## **12.0 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](#):

## **13.0 University Policies and Procedures**

All university policies and procedures must be adhered to when working remotely. In particular, employees must be mindful of their [Data Protection](#) and [Cyber-Security](#) responsibilities.

## **14.0 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 an employee subject to mutual agreement with the relevant Line Manager. Notification of cancellation of the agreement should be forwarded to HR.

## **15.0 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.

## **16.0 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](#).

## Version Control

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## Appendix 1 – 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 employee. Potential grounds for refusal may include, but are not limited to the points outlined below. It should also be noted that these grounds are largely based on the (Draft) Right to Request Remote Working Bill 2022 and therefore may be subject to change once the actual legislation is enacted.

- particular business needs of the unit and/or university
- the nature of the work not allowing for the work to be done remotely;
- cannot reorganise work among existing staff;
- potential negative impact on quality;
- potential negative impact on performance;
- planned structural changes;
- burden of additional costs, taking into account the financial and other costs entailed and the scale and financial resources of the employer's business;
- concerns re the protection of business confidentiality or intellectual property;
- concerns re the suitability of the proposed workspace on health and safety grounds;
- concerns re the suitability of the proposed workspace on data protection grounds;
- concerns re the internet connectivity of the proposed remote working location;
- inordinate distance between the proposed remote location and on-site location;
- if the proposed remote working arrangement conflicts with the provisions of an applicable collective agreement;
- ongoing or recently concluded formal disciplinary processes.