Applying for the scheme

- **Who can apply for the scheme?**
  All professional services staff on UK contracts of employment - permanent and fixed term, full-time and part-time - will be eligible to apply for the scheme. This applies to all grades of staff.

- **Does the scheme apply to academic staff?**
  It is already common for academic staff to work in a way that blends time on campus with time working remotely. As is existing practice for academics, arrangements should be made locally in discussion with managers; and academic staff will not be required to submit an application under the HWS.

- **Does the scheme apply to staff in our European campuses?**
  The Hybrid Working Scheme complies with UK legislative and regulatory requirements. In Belgium a Telework Policy that meets the requirements of Belgian law has been issued to relevant staff. We are in the process of investigating what is needed to set up a similar scheme for colleagues in France.

- **How many days per week can I work remotely?**
  The standard policy is that staff who are contracted to work on a minimum of four days per week can apply to work up to two days per week remotely. Staff who are contracted to work on fewer than four days per week can apply to work up to one day per week remotely. However, from September 2022 onwards, there will be Director discretion regarding the permitted number of remote working days. Note that the standard maximums are based on 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.

- **In my working pattern, I do not work on the same number of days each week, how will this affect the number of remote working days I can apply for?**
  If you do not work on the same number of days each week, the number of remote working days you can apply for will be based on the average number of days you work. For example, if you have a 0.7FTE contract and alternate weeks so that you work four days in one week and three days in the next, your average is 3.5 days per week, meaning that on average you work on four days per week. You will be able to
apply to work remotely a maximum of two days in a week. Note that in this case it is likely that you will only be granted two remote-working days in the weeks where you work on four days; and in the weeks where you work on three days you would have one remote-working day. This will be at managers’ discretion, taking into account the needs of the business.

- **Why has a limit of two remote working days been set? I’d like to work from home more than this and I know several of my colleagues would too.**
  We understand that there are some staff who would like to work remotely more than two days per week and, from September 2022, the scheme gives Directors discretion to exceed this, subject to following guidelines. When the scheme was launched in summer 2021, the two day limit was set having regard to the need to strike a balance between greater flexibility for staff on the one hand and, on the other hand, retaining a vibrant campus that delivers the high quality experience our students expect and deserve.
  When the scheme was reviewed in 2022, the review panel carefully balanced the wishes of individual staff members regarding work-life balance, the views of line managers regarding what works on the ground from an operational/service delivery perspective and the views of directors/heads of service from a broader strategic perspective. In deciding to keep the standard policy as a maximum of two remote days per week, the panel was mindful of the fact that the 2022-23 academic year will see students return to campus fully for the first time since the pandemic. It would therefore have been premature to make a more radical change to arrangements ahead of this, but the Director discretion enables local adjustments to be made where there is a good business reason for doing so. In addition, the review panel committed to keep this under review.

- **How does this arrangement differ to a flexible working request?**
  A hybrid working arrangement under the HWS is a change to the location in which you work for part of your working week; whereas flexible working requests cover a much broader range of options. 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.
  In addition, a move to a hybrid working arrangement will not constitute a contractual change and, although it is not time-limited, it will be subject to annual review. The contractual place of work will also remain the University campus. Arrangements agreed following a flexible working request do result in a formal change to contract, which will be permanent unless otherwise specified at the start of the arrangement. If a formal flexible working agreement then needed to be changed, a further contractual change would need to be discussed and agreed.

- **I already work from home one day a week under an agreed flexible working arrangement. Can I apply to work an additional two days a week from home under the HWS?**
  No. The standard two day a week limit on remote working has been set partly to limit the logistical pressures on managers in terms of maintaining services. This cap will also apply where a pre-existing flexible working arrangement accounts for part (or all) of it. If you have a contractual flexible working agreement to work from home one day a week, you will be able to continue this irrespective of an application under the HWS. If you work on four or more days per week, then you may also apply under the HWS to work one additional day remotely. You should note your existing arrangement in the
“Additional Information” section of the application form, including which day of the week you already work remotely.

- **Will an arrangement agreed under the HWS be permanent?**
  The arrangements are intended to continue indefinitely. However, line managers will be asked to discuss and formally review the arrangement with you annually. 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.

- **I completed my application form and pressed submit but nothing happened. How do I know that it has been logged?**
  When you submit your form you should receive a pop-up in the top right hand side of the screen to say it has been submitted. If this does not happen, it may be that you have omitted one of the questions – all are mandatory except for the “Additional Information” section. If a question is not applicable, please put N/A. To double-check if your form has been recorded, log into Staff Connect, click “My Forms” from the left hand menu and then click “My Form History”. This page will display any forms that have been submitted and if they are pending authorisation. If there is no record there that it has been submitted, it is likely that there has been a problem. Please contact the team on hws@kent.ac.uk.

- **I made a mistake on my application form, can I change it or submit it again?**
  Whilst the Staff Connect system will not allow you to make changes to a form that has already been submitted, it will permit you to submit the application form more than once. Therefore if you wish to change some of the information, you may submit a second form. You are advised to state your reason for doing so in the Additional Information section. You should note that, when managers are reviewing applications, the latest form will be taken to supersede any earlier ones.

**Consideration of applications**

- **What will the application process be?**
  Staff will be asked to complete an application form via Staff Connect, in which they will need to specify details such as:
  - The day(s) on which you would ideally like to work remotely. (Note that managers will need to consider team requests in the rounds, taking into account business needs, and therefore it might not be possible to accommodate your ideal days.)
  - Whether you propose to work from your home address or at another location
  - What equipment you will be using
  - You will also need to confirm you understand and agree that you may be asked to change your remote working day if required for business reasons, either on an ad hoc basis (on occasion) or if your manager instigates a review of the arrangement

  Staff will also need to complete a risk assessment for health and safety purposes. The University has an obligation to ensure that workstations meet the requirements of the health and safety regulations and, accordingly, it can decline hybrid working requests where this cannot be achieved.
• Will I have to specify set days on which to work remotely and be restricted to those days?
Managers will need to ensure that there is sufficient staff presence on campus at any one time to meet service requirements. This will depend on the nature of the activity, and it is likely to be most practical to organise this based on staff working set days; however these agreements can be made locally.

• I do not wish to work in a hybrid way as envisaged by the scheme; however in the past my manager has occasionally agreed to me working remotely to focus on a particular task or project. Will this still be allowed?
Yes. Managers will still have discretion to agree ad hoc requests to work remotely to accommodate individual circumstances. This might arise where the team member has chosen not to apply to the HWS; or where it has not been operationally viable to approve a hybrid working application under the scheme but where certain tasks lend themselves to occasional remote working as they arise on an ad hoc basis. The individual circumstances that prompt an ad hoc remote working request could also be personal situations, such as to enable the team member to attend an appointment local to their home. These decisions should be made by managers on a case-by-case basis.

• Will management be able to restrict hybrid working to certain times of the year?
Yes. 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. Management will have discretion to preclude hybrid working during those specified periods, whilst being more flexible at other times.

• Do I have to work from my home address when I’m working remotely?
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 or another residence.

• Who makes the decision on whether or not my application is accepted?
The decision on whether or not a hybrid working application can be approved rests with departmental management. Line managers will reach decisions on applications from within their team, working within the parameters that are set out in guidance and any specific arrangements agreed within the directorate. In doing so they will need to take into account the nature of the role, the service requirements, availability of equipment and the overall needs of the team.

The over-arching principle will be that managers should seek to facilitate hybrid working where operationally possible.

• On what basis will the decision be made as to whether or not I can work remotely?
In order to aid consistency, the University has established a set of criteria, based on
role duties and accountabilities, which will lead to classifying roles as below. Managers will also need to take into account the availability of equipment, service requirements and the overall needs of the team.

- **Green roles** - duties are predominantly desk-based and can be carried out from any location without detriment to the outputs provided there is access to computer equipment, the internet and relevant software. These are likely to be approved subject to consideration by line managers of issues such as the availability of equipment, service requirements and the overall needs of the team.

- **Amber roles** - include a substantial proportion of face-to-face liaison with colleagues or students, potentially including hands-on support, or shared responsibility amongst a team for resolving client queries (e.g. helpdesk) – These are likely to require discussion/negotiation between the staff member and line manager to address any logistical constraints.

- **Red roles** - presence on campus is required 90-100% of the time. These are unlikely to be approved.

- **My role involves teaching delivery or support, can timetabling be arranged around my remote working days?**
  When considering applications, service delivery requirements will need to take priority. Hybrid working arrangements will not be used as teaching constraints for timetabling purposes. Therefore staff involved in teaching delivery or teaching support may be required to change their remote working days from time to time as needed to facilitate timetabling.

- **Can the arrangement be withdrawn by my manager, or can I change my mind?**
  A hybrid working arrangement is not a contractual change and the arrangement will need to be kept under regular review to ensure it remains operationally viable. Managers and team members are encouraged to maintain an open dialogue about how an arrangement is working and should formally review an arrangement at least annually. In addition, business reasons (such as a change in service requirements, team make-up or a demonstrable impact on productivity) may mean that a manager needs to initiate a review of the arrangement prior to the annual review. This could potentially result in the withdrawal of the hybrid working privilege.

A staff member may also request a review of the arrangement, prior to the annual review, if a change in personal circumstances means that they cannot continue their existing hybrid working arrangement.

- **What if I disagree with the department’s decision?**
  The purpose of the RAG classification of roles is to help ensure consistency across the University and to prevent line managers reaching decisions based purely on personal preference. In addition, the scheme includes an escalation process, so that a decision to turn down an application can be reviewed. If you believe an unfair or incorrect process has been applied in reaching the decision to turn down your hybrid working application, you should follow the process set out in the Application Guide.
Equipment to facilitate hybrid working

- **I do not have a University-issued laptop, does that mean my application will automatically be rejected?**
  No; however it may mean that it is more difficult to approve the application for logistical reasons. Divisions and PSDs will be encouraged to consider work-arounds in this case – for example procuring a loan laptop for the team, which staff could use on rota on their remote working days. Divisions and PSDs will also be asked to check within their division/directorate to ascertain whether there is any equipment that could be redistributed in order to facilitate hybrid working.

- **Can I use my personal computer to work remotely?**
  Staff who successfully used their own IT equipment to work remotely during the pandemic may be authorised to continue to do so by their division/directorate. This will be at the division/directorate’s discretion. 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 staff agreeing to comply with the applicable rules to protect information and data security.

- **What are the University’s plans to ensure more staff have access to portable computer equipment for remote working purposes going forward?**
  A standardised IT procurement policy will be introduced across divisions and PSDs. This will include the replacement of computers by portable devices in order to facilitate remote working in areas where it is operationally viable.

- **Can staff buy end of life equipment from the University to use at home to facilitate hybrid working?**
  This is not currently feasible. Due to the quantity of equipment the University procures we are classified as a producer of electrical waste and must dispose of or transfer end of life electronic items in accordance with WEEE regulations.

- **Will there be a central budget for desks, chairs etc to be provided to staff to work from home?**
  No. The University will provide staff with the equipment (such as a computer, desk, chair etc) they need conduct their role at their contractual place of work, which in the hybrid working arrangement remains the University campus. Unless individual arrangements are made permanent, H&S regulations do not require employers to provide an additional set of equipment for the employee’s home when staff are requesting to blend their working time between home and the workplace, as is the case under the HWS. In addition, in view of current financial constraints, it is not feasible for the University to set up a general fund for this purpose. The University has secured a discount on the cost of workstation equipment from an existing supplier – see the guidance on setting up a remote workstation elsewhere on the HWS webpages.

  However, in order to ensure that staff with disabilities are not disadvantaged in accessing the scheme, an exception to this will be where there is a need for a reasonable adjustment to accommodate a disability (upon occupational health advice).
• **Will academic staff have access to University equipment for remote working?**

Equipment for academic colleagues will be managed by their Division's IT team or lead. Some academics already have mobile/flexible equipment and requests for new equipment to support hybrid working would be managed by the relevant Divisional IT Support team. Equipment will be replaced as part of the standard equipment refresh cycle.

**General**

• **What is the effect on pay tax codes if I work from home two days a week?**

There will be no change to your tax code as a result.

• **Can I claim expenses and/or tax relief for costs I incur while working remotely on a hybrid working arrangement?**

Staff working on a hybrid arrangement will not be able to claim expenses or tax relief for costs such as increases to utility bills, a new broadband connection, business calls or increased costs for home insurance resulting from home working. Whilst such claims were permitted while staff were **required** to work remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic, and subject to demonstrating net loss, staff working on a hybrid arrangement are working remotely by choice.

Staff working on a hybrid arrangement are asked to work in an electronic manner wherever possible and avoid unnecessary printing or scanning. If paper copies are deemed essential, and where net costs can be demonstrated to exceed overall savings, a claim can be made at the rate per page that will be set from time to time.