



Polasaí agus Nósanna Imeachta/Policies and Procedures

Code	QA180
Title	Hybrid Working Policy
Policy Owner	-
Date	15 December 2022
Approved By	-

Note: Recognising the development of national legislation with the integration of the principles of the 'Right to Request Remote Work Bill 2022' into the impending 'Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022', this policy is being introduced on a trial basis and will be reviewed annually to take account of national legislative and workplace developments and feedback from the pilot.

1.0 Purpose and Scope

The University is committed to embracing opportunities for hybrid working, to build a more dynamic, agile and responsive University, while sustaining strong standards of teaching, learning, research and high levels of productivity. The University believes that hybrid working can increase flexibility, improve health and wellbeing, and enhance work-life balance.

This policy provides a procedure for all staff employed by the University to apply for hybrid working arrangements, if they perform a role that does not already incorporate a hybrid type working arrangement. It also provides an opportunity to support the University values. We will continue to review this policy to ensure that it continues to support the University's strategic values of excellence, and sustainability. 'Hybrid working arrangements should lead to reduced commuting to campus, which supports the aim of the university to be net-zero greenhouse gas emissions as set out in QA205 Climate Action and Sustainability policy, and the objectives of the University Sustainability Strategy.

This policy will not override the principles of the University Sabbatical Leave policy. The policy does not supersede any requirement that may arise from time to time to travel, e.g. for University business, or to conferences. Where arrangements for hybrid type working were agreed and in place prior to March 2020, then such arrangements can remain in place provided they do not interfere with university business. These arrangements should be documented in the Hybrid Working policy form.

2.0 Policy Objectives

This policy is intended to impart a clear understanding of the expectations and responsibilities of all parties involved in hybrid working arrangements. The policy also enables employees considering hybrid working arrangements to understand how their request will be evaluated. A copy of this policy must be signed by the staff member to acknowledge that they have read and understood the details herein.

3.0 Key principles

The following key principles inform this policy and the approach of the University to hybrid working:

- Hybrid working arrangements must align with the business needs of our university;
- Senior management will encourage and facilitate hybrid working where practical;
- Hybrid working is part of our commitment to be an Employer of Choice;
- We are committed to transparency and consistency when dealing with requests for hybrid working;



- The health, safety, and wellbeing of our staff at all times is, and will remain, of paramount importance;
- Hybrid working will not compromise the University's commitment to excellence, in our teaching, research and professional support services;
- Hybrid working must not be used as an alternative for annual leave or sick leave;
- While hybrid working may have benefits for persons with caring responsibilities, any caring responsibilities must take place outside of working time;
- The hybrid working arrangement should ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times, and when working remotely it is at the space that is assessed for hybrid working, and not at any other location, unless agreed with your line manager.

4.0 Operating Principles

- The University is committed to improving the working lives of all staff and helping them to achieve a balance between the demands of their jobs and personal life. The University views hybrid working as a helpful and important tool to assist with achieving this goal.
- This policy seeks to establish a positive working environment which supports staff members' work-life balance without compromising delivery of the functions of the University and the specific school/unit where the employee works.
- There is no automatic right to hybrid working, and there may be circumstances when the University may not be able to accommodate an employee's request. However, the University will consider all formal applications and, if the application cannot be approved, will share the reasons for declining the request.
- If the employee considers that an application for hybrid working (or to cease hybrid working, or to vary their hybrid working option) has been unreasonably refused, they can raise the concern with their HR Business Partner/Senior HR Manager. If the employee still considers the refusal is unreasonable, they may raise a grievance in accordance with the University's Grievance Procedure.
- Situations may arise from time to time where the employee's job requires a temporary cessation of the hybrid working arrangement, and it is expected that the employee will co-operate, when necessary, with such requests to revert to a normal working pattern.
- Requests for hybrid working may be made for a short- or long-term basis, and the feasibility of the request will be reviewed; in all cases, the situation will be subject to a periodic review or as otherwise agreed with the individual.
- It may be the case that in some schools/units, hybrid working may be granted for a period of months only to ensure fairness, equity among team members and to meet business needs.
- Some schools/units may be in a position to facilitate higher volumes of hybrid working arrangement than others.
- Hybrid working can be reviewed, and possibly withdrawn if it is demonstrated that, e.g.:
 - o Performance of an individual member of staff suffers as a result;
 - o The effective and efficient operation of the team, school/unit is compromised;
 - o There is a demonstrable negative impact on the level of service provided
 - o The conditions of this policy are not adhered to by the employee.
- Hybrid working may be withdrawn from employees who abuse the arrangement. Such employees may also face disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Policy.
- Members of staff who have a hybrid working arrangement must clearly indicate and update their working pattern in their calendar.
- If the business or work of the University is interrupted for any reason, including without limitation to force majeure or industrial action, the University reserves the right to withdraw hybrid working arrangements in whole or in part through the service of not less than seven (7) calendar days' notice.



5.0 Definitions

The term remote work refers to the broad concept of an arrangement where an individual works at an alternative worksite to the employer's work premises (in most cases the employer's work premises will be the office).

The term hybrid working refers to working arrangements that involve a combination of working from the work premises and working remotely, based on an agreement between the staff member and the manager, and approved through the application process. The University will continue to be the primary workplace for all staff, and there will be a requirement to attend the office:

- on specific days each week agreed with the manager; and/or
- for particular periods to support the business of the University i.e. delivery of teaching, student registration; and/or
- an agreed percentage of days per week or month as agreed with the manager; and/or
- on days as and when required by the manager, for example for collaboration, meetings, training and key events. This will need to be discussed with the staff in advance of approving the hybrid working arrangement.

6.0 Types of Hybrid Working

There are a number of different types of Hybrid working arrangement covered by this Policy. Staff undertaking hybrid working must agree with their line manager an agreement covering which type of hybrid working is applicable so that expectations on office attendance are clear on all sides.

- **Minimal Hybrid Working** This applies to staff who work remotely to complete a specific task or on a regular basis but for a minor part of their working time. For a full time staff member, it is envisaged that this would not normally amount to more than 1 day per week on average working remotely. In these circumstances the staff member should retain their designated work location.
- **Substantial Hybrid Working** This applies to staff who work remotely to complete a specific task or on a regular basis between 2 and 3 days per week. For a full time staff member, it is envisaged that this would normally amount to no more than 3 days a week on average working remotely pro rata. It is recognised that needs differ in different areas and that different types of work can accommodate remote working differentially. Therefore, the decision on the number of days an employee can work remotely will be determined by the line manager in accordance with the needs of the unit. For those availing of substantial hybrid working, the UMT expectation is that the majority of staff would be attending on campus a minimum of 3 days per week. Where an application for a staff member to work remotely more than 2 days per week is recommended for approval by a line manager this must be approved by the relevant UMT member. The University will not provide a dedicated workstation at the office for those availing of substantial hybrid working but instead shared office access will be available.
- **Seasonal Hybrid Working** Many of the services that the University delivers require an on-campus presence. This may make hybrid working difficult to accommodate in some areas within the University, at particular times during the year. To support those areas the option of seasonal hybrid working is also an option. This will provide opportunity to have hybrid arrangements during periods where on campus business needs are reduced. With this type of arrangement, the manager of the service can advise of the dates when remote working will be available to staff. This will not be more than 2 days per week.
- **Remote Working for Business Continuity Purposes** It may be necessary for business continuity reasons, such as COVID-19, adverse weather conditions, transport strikes etc for staff to work remotely. Remote working arrangements should form part of each area's business continuity plans. Staff working remotely for business continuity purposes should be made aware that this is a temporary arrangement, which may be withdrawn by the University as circumstances change. In this category no application process will be required, given that such events are unlikely to be planned.



- 100% Remote Working At this time the University will not be facilitating staff to work remotely for the full 100% of their contract.

7.0 Eligibility Criteria

The policy is open to all employees. All employees across the University, and at any level of the organisation, may submit a request for hybrid working. An employee must have successfully completed 26 weeks' continuous service before they can submit a request for hybrid working. All the following criteria must be satisfied for any hybrid working arrangement to be approved, none of which may be excluded from consideration.

a) Business needs

Supporting business needs in order to deliver efficient, high-quality services is of paramount importance. Productivity standards and performance levels will not be compromised to facilitate hybrid working. We aim to strike the balance between striving to be more flexible, efficient and resilient by reimagining roles and facilitating hybrid working where practical, while enabling onsite interaction, collaboration and support as required to sustain high levels of productivity and performance at an individual, team and organisational level. The number of staff, and/or the percentage of time, approved to work on a hybrid basis may be limited based on the assessed impact on business needs.

The University will consider the impact of the hybrid working application on:

- the ability to meet the service needs of the University;

- the ability to meet the service needs of the Unit/Team;
- the ability to maintain the required level of service quality;
- team performance and team collaboration;
- operational issues, or other issues related to the University as a whole;
- general staff engagement;
- organisational costs; and
- limits to the number or percentage of staff with hybrid working arrangements.

b) Role suitability

While the University is committed to facilitating hybrid working where practical, not all roles will be suitable for hybrid working. A consideration of role suitability will include a consideration of:

- requirements to access particular technologies/equipment/data accessible only on-site.
- requirements for customer-facing service delivery at the employer premises;
- performance of tasks that have a high degree of manual work;
- performance of support tasks that must be provided on-site;
- performance of tasks that are more efficiently carried out on-site; and
- performance of tasks that have a high degree of team working, that cannot be completed on an individual level.

In line with the University's policy requirements and strategic approach to hybrid working, when assessing applications, managers should consider the need to facilitate collaboration, team-building and engagement with colleagues and other stakeholders, where it is more beneficial or appropriate to take place in-person at the University work premises.

Some positions by nature of the work will not be suitable for hybrid work arrangements. Many activities like setting up labs, maintaining equipment, operating machinery, working on the grounds, supervising activities on campus, providing catering services, provision of in – person support to students etc. cannot be done remotely.

If all, or some of your work can be undertaken, done, and delivered remotely, your role can be considered for hybrid working.

If all of your work must be delivered in person on campus, your role cannot be considered for hybrid working.



c) Staff member suitability

An assessment of individual suitability may include, but may not be limited to:

- demonstration of satisfactory performance (PMDS);
- satisfactory compliance with time and attendance policy and procedures;
- demonstration of delivery of results;
- in general, the staff member should not be the subject of an ongoing disciplinary process or have a live record of disciplinary action on file;
- Staff who are on probation may be considered for hybrid working, where hybrid working is appropriate taking into account the general criteria, and specific further factors relevant in the context of probationers. For example, a manager may require that a probationer attend the office during the probationary period:
 - to assist with adapting to their new role and work environment;
 - to facilitate ongoing engagement with managers, and with team members;
 - to facilitate team bonding and collaboration; or to facilitate face-to-face meetings and training where required; and/or or to assist with the assessment of the probationer's performance during the probationary period.

d) Designated workstation requirements

The employee should have a dedicated workspace where work material and equipment can be installed and stored.

The employee and their manager will work together to outline what is necessary for the employee to do his/her job. The University will provide equipment necessary for the employee to operate effectively remotely.

This may include:

- Laptop
- Mobile phone (where deemed necessary for the staff member's work)
- MS Office and Outlook

If any of the equipment used by the employee to perform his / her job function fails, they will be required to work from his / her office location until the equipment has been repaired or replaced.

Hybrid workers are expected to maintain the same standards of health and safety at the remote workplace as at the University. Employees remain subject at all times to the University's policies and procedures, regardless of their work location.

The University may conduct further health and safety audits from time to time to ensure health and safety standards are maintained. Hybrid workers must operate in accordance with the University's Safety Statement.

All parties must ensure that they comply with all relevant health and safety obligations. The staff member must:

- Complete the application, declaration and self-assessment form
- Identify a single designated remote workstation;
- Confirm the workstation is suitable and meets all health and safety requirements;
- Agree to and co-operate in the risk assessment of their workstation conducted by the University;
- Agree to make no subsequent changes to the workstation without authorisation from the University;
- Confirm that they are able to connect to a work computer via their own reliable broadband connection;
- Confirm that the workstation allows compliance with data security and applicable confidentiality standards.

Hybrid working outside of the Republic of Ireland will not be facilitated. Dedicated workstation, or office allocation is as set out above. This will be a matter for each unit to address locally.



The employee is required to take all reasonable steps to protect University property. The University bears the risk for loss or damage to its equipment and the employee does not need to cover these items via their personal household contents insurance. If equipment is damaged while on the employee's premises, it should be reported immediately to their Manager. Regarding property damage, the University will only be responsible for damage caused to property owned by the University that is in the employee's possession or control.

Intellectual Property, Business Conduct and Compliance

The requirement for the protection of the University's intellectual property will apply to the use of all materials taken to the remote work location.

Security, Confidentiality and Audit

Employees have a responsibility to ensure that:

- Individuals other than employees of the University do not have access to work-related PC and equipment, documents, papers and records at the remote working location.
- All documents and records relating to their work are kept safe and secure so as to protect the confidentiality attaching to them. To this end, they will comply with any policies or procedures that may be specified by the University for this purpose.
- All documents, papers and records whether on paper or PC, remain the property of the University. If their employment with the University ceases or the hybrid working arrangement ceases, all such records and all equipment must be returned to their manager.

8.0 Application

The University will facilitate access to hybrid working, where practical and in accordance with the stipulations and contexts outlined heretofore in this policy. All applications are subject to an evaluation process, based on eligibility criteria, which take into account the specific needs of the University, and the Unit the staff member is working in. Hybrid working is not an automatic entitlement, regardless of any previous remote working arrangement. A staff member may submit a hybrid working application for consideration no more than once every 12 months, unless their role and/or unit changes. Requests for hybrid working arrangements as a reasonable accommodation will not be through the application process in this policy. Such arrangements will be dealt with through QA155 Staff Guide to Disability in the Workplace Code.

The approval of any hybrid working arrangement is at the discretion of management, following the process outlined below.

8.1 Documentation

A staff member who wishes to apply for hybrid working arrangements should familiarise themselves with this policy, the eligibility criteria, Health and Safety Self-Assessment Form, Hybrid Working Application and Declaration Form.

8.2 Discussions with Manager/Head of Unit

The staff member should then discuss the possibility of hybrid working with their Manager, Head of Unit/Head of School to determine the suitability of a hybrid working arrangement, taking into account the eligibility criteria (i.e. business needs, role, individual and workstation suitability). The applicant and Manager, Head of Unit/Head of School may use the application form as a guide for those discussions.

The staff member may be given feedback by their Manager, Head of Unit/Head of School in relation to any areas where the eligibility criteria have not been met, giving the staff member the opportunity to rectify these areas before submitting their application.



If the staff member is the subject of any ongoing formal HR processes, such as disciplinary, performance, or absence management, the Manager, Head of Unit/Head of School must seek advice from the HR Unit before considering the suitability of a hybrid working arrangement.

8.3 Application Process

- The staff member should complete the Hybrid Working Application and Declaration Form to reflect the conversation with their Manager, Head of Unit/Head of School. These forms are then submitted to the immediate line manager/ Head of Unit/Head of School. All staff members must register on ESS to manage their time, leave and development programmes.
- The Line Manager/Head of Unit/Head of School will consider the application and makes a recommendation on whether they support, or do not support, the application, and will submit their recommendation to the UMT Member or nominee for review.
- The UMT member or nominee considers the application and recommendation of the manager and makes a decision whether to provisionally approve, or refuse, the application. That decision is confirmed to the staff member and the Line Manager/Head of Unit/Head of School. Any approval is provisional, pending the completion of the assessment by the Unit DSE assessor (following Self- Assessment) and the outcome of these assessment.
- The staff member completes the Self-Assessment Form. The staff member submits the Form to the Unit Safety Coordinator who refers the assessment to the Unit DSE Assessors for the formal assessment of the designated workstation. If risks are identified, the staff member has the opportunity to address these risks (e.g. through advice, equipment, etc).
- While the remote working arrangement may have commenced prior to this assessment, if the designated workstation cannot be improved to meet the health and safety requirements, the arrangement will be rescinded.
- If the designated workstation is deemed suitable after the full risk assessment, the first manager confirms formal approval.

The University will return a decision within a reasonable time period, and in any event within 12 weeks from the receipt of request. Where the University has completed the assessment process and any appeal has been heard, the employee will have to wait a period of 12 months from the final decision to submit another request, provided the employee remains in the same role. If an employee moves to a new role within the University, they may submit a fresh request.

An employee may withdraw a request for remote working in writing or be deemed to have withdrawn the request where they fail to provide additional documentation sought by the University, or fails to comply with an invitation from the University for a meeting or discussion of the request. Where an employee withdraws a request, another application can be submitted after 30 days from the date that the University confirms the withdrawal of the initial request.

8.4 Refusal

Where an application is refused, the manager(s) should ensure that the written decision contains sufficient detail to allow the staff member understand the reasons for refusal, the business ground(s) on which the refusal is based, and determine whether to seek a review. The request for a formal review must be submitted, in writing, within 10 working days of receipt of the decision to refuse the application.

The University may decline a request for remote working where satisfied, in its view, that the proposal requested is not suitable on business grounds. Business grounds include but are not limited to the following:

- a) the nature of the work not allowing for the work to be done remotely;



- b) cannot reorganise work among existing staff;
- c) potential negative impact on quality;
- d) potential negative impact on performance;
- e) planned structural changes;
- f) burden of additional costs, taking into account the financial and other costs entailed and the scale and financial resources of the employer's business;
- g) concerns re the protection of business confidentiality or intellectual property;
- h) concerns re the suitability of the proposed workspace on health and safety grounds;
- i) concerns re the suitability of the proposed workspace on data protection grounds;
- j) concerns re the internet connectivity of the proposed remote working location;
- k) inordinate distance between the proposed remote location and on-site location;
- l) if the proposed remote working arrangement conflicts with the provisions of an applicable collective agreement;
- m) ongoing or recently concluded formal disciplinary processes

9.0 Individual Review Process for Staff Members

Where the application is refused, the staff member has a right to request a review. The steps in the review process are set out below.

9.1 Informal Discussion

Before seeking a formal review, the staff member should have an informal discussion with their manager to discuss the reasons for refusal and to explore if there is an opportunity to resolve any issues identified. If the issues can be resolved, the manager can re-assess the application. If the issues cannot be resolved, the staff member can seek a formal review.

9.2 Formal Review

The staff member's request for a formal review should set out the grounds of the review. The review will focus on whether the application process was appropriate and in line with the Hybrid Working Policy. The review will be undertaken by a Review Officer, who was not involved in the original decision making process. All records relating to the application and original decision should be made available to the Review Officer. In general, the review will be a review of the file only. The Review Officer may, however, determine the process for the review, and has the discretion to determine, in a specific case, that a meeting with the staff member, or other parties, is appropriate.

9.3 Outcome of Formal Review

The decision of the Review Officer should be communicated in writing to the staff member, relevant Managers and HR. In general, this should occur within 10 working days of receipt of the formal request for a review. The Review Officer may:

- Affirm the decision to refuse the application; or
- Recommend that the original decision be reconsidered by the first manager and/or second manager, taking into account any issues identified by the Review Officer;
- Make other recommendations related to hybrid working, where appropriate.

While the main purpose of the review process is to deal with a request for review of the decision to refuse an application, the Review Officer has discretion to consider reviews of other cases where hybrid working arrangements are deemed inappropriate or unsuitable after a trial period, or as a



result of a change of circumstances. For the avoidance of doubt, the decision of the Review Officer is the final stage of the internal process.

10.0 Trial Period and Continuing Assessment of Suitability

Hybrid working arrangements are not guaranteed on a permanent basis. Rotating hybrid working opportunities among staff may be required in order to support staff mobility and career development.

A hybrid working arrangement may, in the first instance, be granted for a trial period (in general, between 3 and 6 months to allow for review). The trial period is an opportunity for the staff member and the manager to keep in regular contact, to evaluate the success, and ongoing suitability, of the arrangement.

After the trial period, the suitability of the arrangement should continue to be assessed, through regular feedback conversations. Where performance issues arise, the manager should discuss the issues with the staff member as soon as practical, and give them the opportunity to rectify the issue.

A record should be kept of such discussions and the agreed outcome. Performance issues will be dealt with in accordance with the University's PMDS Framework.

A formal review of the hybrid working arrangements should also take place as part of the PMDS process/or during the period of the trial. The manager will need to assess if the hybrid working arrangement continues to suit the business needs of the University.

Staff must be in a position to carry out all the responsibilities of their role when availing of hybrid working.

11.0 Termination of Agreement

Hybrid working arrangements may be terminated by the staff member, or by the University, on reasonable notice.

For example, a hybrid working arrangement may be terminated due to business needs, team mobility, poor performance, poor broadband connectivity, health and safety risks, or where other eligibility criteria are no longer met. Managers should discuss the proposal to terminate the hybrid working arrangement with the employee and confirm the decision in writing.

Alternatively, a staff member's circumstances may change, requiring them to return to working in an office-based environment. In most cases, reasonable notice will be given. In exceptional cases, shorter notice may be required.

12.0 Provision of Equipment

Staff members availing of hybrid working will be equipped with a laptop, keyboard, mouse, monitor. Printers will not be provided. To be considered for a hybrid working arrangement, employees must provide the appropriate work station (desk & chair) and location. All equipment provided is the property of the University and appropriate care should be taken when in possession of it. Any equipment provided must be returned on termination of the hybrid working arrangement, or when requested by the employer. The employee will be expected to ensure that workstation must meet the required health and safety standards at all times.

13.0 Expenses

Expenses will not be paid where a staff member makes changes to premises (such as a home office) to allow for remote working. Staff members availing of hybrid working arrangements may make claims directly from the Revenue Commissioners in respect of tax relief for certain costs when working from home. The application can be made at the end of the relevant tax year, in accordance with the relevant tax laws. Any claim made is solely a matter for the individual concerned. Further details on eWorking and tax are available at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/tax->



professionals/tdm/income-tax-capital-gainstax-corporation-tax/part-05/05-02-13.pdf. Travel and Subsistence will not be payable for attending the office during a hybrid working arrangement.

14.0 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

Obligations under the Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Acts 2005 - 2014, and associated regulations are of great importance when considering and implementing any hybrid working arrangement, whether at application stage, or on an ongoing basis. Employers have an obligation to provide a safe place of work, and safe systems of work. Staff members also have a personal responsibility to manage their own health, both physical and mental. All staff must comply fully with the obligations contained in the Acts, and Regulations.

The application process includes the obligation to complete a health and safety self-assessment form in relation to the physical remote workspace. Supports for psychological health and well-being are available to all staff, including through the Employee Assistance Scheme. Further details and forms available at <https://www.universityofgalway.ie/health-safety/lab-office-field-diving/officesafety/dsecomputerworkstationassessmentsafetyguidance-hybridworkingpolicy/safetyguidancehybridworkingpolicy/>.

15.0 Legal and HR Obligations

A staff member working on a hybrid working arrangement must continue to comply with all their obligations as a staff member, including all legislative obligations, and remain bound by all relevant organisational policies and procedures. This includes but not limited to Organisation of working time Act, GDPR, Data Compliance, University Policies & Procedures.

16.0 Terms and Conditions/Working Arrangements

In general, there should be no change to terms and conditions of employment as part of a hybrid working arrangement, save that the staff member will be allowed to work remotely on specific days. The manager should agree any other changes to working arrangements with the staff member, and record those arrangements on the application form. The manager should consult with their manager or HR if there are any concerns about changes to working arrangements.

17. Review of Policy/Arrangements

We will carry out regular reviews of this policy. The first review will take place within the first 12 months from when the policy is implemented. The review will consider the approach of the University to hybrid working arrangements to:

- ensure the arrangements are consistently meeting the business needs of the organisation;
- The policy is applied in an equitable and consistent manner across each area, in line with the provisions of the policy;
- There is no discrimination under the Employment Equality Acts, or other employment provisions;
- We are aware of the impact of arrangements on team productivity and performance and on the organisation in general; and
- Appropriate reporting on the number of staff members availing of hybrid working arrangements.

The review will engage the working group to ensure any review considers the key stakeholders.



Policy Appendices

- a) [Application Form](#)
- b) [Health and Safety Self-Assessment Form](#)
- c) [University Safety Statement](#)