OUR PEOPLE PRACTICES / HYBRID WORKING SCHEME FRAMEWORK: Guidance for Divisions and Professional Services Directorates

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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 normal caring arrangements that staff would ordinarily have in place if they were working on campus and this will need to be taken into account when considering requests.

1.7. This framework aims to:

1.7.1. set out parameters within which Divisions and Professional Services Directorates can take local decisions as appropriate to their business needs;

1.7.2. guide Divisions and Professional Services Directorates to manage the scheme to ensure fair and consistent application throughout the University; and

1.7.3. outline the way in which Divisions and Professional Services Directorates will be asked to report on the scheme’s operation, so monitoring its effectiveness.

1.8. All staff with line management responsibility within the University should familiarise themselves with this framework and with the updated Remote Working Policy. The Remote Working Policy is available [here](#).

1.9. This framework 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 framework 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 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 a staff member works, rather than the number of complete days their FTE amounts to. Therefore, for example, a colleague on a 0.7FTE contract who works three full days and one half day could apply to work remotely on two of those days, in line with the number of hours they 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 they are ordinarily based.

3.4. In rare cases staff may be contracted to work remotely on a full-role and permanent basis (“permanent remote workers”). Individuals in these roles would normally be lone workers - their role has little need for collaboration or face-to-face interaction with students or other staff, with only occasional working on campus. Under this contractual arrangement the staff member does not retain or require a desk on campus, but will attend campus for meetings as needed. A permanent remote worker’s contractual place of work will be their home address, unless agreed otherwise. Arrangements for permanent remote workers are outside the scope of this framework.

3.5. Should a staff member wish to work remotely on a full-role and permanent basis, they should apply to do so through the Flexible Working Policy to effect this contractual change. Similarly, permanent remote workers who wish to change to a hybrid arrangement or full-time working on campus should make a flexible working request.

3.6. If a staff member is requesting a set working pattern which changes their contractual hours of work, they 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.

3.7. Hybrid working is optional and no staff member can be compelled to work remotely unless, by contractual arrangement, they are permanent remote workers.

4. **Responsibilities**

**Managers**

4.1. Line managers will be responsible for considering applications from within their team and will make the decision in principle as to whether or not an application can be approved. The decision will then 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.

4.2. Line managers are advised to discuss with their teams the extent to which hybrid working arrangements are likely to work operationally, in advance of inviting
applications from the team. In this way, local expectations and parameters can be made clear at the outset.

4.3. To ensure fairness and consistency, managers should apply the criteria and follow the process set out in section five below. It is essential that managers make decisions equitably and consistently, having regard to equality considerations.

4.4. Line managers are responsible for ensuring that the procedures to safeguard health and safety, which are set out in section five below, are followed. This should be done through discussion with the staff member. If there are health and safety risks that cannot be mitigated, it is the responsibility of management to decline the application.

4.5. If an application is declined, the line manager should ensure that they clearly explain the operational reasons for doing so to the staff member and record this on the application documentation.

4.6. In operating the scheme, line managers should avoid ‘visibility bias’. They should seek to ensure that all colleagues have the same work and development opportunities regardless of whether they are working on or off campus; and that those on campus aren’t exclusively considered for urgent tasks.

**Individual staff members**

4.7. Staff should complete the application form via Staff Connect and submit it to their line manager within the application window that is stipulated. Timing is important to enable the line manager to consider the requests of all team members in the rounds. This will enable a more open discussion around potential compromises, if necessary.

4.8. As part of the application process, staff will also be required to complete a Remote Working/DSE Risk Assessment Checklist. Any health and safety concerns identified through this process must be discussed with the line manager and staff will be responsible for maintaining a safe and healthy working environment in their remote location.

4.9. 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 though unsafe working practices or insufficient home network security. Further guidance on these issues is available in the [Work and study from home / off campus guide](#).

**Human Resources & Organisational Development**

4.10. Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR) is responsible for overseeing the application of the HWS so as to ensure the procedure is applied transparently and consistently.

4.11. At the launch of the scheme, and in line with each annual application cycle, HR will set an application window, giving a deadline for receipt of applications¹. Applications should not be submitted outside the application window, with the exception of new joiners and colleagues returning from extended absence.

¹ The default application window may be varied by departmental managers if there is good reason to do so.
4.12. HR will conduct an equality impact assessment of the HWS and keep this under review, in order to ensure equality of experience throughout the University. It is hoped that a hybrid working model will help the University meet its equality and diversity objectives, as this model fosters greater choice and flexibility in ways of working. However, we want to understand any potential adverse impacts from this way of working so that we can continually adjust and improve our approaches as we learn.

4.13. HR will establish a central Review Panel, who will have responsibility for conducting the annual review of the HWS and for considering 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.

5. Considering applications

Process

5.1. Line managers should firstly apply the criteria set out in the Application Process Flowchart to classify roles as red, amber or green, based on the duties and accountabilities of the role.

5.2. For a hybrid working arrangement to be considered, there will need to be at least one whole day where the staff member will not need to undertake any of the “red list” activities set out in the flowchart. This is irrespective of whether the applicant is full or part-time. This may be achieved by reorganising activities where practicable; or by another team member covering the “red list” activities on a reciprocal arrangement.

5.3. Once it is established that a role is amber or green, managers should then work through the items on the HWS Applications Managers’ Checklist to consider operational constraints, service requirements, the overall needs of the team and the individual circumstances of the applicant. It is important that all of these factors are considered before an application is approved.

5.4. If a team member has an existing, locally agreed, informal arrangement to work remotely for part of the week, they will still need to make an application under the HWS. In this instance, the staff member should provide brief details in their application form. (This should include when the arrangement was agreed, with whom it was agreed, on which days they work remotely etc.) If a team member has been working successfully on an informal arrangement that has been in place and unchanged for at least two years prior to the first national lockdown in March 2020 and they are in the same role - the presumption should be that the arrangement is allowed to continue.

5.5. Applications will be submitted via Staff Connect and line managers will be able to run a report from Staff Connect summarising the details of the applications from within their team, making it easier to take an overview. The report should be exported into Excel for the line manager’s comments and decisions in principle to be recorded. The Excel report should then be forwarded to the director (or their nominee) for review and final sign-off. Once this has been communicated back to the line manager, they should then log the details in Staff Connect and submit the decision via the system. Please note that the decision should not be submitted via Staff Connect until final sign-off has been received, as the staff member will be able to view the management section of the form in Staff Connect and this should not happen prematurely.
Different hybrid working arrangements

5.6. 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 should also consider whether other options might suit their operational requirements - in order to help fulfil the over-arching principle of facilitating hybrid working where operationally possible. Managers have discretion to depart from a fixed working pattern, or to exceed two days a week, if this fits with business needs. However, the discretion to permit more than two days of remote working a week should only be exercised in exceptional circumstances and full-role remote working is not permitted under the scheme as this has legal implications. Such exceptions will be limited; examples are below. In each case, this should be subject to an overall average during the year that does not exceed two remote days per week.

5.6.1. If hybrid working is only viable for the role during certain periods of the year, managers may use their discretion to be flexible. An example of this may be where hybrid working is not viable during certain peak periods of activity. In this case, managers might agree that team members work wholly on campus during those peak periods, but work remotely more than two days a week outside of those periods if operationally viable to do so.

5.6.2. Arrangements whereby team members work remotely for more than two days in a week, on an occasional basis such as to undertake project work (even if a regular pattern of remote working is not viable). This may be appropriate where dedicated concentration and a need to avoid interruptions is important for a particular piece of work. This would need to be arranged in advance with the line manager.

5.7. If it is not operationally viable to approve a hybrid working application under the scheme, or if a staff member chooses 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 confirm the permission to do so by email. An example might be agreeing an ad hoc remote working day to enable the colleague to attend an appointment local to their 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.

5.8. 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). Any such informal variations to standard working hours are subject to the caveat below.

5.9. Staff who have been approved to work remotely should not have primary caring responsibility for children/dependants during those hours of remote work. 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.

5.10. It is worth noting that only a fixed pattern of remote working days can readily be factored into any desk-sharing schemes or similar plans regarding efficiency in office space.
5.11. For the reasons explained in the Remote Working Policy, staff are expected to remain in the UK when working remotely under a hybrid arrangement. In exceptional circumstances, staff may seek permission to work abroad for a limited period to accommodate particular circumstances. In this event HR advice should be obtained before any request is granted; and head of department approval will also be required.

5.12. Managers should be clear with staff 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. Every effort should be made to give reasonable notice.

**Availability of equipment**

5.13. If all requirements to facilitate hybrid working are satisfied, save for the availability of portable IT equipment, managers should consider if any work-arounds can be put in place to enable the application to be approved. Work-arounds might be:

5.13.1. Managers should check within the department whether there is any spare computer equipment that could be reallocated. This should include considering whether there are any instances of duplication where individuals may have a desktop and a laptop; as well as reviewing whether equipment from teaching rooms that is being upgraded could be re-purposed for staff.

5.13.2. It may be possible for a team to procure a laptop for shared use, which can be set up with the appropriate software that all team members may need and ‘loaned’ out to colleagues by rota on their designated remote working days.

5.13.3. If a team member has been working successfully with their personal laptop/PC during the covid-enforced period of remote working, managers have discretion to authorised continued use of that personal equipment 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. Such authorisation must be subject to the staff member agreeing to comply with the rules in the [Work and study from home / off campus guide](#) to protect information and data security. Note that in this instance the University will not be liable for replacing personal computers or their components (e.g. speakers) that are subject to wear and tear.

5.13.4. If the limiting factor is the availability of a separate monitor for remote use, the team may wish to explore arrangements to reduce the use of dual screens on campus to release monitors to enable more colleagues to work remotely. Note that certain roles have an absolute requirement for two screens in order to work efficiently, and such arrangements should not be adopted if productivity would be compromised.

5.14. If all requirements are met save for the availability of portable IT equipment and no work-arounds are available, the line manager should discuss with the applicant the timescale within which such equipment might become available. This would involve liaising with the divisional/departmental IT manager to consider when computer
equipment can be upgraded through the IT replacement cycle. The lack of available IT equipment may be the reason for declining a hybrid working application.

5.15. The University will provide staff with the furniture and ancillary computer equipment they need to conduct their role at their contractual place of work, which in the hybrid working arrangement remains the University campus. If there is spare furniture or ancillary equipment available within a department, management may authorise this to be loaned to staff for hybrid working purposes, but this will remain University property and must be immediately returned if needed for core business elsewhere. Staff will otherwise be responsible for obtaining the furniture and ancillary equipment they 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 Equality Act (upon occupational health advice). This is to ensure that staff with disabilities are not disadvantaged in accessing the scheme.

5.16. If a staff member has been provided with equipment to accommodate a disability on campus, they should provide a copy of the occupational health report/ correspondence confirming this with their application. A further occupational health assessment will be unnecessary. Staff who wish to make a request for equipment to be provided at their remote working location, where there hasn’t been a prior assessment by occupational health confirming a disability, will need to complete a HWS Self-Referral Form and an occupational health assessment will need to be arranged. Staff are advised that this may take some time to arrange and funding will be unavailable until the process is completed. The cost of equipment provided under the HWS as a reasonable adjustment to accommodate a disability is to be met through the departmental budget.

Health & Safety

5.17. All applicants will need to complete a Remote Working/DSE Risk Assessment Checklist. This is linked to the application form on Staff Connect and should be submitted with it. Managers should check that they have done this before approving an application. The process for considering health and safety implications should be followed. Managers should note that, the role of the Occupational Health team in this instance is to confirm whether the staff member’s condition amounts to a disability under the Equality Act, meaning that reasonable adjustments should be considered. It is not for the Occupational Health team to make decisions on whether or not an application should be approved on health and safety grounds. This is the responsibility of management.

Where a request cannot be accommodated

5.18. 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.

5.19. Where more staff within a team apply to take up hybrid working than the team is able to support operationally (either for financial or service delivery reasons), managers should:

5.19.1. Give priority to staff with a disability, where remote working is a reasonable adjustment which is of assistance in managing their role; and

5.19.2. Work with team members in an effort to reach a compromise – for example reducing the number of days each team member works remotely in order to spread the opportunity.
5.20. Where a request has to be declined, the manager should set out the reasons for this clearly in the relevant section of the application documentation.

5.21. In the event of any disagreement, managers should ensure that they endeavour to resolve issues locally and without undue delay. Team members 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.

5.22. If the applicant believes that an unfair or incorrect process has been applied in reaching the department's decision, they may escalate the case. In this instance, they will need to write to the HR Manager for their division or central service, setting out the basis on which they believe the process was unfair/incorrect. The case will be referred to the HWS Review Panel (see 4.13), who will meet to consider appeals quarterly. The panel’s decision will be final.

Changes to hybrid working arrangements

5.23. Managers and team members should discuss and periodically review how individual arrangements are working on an informal basis; and should formally review individual arrangements at least annually. The timing of the annual review should 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 if service requirements change or if the make-up of the team changes. Team members may also initiate a review if their personal circumstances change.

5.24. If the hybrid working arrangement appears to be failing, the manager should:

5.24.1 establish the facts and identify why it is failing;

5.24.2 notify the staff member(s) concerned

5.24.3 establish whether there are remedies to overcome the difficulties. If this is not possible, notice should be given of the withdrawal of the arrangement.

6. Managing the scheme

Physical space and the working environment

6.1. Remote working environments must be safe and secure. It is the line manager’s responsibility to decline an application or withdraw the remote working privilege if there is any doubt about this. Remote working environments should also be adequate in terms of space, lighting, layout, and conditions. They should be appropriate to the nature of the work being conducted and free of distractions.

6.2. Any decisions on hybrid working must take into account any applicable guidance on Covid-secure measures, such as social distancing, which may affect the capacity of office spaces.

6.3. As the practice of hybrid working expands, more opportunities will arise for departments, and the organisation as a whole, to consider how space across the University may be repurposed and improved. This will naturally also take into account the reorganisation of space that has taken place as a result of the Organising for Success organisational restructure. Management should consider how much space is available on campus for new teams, the optimum configuration
of working space, the extent to which desk-sharing is appropriate and the need to allow teams to work together cohesively.

6.4. Managers are encouraged to discuss and to seek to reach agreement within their teams on how to share space (e.g. collaboration spaces, ‘touchdown’ spaces, hot-desking, quiet zones).

Technology

6.5. A move to a hybrid way of working requires us to rethink our approach to how we meet with colleagues, teams, external contacts etc, using the technology that is available to us. Managers will need to review traditional practices around meetings, meeting culture and meeting etiquette. In a hybrid working model this presents a particular challenge because attendees may be a mixture of on-campus and remote, and it is important that all colleagues have an equal experience and an equal chance to participate. Departments/teams will need to make local decisions on the following, taking into account the nature of the meetings and the most effective way of achieving objectives in a hybrid model:

6.5.1. Which meetings should be via Microsoft Teams (even where some attendees are on campus);

6.5.2. Which meetings should be on campus and in person rather than via Microsoft Teams; and

6.5.3. Location of meetings when on campus and mixed attendance. The University is in the process of equipping more rooms for hybrid meetings; but until this is more widespread, teams may need to liaise with each other to balance use of facilities.

6.6. Managers are encouraged to continue to use Microsoft Teams for document sharing/collaboration and for team activity planning so that staff can work in a more agile way. Teams and other online platforms may also facilitate the digitisation of processes, which supports a hybrid working model.

6.7. Feedback from staff of their experience during the pandemic is that a significant proportion of colleagues find Microsoft Teams meetings draining. There can also be a risk of Microsoft Teams being over-used as a means of communication, to the extent it can feel intrusive to some colleagues. To support staff and managers reaching an appropriate balance, a Microsoft Teams Etiquette will be made available.

Culture

6.8. Managers at all levels have a key role to play in supporting the University to adapt to this more agile way of working. It is recognised that managers worked exceptionally hard during the Covid-enforced period of remote working to respond to the challenges presented by the emergency situation. Managers will be able to draw on these experiences to make the further adaptations needed for a hybrid working model and additional support will be made available for managers to facilitate this.

6.9. Departments should ensure that leaders and managers are leading by example on hybrid working and that there is also visibility of senior colleagues on campus. It is particularly important that, where the majority of a team or department are required
to work on campus, those colleagues feel supported by their line managers and that managers are readily accessible for guidance and supervision.

6.10. Open, honest conversations between managers and team members are crucial. Managers must be clear as to their expectations of colleagues when they are engaged in hybrid working - such as agreed outputs, availability for meetings and ensuring that team members are not working excessive hours. Team members should also feel empowered to contribute to decisions about how a hybrid model can work most effectively. It is advisable to reach a shared team agreement regarding how colleagues will work together in terms of visibility and responsiveness.

6.11. Managers should make sure consideration has been given to how the team will work well together – ‘team cohesion’ will be the responsibility of each manager. Some specific aspects to consider are:

6.11.1 Clear (and as far as possible synchronous) communication to all team members, irrespective of work location;

6.11.2 Providing opportunities for social interaction, which is inclusive of all colleagues;

6.11.3 Considering if there are times, such as occasional team meetings or training sessions, when it would be useful for whole teams to come together in person; and

6.11.4 Ensuring parity of access to work or development opportunities for all colleagues regardless of whether they are working on campus or remotely.

6.12. Recruiting managers for newly created roles are encouraged to consider how and where work activities should be carried out as part of the job design stage, so that the ideal ways of working for that role (whether on campus or hybrid) can be transparently represented in the job advert/applicant information.

6.13. The University will work to equip managers to manage their teams effectively where hybrid working means they are more dispersed, to ensure a high-performance culture is maintained and staff are able to thrive wherever they are working. It is recognised that managing staff in a hybrid working environment is different to a model where the team is based together on site at all times; and indeed different to a model where all team members are working remotely. Support will be made available through the training modules in the “Future of Work” suite of training on Staff Moodle.

7. Review

7.1. The University, through the HWS Review Panel (see paragraph 4.13) 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 template will be produced for this purpose. 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.
7.2. This guidance will be reviewed as and when required in accordance with the University’s operations.

8. **Additional resources**

8.1. Managers may find the following guides helpful when managing the HWS:

- **CIPD Line Manager Guide: Flexible Working Lessons from the Pandemic**
- **CIPD Guide: Developing Effective Virtual Teams**