

Back to Work Guidance & Planning

UW POLICIES, REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDANCE

The University of Washington (Seattle) is largely an on-campus institution. As referenced by the University of Washington leadership, a predominance of mission centric activities in teaching, research, and service are expected to be held either on campus or on one's worksite if off campus. In preparation for this transition, UW HR has provided information, tools and updated policies to help schools and operational units plan for and successfully return their teams to onsite work. SSW's approach to mostly in-person learning and operations will align and be in compliance with UW policies, requirements, and guidance as outlined here: <https://hr.uw.edu/returntowork/>

I. SSW BACK TO WORK GUIDING PRINCIPLES & CONSIDERATIONS

Regardless of one's status within the School of Social Work, the School of Social Work holds the following principles first and foremost when considering the launch of onsite teaching, research & service:

1. Safety is priority #1 for the SSW community- no exceptions;
2. Create an atmosphere where the needs of faculty, staff, and students are addressed so that all can thrive academically and professionally;
3. Accommodate employee work needs as best as possible that promote excellence, productivity and flexibility while being responsive to the communities they serve both internal and external to the School of Social Work.

The School of Social Work COVID-19 team and School Leadership recognize the benefit to having school-wide guiding principles, processes and procedures to help with return to the workplace planning, including employee telework options. Building on the University requirements and resources, the following is intended to establish common norms for all administrative, academic, and research units in the planning and implementation of our return to in-person operations for Fall Quarter. Along with UW policies and requirements, these SSW-specific guidelines, processes and procedures should be used by SSW supervisors for their return-to-the-workplace plans, including employee telework-agreements.

Safety is our priority

Return to in-person learning and operations plans must consider and adhere to current UW-issued COVID-19 prevention and safety guidelines. Given the dynamic nature of this pandemic, it is essential that we all are aware of and comply with the most current safety guidelines as provided here: <https://www.washington.edu/coronavirus/>. Additionally, SSW site specific plans on safety and protocols can be found on our local [COVID 19 site](#).

SSW Office Hours and On-Site Support

The School of Social Work building operating hours are M-F (7:30am – 6:00pm). While doors to public corridors close at 5pm, the SSW mailroom is open until 6pm to assist our community in both administrative and operational needs.

In developing plans for specific units, supervisors should ensure that their unit has available personnel on site to assist and provide service to students, community, and colleagues during normal operating hours. For reasons of service and personal safety, we strongly recommend that units coordinate together so that no staff member should be left alone in an office for extended periods of time.

SSW Facilities & Technology Needs:

The School of Social Work is responsible for providing both a workspace and appropriate technology for employees to perform their mission critical work. The UW work site (whether on campus or off campus office) is one's primary work location. The UW requires that units provide 1 primary workstation for this effort. With the possibility of hybrid arrangements, employees need to consider where that arrangement may be. SSW may be able to support augmentation of computer peripherals such as keyboards, mice, and monitors but actual computer hardware or office equipment will need to be housed in 1 location. Ideally employees will be able to use a school issued laptop; however, if that is not possible then further discussion with your supervisor, SSWIT and financial manager may be needed to ensure any telework arrangements can be carried out without issue.

SSW Meeting Structures

Meetings are an important vehicle to share information and build and maintain relationships, while providing a necessary business function for most units. Due to this, in-person meetings are highly encouraged. Those charged with leading a meeting should carefully consider the meeting objectives, the type of participation needed, and intended outcomes expected in determining the appropriate structure of whether one holds an in-person or virtual meeting or hybrid. SSW conferences are equipped to handle hybrid meetings; however, training of personnel will be needed to carry out the meeting successfully.

II. SSW TELEWORK GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND APPROVAL PROCESS AND PROCEDURES FOR FALL QUARTER 2021

To promote a consistent, fair and transparent way of making telework determinations, SSW recommends the following Telework Guiding Principles and Considerations and Telework Approval Process and Procedures for Autumn Quarter 2021

(1) SSW Telework Guiding Principles and Considerations

Whether the position or person is suitable for remote or hybrid work is based on the nature of the job duties, employee readiness for telework, department/unit readiness for telework. Supervisors and their department/unit leader are expected to consider requests from employees thoughtfully and not based on any one factor alone (cost savings, employee preference, etc.)

- **Mostly In-Person Work Arrangements**

- SSW expects employees to return to in-person work at least 2-3 days/week. Individually determined cases can be made to have telework arrangements for 4 days/week; however, telework agreements that are 100% remote (based on 100% FTE) will be an exceptional consideration by school leadership and will require the employee to provide a [disability accommodation](#) for the work arrangement. All telework arrangements must be mutually arranged and approved by the affected employee and supervisor for remote work that is 1-3 days/week. Additional approvals by SSWHR will be required for remote work at 4 days/week while 100% remote work will be approved by the Dean or her designee.

- **Flexibility - new arrangements not set in stone**
 - We should factor in transition time and know that adjustments and changes will need to be made, especially within the first quarter. For this reason, all new SSW telework agreements are entered into as a pilot for Fall Quarter and are required to be reviewed no later than January 31, 2022.

- **Seek Employee Input/Feedback**
 - There continue to be many unknowns as well as concerns and fears about getting to and being on campus. Supervisors are expected to initiate conversations with their staff and seek feedback and be responsive to their employees' needs. Supervisors are strongly encouraged to contact SSW HR for support resources and guidance.

- **Function determines flexibility**
 - Job functions determine the location that work is best performed and therefore some positions will have more flexible work options than others. Depending on the work, some positions may not be conducive to a telework arrangement. Requests from staff to work off-site for one or more days of the week should be evaluated first and foremost with reference to the unit's mission and the business needs that flow from that mission. For example, an instructional unit may have significantly less flexibility to approve remote work requests than would a research unit.

(2) SSW Telework Approval Process and Procedures for Autumn Quarter 2021

The following is based on the SSW Telework Guiding Principles outlined above as well as UW resources and guidance. Telework decisions and agreements will comply with UW policies and support the SSW mission and guiding principles.

SSW has established the following guidance and requirements for planning and implementation of telework agreements for Autumn Quarter 2021.

SSW Supervisor Planning

Over the summer/fall of 2021, SSW administration is planning for a return to mostly in-person instruction and operations after September 10, 2021. When developing plans and guidance that impact employees:

- SSW supervisors are expected to work with their SSW unit leaders who will in turn consult with SSWHR as needed to facilitate consistency with regard to determinations and approvals.
- SSW expects units to be familiar with and utilize the guidance, communication templates and other tools provided by UW HR (<https://hr.uw.edu/returntowork/>)

Employee Requests and Types of Telework Arrangements

SSW supervisors will work with direct reports to establish telework plans responsive to the revised telework [policy](#). Telework plans will be documented in telework agreements. The UW Telework Policy establishes three types of telework arrangements: occasional, hybrid and fully remote.

- In the case of occasional telework, no formal telework agreement is necessary. Occasional telework is sporadic and agreed to by supervisor and direct report.

- In the case of hybrid telework plan, a formal telework agreement is required. UW expects employees to return to mostly in-person work. Therefore, telework agreements of over two days remote work (based on 100% FTE) will require documented arrangements.
- Fully remote telework plans are rare and will be considered on a case-by-case basis as evidenced by approved disability accommodations from one's primary care physician.

Telework Agreements must be in place by early Fall quarter (1st week of October)

Approved telework arrangements should be documented in the relevant telework agreement document, all of which are available [here](#). For all current employees, any new/revised SSW telework agreement should be completed as soon as possible and have an end-date of no later than January 31, 2022. All telework agreements are subject to change with appropriate notice. After this initial trial period, any new or revised telework agreements will be reviewed no less than annually and should communicate they are subject to change after review and with appropriate notice.

SSW Approval Processes and Documentation

TELEWORK DESIGNATION	SSW APPROVAL PROCESS	REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION
OCCASIONAL		
Infrequent, Not Regularly Scheduled	Employee's direct supervisor.	Telework agreement not required, but written approval/documentation is required. Letter or email with employee and supervisor confirmation sent to SSWHR@uw.edu or your unit's HR manager will suffice
HYBRID		
Up to 60% Remote Work (2-3 days based on 100% FTE)	Employee's direct supervisor.	Telework agreement required with a review of the agreement no later than January 31, 2022. Signed Telework Agreement sent to SSWHR@uw.edu or your unit's HR manager
MOSTLY REMOTE/REMOTE		
More than 80% Remote Work (more than 3 days based on 100% FTE)	SSW leadership recommendation and SSW Dean or designee approval	Telework agreement required with a review of the agreement no later than January 31, 2022. Signed Telework Agreement sent to SSWHR@uw.edu or your unit's HR manager to then be forwarded to the appropriate designee for review and approval.

Additional SSW HR/UW HR Approvals

SSW telework plans that include the following may not be executed without prior consultation with SSWHR and SSW leadership (depending on unit):

- Supervisor-initiated hybrid or remote telework arrangements that include contract covered staff (Requires UW HR consultation/approval).
- Significant shifts of whole teams, programs or services to ongoing, fully remote operations. (Requires UW HR consultation/approval).

Determining Telework Eligibility

SSW supervisors should use UW HR policies, definitions, forms and resources as well as SSW guiding principles, process and procedures in working with their employees to evaluate their telework request. UW HR has also created guidance to consider for telework: <https://hr.uw.edu/returntowork/planning-for-fall-quarter-return/determining-eligibility-for-hybrid-or-remote-work/>

Characteristics of positions that DO NOT lend themselves to telework when considering telework:

- Job duties require access to specific personnel, onsite files, or specialized space/equipment/technology in order to effectively perform the job
- The position had regular in-person client/customer/student interaction pre-COVID which became less efficient or effective in a remote environment.
- Position's job duties require participation in onsite meetings or presentations.
- Telework relationship adds additional cost to the employer. For example, a remote telework arrangement should not typically result in the duplication of office equipment.
- Employee's continued telework negatively impacts team performance.

Characteristics of positions that DO lend themselves to telework:

- Job duties can be conducted outside of the worksite
- Teleworking does not affect the service quality or organizational operations
- Teleworking does not add additional cost to the employer.
- Teleworking does not negatively impact team performance.

Communicating Decisions

There may be circumstances in which a request for telework cannot be approved. In order to demonstrate transparency and consistency, it is important the denial is explained to the employee and is based upon policy, impact on job effectiveness, unit operations, and/or the employee's past performance.

Refer to SSWHR Situations that Fall Outside of UW Telework Agreement Policy

The following employee requests/situations fall outside of the UW telework policy and should be referred to SSW HR:

- Out-of-state or international remote work follows the process outlines in [remote work location and out-of-state work policy](#).

Contacts:

The following SSWHR staff can assist in answering the following questions:

HR policy: [Bethany Robinson](#), SSW HR Consultant
[Don Berg](#), SSW Academic HR Consultant
[Michelle Birdsall](#), SSW HR Consultant

Leave administration: [Andrea Wagner](#), SSW payroll
[Shirley Alcantara](#), SSW payroll

Overall HR policy: [Vicki Anderson-Elis](#), Assistant Dean of Finance & Administration