

OUR PEOPLE PRACTICES /

HYBRID WORKING SCHEME:

Application Guide

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Hybrid Working Scheme (or HWS) has been established following a commitment made by the University through the Reward Strategy Collective Agreement reached in July 2020.
- 1.2. The HWS enables professional services staff on a UK contract of employment to apply to work from home, or another remote location, for one or two days per week.
- 1.3. The University appreciates the benefits of hybrid working (i.e. a blend of on campus and remote working) both to the organisation and to staff. It is recognised that giving staff more choice and control over their working arrangements strengthens the relationship of mutual trust, and can improve work-life balance and well-being for the individual. For the University the benefits include increased employee motivation, enhanced performance, staff retention and the ability to recruit staff from a broader pool. Longer-term benefits may also include the opportunity to consider how the University estate may be repurposed or improved.
- 1.4. The desire to promote greater choice and flexibility for staff must also be balanced with the needs of the University to deliver the high quality experience our students expect and deserve, part of which means ensuring we retain a vibrant campus atmosphere. The experience of the pandemic has shown that a hybrid way of working may generate some benefits for our students too – for example, easier access to staff such as personal tutors and programme leads, and the ability for virtual meetings can benefit students who may otherwise need to travel to campus to attend an appointment.
- 1.5. It must be recognised that hybrid working will not be operationally viable for all roles. Requirements may also vary throughout the year. Decisions about how and where work is done will need to be made locally, based on University-wide principles and a consistent process for considering applications. That process is set out in section five below.
- 1.6. It is also important to note that the context within which ongoing hybrid working arrangements need to be considered differs in significant respects from the experience of enforced remote working since March 2020 as a result of the global pandemic. Therefore, the fact that a role has been undertaken successfully on a remote basis during the pandemic is not a guarantee that it can continue to be undertaken on a hybrid basis. Significant contextual differences include the following.
 - 1.6.1. With students back on campus, service requirements will differ substantially.
 - 1.6.2. During the pandemic, the emergency situation meant that legal allowances were made in respect of the employer's duty of care regarding workstation

health & safety assessments, which will not apply once pandemic restrictions are lifted.

- 1.6.3. Many staff have successfully been able to work remotely using desktop PCs borrowed from the University, or their own personal computers, but this is not sustainable on a permanent basis.
- 1.6.4. During the pandemic, many staff were unavoidably trying to work while also caring for children/other dependants and/or home-schooling; and the University allowed staff in this situation considerable flexibility in terms of working hours and expected outputs. Hybrid working is not intended to replace the normal caring arrangements that staff would ordinarily have in place if they were working on campus, and staff will need to make suitable arrangements for dependant care.
- 1.7. This Application Guide :
 - 1.7.1. outlines the key issues that individuals should take into account when submitting an application for hybrid working; and
 - 1.7.2. explains the basis on which line managers in Divisions and Professional Services Directorates will consider and make decisions under the HWS.
- 1.8. It should be read in conjunction with the [Remote Working Policy](#).
- 1.9. The Hybrid Working Scheme is non-contractual and may be withdrawn, updated or amended at any time.

2. What is hybrid working?

- 2.1. The term “hybrid working” is used throughout this guide to refer specifically to the arrangement envisaged by this new scheme, whereby staff blend their time between working on campus and remote working. It supports colleagues to work in a way that provides them with greater flexibility - balancing the needs of the University, personal preferences and team cohesion.
- 2.2. Remote working is the practice of an individual performing all or part of their role from home or another suitable non-University workplace. Remote working is one of a number of forms of flexible working and may be practised on its own or in conjunction with other forms of flexible working outlined in the University’s Flexible Working Policy.
- 2.3. At times the terms “remote working” and “home working” may be used interchangeably within the University and to all intents and purposes they mean the same thing. However, it is recognised that, for some staff, their home may not be a suitable working environment. In these instances, staff will need to agree a remote working location that is fitting to the requirements of their role with their line manager. Examples could be a local co-working hub, a library or another residence.
- 2.4. For a hybrid working model to be successful, line managers and their team members need to adopt a spirit of mutual trust, flexibility and compromise; and to ensure that they discuss any issues openly.

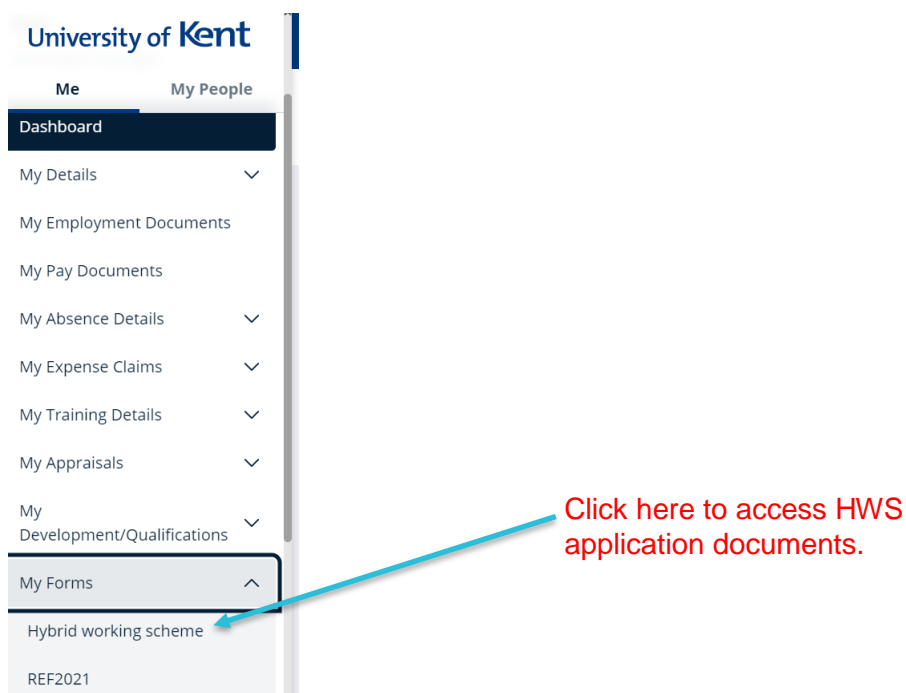
3. Hybrid Working Scheme eligibility and contractual status

- 3.1. All professional services staff on a UK contract of employment - permanent and fixed term, full-time and part-time - will be eligible to apply for the HWS.
- 3.2. Staff who are contracted to work on a minimum of four days per week can apply to work up to two days remotely. The HWS permits a maximum of one remote working day per week for staff who contractually work on fewer than four days. Note that the consideration here is the number of days on which you work, rather than the number of complete days your FTE amounts to. Therefore, for example, if you have a 0.7FTE contract and work three full days and one half day, you could apply to work remotely on two of those days, in line with the number of hours you are contracted to work on each of the particular days.
- 3.3. The acceptance of an application under the HWS will not constitute a contractual change and the contractual place of work will remain the University campus on which you are ordinarily based.
- 3.4. Should you wish to work remotely on a full-role and permanent basis, you should apply to do so through the Flexible Working Policy to effect this contractual change to become a permanent remote worker.
- 3.5. If you are requesting a set working pattern which changes your contractual hours of work, you should make a request through the Flexible Working Policy. As an example, requests to adjust working hours around childcare or other dependant care should be dealt with via the Flexible Working Policy.
- 3.6. Hybrid working is optional and no staff member can be compelled to work remotely.

4. Submitting an application

- 4.1. Line managers have been advised to discuss with their teams the extent to which hybrid working arrangements are likely to work operationally, in advance of inviting applications. This is in order to make local expectations and parameters clear from the outset. Where this discussion has taken place, you should try to ensure that your request fits within the operational constraints that have been shared locally.
- 4.2. At the launch of the scheme, and in line with each annual application cycle, HR will set a specific application window, giving a deadline for receipt of applications¹. This is to ensure managers can consider the requests of all team members in the rounds. This will enable open discussion around potential compromises, if necessary. Applications should not be submitted outside the application window, with the exception of new joiners or colleagues returning from extended absence.
- 4.3. You should complete the application documents via Staff Connect and submit it to your line manager within the application window that has been set. To access the application documents, please log on to Staff Connect and go to 'My Forms' in the left hand menu. Click on the link for the Hybrid Working Scheme (see image below). Please note that you will not be able to change the details after you have submitted your application so it is important that you consider your request carefully and take account the points in this guidance before doing so.

¹ The default application window may be varied by departmental managers if there is good reason to do so.



- 4.4. If you work across more than one contract, you will need to complete a separate application for each post that is affected by your request, to be considered by each of your line managers. Use the drop-down box under the “Current job title/post” field to select which post your application relates to. Please also state in the Additional Information section of the application form that you have made a hybrid working application in respect of another post and state the remote-working day you have requested for that post. Note that you are only eligible to apply for up to two remote-working days in total.
- 4.5. There are a number of important considerations for you to take into account when completing your application form. These are:
- 4.5.1. **Existing remote working agreements:** If you have an existing, locally agreed, informal arrangement to work remotely for part of your working week, you still need to make an application under the HWS and should provide brief details in your application. This should include when it was agreed, with whom it was agreed, which days you work remotely etc. If your arrangement has been in place and unchanged for at least two years prior to the first national lockdown in March 2020, you are in the same role and have been successfully working in this way, managers will be encouraged to allow this to continue.
- 4.5.2. **Remote working location:** If you propose to work at a location other than your home when working remotely, you will need to state in your application form whether this will be another residence or a public facility. Your line manager will need to be satisfied that appropriate levels of confidentiality can be maintained. For example, if your role involves regular confidential conversations, a location such as a public library is likely to be unsuitable. If you change your regular remote working location, you should let your line manager know and should also complete the health and safety checks (see 4.5.3 below) for the new location.

If working from home, you are responsible for assessing any insurance or other personal implications of working in your home, such as mortgage, utilities provision and any leasing or landlord agreements. Please see section six of the [Remote Working Policy](#).

For the reasons explained in the [Remote Working Policy](#), staff are expected to remain in the UK when working remotely under a hybrid arrangement.

- 4.5.3. **Health & Safety:** As part of the application process, you will need to complete a Remote Working/DSE Risk Assessment Checklist. This is linked to the application form on Staff Connect. Any health and safety concerns identified through this process must be discussed with your line manager. Managers will also need to follow a process for considering health and safety implications in each case, which is available [here](#). If the DSE assessment identifies that you need a different workstation set-up, you will need to address this before the hybrid working arrangement can begin. (See the section on equipment below.) If there are health and safety risks that cannot be mitigated, management have a responsibility to decline the application in order to fulfil the employer's duty of care with regard to health and safety.
- 4.5.4. **Equipment:** You will be responsible for obtaining the furniture and ancillary equipment you need to set up to work remotely – this will not be funded by the University. An exception will be made where there is a need for a reasonable adjustment to accommodate a disability under the terms of the Equality Act² (upon occupational health advice). The application form asks you to state whether you have been provided with specialist workstation equipment on campus to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate a disability under the terms of the Equality Act, as a result of an occupational health referral. If this applies, you will have been provided with a report or letter by occupational health indicating that your condition is covered by the Equality Act, and you will not need another assessment. Please upload a copy of that letter/report to Staff Connect with the application and list what equipment has been provided to you.

If you believe you have a disability covered by the Equality Act that requires provision of DSE equipment at your remote working location as an adjustment, but you have not discussed this with occupational health previously, you should complete the [Hybrid Working Self-Referral Form](#). An occupational health assessment will need to be arranged. Please note that it may take some time to arrange this and funding will be unavailable until this process has been completed.

It is important to note that not all specialist equipment provided by the University following an occupational health assessment or referral is provided as a result of a condition that amounts to a disability under the

² Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a “substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out day-to-day activities.” “Substantial” is defined by the Act as “more than minor or trivial”. An impairment is considered to have a long-term effect if:

- It has lasted for at least 12 months
- It is likely to last for at least 12 months, or
- It is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person.

Day-to-day activities are not defined in the Act, but in general they are things people do on a regular or daily basis, for example eating, washing, walking.

Equality Act. Some equipment may have been provided on campus based on best occupational health/ergonomic practice; but under the HWS equipment for remote working will only be funded where a condition is covered by the Equality Act.

If the Remote Working/DSE Risk Assessment identifies that you need a different chair/desk etc, you are advised to consult the OH advice on a home DSE set-up that is available on the [HWS webpages](#). This includes information on what to look out for and links to sources of equipment.

- 4.5.5. **IT equipment:** The default position is that staff working on a hybrid arrangement will use a University-issued laptop or other portable computer device. A few colleagues may have been provided with a University desktop computer for use during the Covid-enforced period of remote working that no longer needs to be returned. In the latter case, you will need to confirm with your manager that you can retain it for hybrid working purposes.

If neither of these apply, managers may consider a limited number of work-arounds, one of which might be to authorise continued use of a personal laptop/PC if you have been using this successfully during the Covid-enforced period of remote working. Such permission would only be granted as a temporary measure – until such time as a University laptop or other portable device can be procured or, in any event, no later than 1 January 2023. It would also be subject to you agreeing to comply with the rules in the [Work and study from home / off campus guide](#) to protect information and data security. Note that, if a personal device is used, the University will not be liable for replacing it, or components (e.g. speakers), that are subject to wear and tear.

- 4.5.6. **Data and information security:** Staff are responsible for maintaining safe and secure work practices, for example being data and cyber-security aware. Sensitive and confidential information can easily be compromised through unsafe working practices or insufficient home network security. Note that the [Data Protection \(GDPR\) training module](#) should be completed every two years. Before starting remote working you should check your training record on Staff Connect and complete the training if you have not done so in the last two years. Further guidance on these issues is available [here](#).
- 4.5.7. **Caring responsibilities:** Staff who have been approved to work remotely should not have primary caring responsibility for children/dependants during their hours of remote work. If applicable, you are therefore asked to confirm in the application form that you have arranged alternative care for your dependants while you are remote working. If there is a need for additional flexibility to manage caring responsibilities, this should be requested in the normal way through the Flexible Working Policy.

5. How your application will be considered

- 5.1. The decision on whether or not a hybrid working application can be approved rests with departmental management. Line managers will consider applications from within their team and will make the decision in principle as to whether or not the application can be approved. This decision will be subject to sign-off by the relevant director (or his/her nominee or nominated group) to ensure consistency across

teams within a division/directorate. The over-arching principle will be that managers should seek to facilitate hybrid working where operationally possible.

- 5.2. To ensure fairness and consistency, managers have been provided with guidance on the criteria and process to be followed, using an [Application Process Flowchart](#) and a [Managers' Checklist](#). Through this process, managers consider the requirements of the role, operational constraints, service requirements, the overall needs of the team and the individual circumstances of an applicant.
- 5.3. Whilst the most practicable hybrid working arrangement is likely to be a regular working pattern of 1 or 2 days a week on fixed days, managers are advised to consider whether other options might suit their operational requirements - in order fulfil the over-arching principle of facilitating hybrid working where operationally possible.
- 5.4. In some cases it may be that hybrid working will only be operationally viable outside of specified peak periods of activity. Depending on the role, it could be that hybrid working is operationally viable outside term-time but not during term-time, for example. Management will have discretion to preclude hybrid working during those specified periods, whilst being more flexible at other times.

If the hybrid working arrangement is approved

- 5.5. Colleagues should work the same number of hours on their remote working days as they are ordinarily contracted to do, but there may be flexibility in when work takes place. Managers have discretion to set expectations regarding working hours on remote working days with their teams. For example, managers may leave it open to team members to work when they like, subject to being available during certain core hours; or teams may use the opportunity to consider where service benefits could be achieved by agreeing flexibility in hours (e.g. to take account of international stakeholders and time differences).
- 5.6. It is important for staff to understand that a hybrid working arrangement is not a contractual right and that arrangements may need to be superseded by service or operational requirements. Managers may therefore require colleagues to alter hybrid working arrangements and come onto campus on an ad hoc basis to address a short-term need – for example to attend particular meetings or to cover absence. Managers should make every effort to give reasonable notice.
- 5.7. You should discuss how your hybrid working arrangement is working with your line manager on an informal basis periodically and should formally review the arrangement annually. The timing of the annual review will be in line with the scheme application review dates, which will be published on the HWS webpages. In addition, line managers may initiate a review (prior to the annual review) if service requirements change or if the make-up of the team changes. You may also initiate a review if your personal circumstances change.

Where a request cannot be accommodated

- 5.8. Colleagues should approach discussions regarding hybrid working in a spirit of trust and collaboration, recognising that they may need to compromise and that their requests will be considered in the context of the team and its service requirements.

- 5.9. If an application is declined, the manager should ensure that they clearly explain the operational reasons for doing so to you and should record those reasons clearly in the relevant section of the application documentation.
- 5.10. If it is not operationally viable to approve a hybrid working application under the scheme, or if you choose not to apply to the scheme, it is still open to managers to agree ad hoc requests to work remotely to accommodate individual circumstances. These decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis and it is best to ensure that this permission has been confirmed by email. An example might be agreeing an ad hoc remote working day to enable you to attend an appointment local to your home. This may also be suitable for staff where high levels of student-facing or customer-facing contact is ordinarily required, such that a fixed pattern of remote working is not viable; but where certain tasks (e.g. report-writing, inputting/analysing data, desk-based research) lend themselves to occasional remote working as they arise on an ad hoc basis.
- 5.11. In the event of any disagreement, managers should endeavour to resolve issues locally and without undue delay. You should be given the opportunity to put forward potential solutions to perceived barriers. Every effort should be made to reach a mutual agreement, but the manager will then make a decision in principle, which shall be considered by the departmental director.
- 5.12. If you believe that an unfair or incorrect process has been applied in reaching the department's decision, you may escalate the case. To do this, you should write to the HR Manager for your division or central service, setting out the basis on which you believe the process was unfair/incorrect. The case will be referred to the HWS Review Panel (see below). The panel will meet to consider appeals quarterly and you should be aware that there may therefore be a delay before you hear the outcome of your appeal. The panel's decision will be final.

6. Review

- 6.1. A central Review Panel will be established to take responsibility for conducting the annual review of the HWS and to consider appeals. The HWS Review Panel will consist of one professional services Director (acting as Chair), one Head of Department and a staff/TU representative from the JSNCC. A senior HR representative will attend in an advisory capacity.
- 6.2. The HWS Review Panel will review the progress of the HWS after 6 months of operation (i.e. in March 2022). At the first review of the scheme the HWS Review Panel will determine the timing for subsequent reviews, which will take place annually. Divisions and PSDs will be asked to provide progress reports, which will be shared with EG and JSNCC. A key indicator of success of the scheme will be whether 60% of applications from staff in roles classified as 'amber' or 'green' within each department have been approved.
- 6.3. This guidance will be reviewed as and when required in accordance with the University's operations.