Global Connected Hybrid Working Policy

June 2024

POLICY

HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY
POLICY TITLE

CONTENT

POLICY

1.

INTRODUCTION

The Connected Hybrid Working (CHW) Policy sets out the University's approach to working in a flexible way and provides clear guidelines and expectations for staff and managers. The policy seeks to ensure that University staff can work as effectively as possible when working at any of our global campus locations or when working remotely away from campus. The policy recognises that certain roles will include duties that can only be performed on University premises and highlights the importance of the university community and personal connections.

This Policy and accompanying Guiding Principles are directly aligned with Strategy 2025 and support our aspirations for building and sustaining flourishing communities within our globally connected university. The policy reinforces the position of Heriot-Watt as a **campus first organisation** and recognises that to realise our strategic intent and meet the expectations of our students, colleagues and partners, all staff will typically need to spend **more time working on campus than off**.

Heriot Watt University approach to CHW is designed to promote flexible and agile working principles whilst avoiding the need for any over formalisation of process or change to terms and conditions of employment. Approaches to Hybrid working should be discussed locally and agreed by managers ensuring the needs of the organisation are met whilst seeking to accommodate personal preferences within the team.

The vast majority of job roles are campus based and that will not change. With this in mind, managers should not agree to any permanent or fixed working patterns whereby certain days are always worked remotely.

However, it is recognised that staff will need to be able to plan their working weeks and hence local and individual norms should be agreed, and reasonable notice given where rotas or working locations need to change. Managers should not agree to a working pattern outwith the principles set out in this Policy without the express support of the relevant member of GOE or UE and having first taken advice from HR.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that the University operates as effectively and efficiently as possible and that working arrangements are appropriate across their teams to support a positive staff and student experience and that all services are delivered. Connected Hybrid working is intended to be an enabler of efficiency and sustainable working and ensuring clarity and transparency at a local level is essential to this working for all our community.

Colleagues with greater autonomy for self-managing or self-organising their schedules of work are also expected to work within the principles set out in this Policy and should ensure their line managers are aware of and supportive of the approach they are adopting.

The Policy and accompanying Guiding Principles are part of broader arrangements designed to support flexible working approaches which will enable colleagues to thrive within an ever-changing operating environment.

2.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy and accompanying Guiding Principles is to:
- underpin our position as a campus first organisation where **most staff will spend more time working on campus than off**.

- Support the need for a **Service led** approach which starts with the needs of the organisation, the colleagues we work with and our students.
- provide a robust and future ready foundation to ensure any adaptations to our working, learning and teaching practices are **values driven** and can be managed with agility.
- ensure individual staff, managers and teams are supported in identifying the most effective ways of working within the constancy of change and increasingly complex operating environments.
- align with other flexible working and health, safety and welfare procedures and policies where practicable.

3.
OBJECTIVES
The policy seeks to ensure that:
- our values are integral to all CHW arrangements and that the principles are applied to ensure consistency, fairness, and equality
- explicit norms at University and local levels are surfaced to reflect our current and future campus/service first requirements, and
- the effectiveness of CHW is continually monitored and evaluated using existing metrics and specific measures.
- Values the opportunity for staff to work in an agile and flexible approach which provides scope for a positive work life balance, including a degree of remote working but is always grounded in the University being a campus based organisation.

4.
SCOPE
The Policy applies to all University colleagues (being staff members on the University payroll).

The Policy covers all connected hybrid working arrangements, such as:
- establishment of explicit norms to inform local and individual agreements,
- the importance of flexibility, fairness and equality
- diversity, inclusion and wellbeing,
- safe and effective ways of working
- technology, equipment and
- use of physical spaces.

5.
KEY PRINCIPLES
Campus Based Working Arrangements
First and foremost, Heriot-Watt University is a **campus based organisation**. We recognise that to ensure provision of the most meaningful learning experiences for students and working experiences for staff requires abilities for balancing in person engagements, with remote, virtual or off campus work and teaching.

Some roles and activities can only be carried out on campus and to sustain and evolve our flourishing communities and broader University cultural aspirations requires colleagues to be **working more on campus than off**. Being service driven means that working patterns may vary between departments and across the academic year. For example, during semester time on campus working is likely to be the norm for student facing roles.

Explicit Norms

Norms will be established to reflect both the iterative nature of hybrid working and the idiosyncrasies of the University activities. Norms to support the key principles of campus first and service focussed will be surfaced at three levels, which include the following examples:

- University – Based on the principle of working more on campus than off, full-time staff, who have activities that can effectively be carried out remotely, may seek agreement with their manager to work remotely for up to two days per week(pro-rata for part-time staff). Such patterns may vary through the year depending on the needs of the service and to take other variables such as annual leave of colleagues, into consideration.
- Local – line managers in some areas will need to agree rotational scheduling of remote working to ensure appropriate campus-based service coverage across all days of the week and to enable some team meetings to occur face to face.
- Individual – Hybrid working is not just about where we work but also when and how, so colleagues may agree with their managers for example when and where they start and end the working day and, when they travel to and from campus.

The aforementioned norms are intended to create a consistent hybrid working approach. It is recognised that operational difference and service demands will lead to activities varying over time, which may necessitate exceptions to these norms.

Any consistent or regular working patterns at team or departmental level which deviate from the norms outlined in this policy must be agreed in advance with the relevant Director or Executive Dean.

Flexibility

Given the degree of flexibility that the University's connected hybrid working arrangements offer, there is a requirement for colleagues to be equally flexible.

This means that in meeting the specific needs of the service that colleagues may be required to be on campus on particular days at the request of the line manager, for example for meetings, teaching delivery or in-person training that is deemed best conducted in person.

Similarly, there may be circumstances in which colleagues are requested to work remotely, or another part of campus, or to work from another place as may reasonably be required, when they would otherwise expect to attend work on campus, for instance:

- to meet operational needs, *for example* if there are too many members of a particular team on campus on specific days; or
- external forces beyond the control of the University dictate.

In all such cases, staff will be given as much notice, support and ongoing communication, as possible.

It is recognised that some colleagues find remote working difficult due to a variety of circumstances, preferring to be on campus at all times. The University will not require any colleagues whose role and nature of duties may permit, to work in hybrid mode should they choose not to.

It is also recognised that tasks within certain roles may only be performed on campus.

Physical Space and Equipment

School and Directorate arrangements will vary in relation to workspaces for connected hybrid working. In most instances, workspaces equipped with docking stations are available.

In shared office areas 'hot desks' and 'touch down' areas are provided to allow for the rotating nature of colleagues working on and off campus.

Ensuring work stations are kept tidy as routine and desks are cleared at the end of every working day and securing relevant paperwork and personal belongings in areas provided is essential.

To enable smooth transitioning between physical (on campus) workspaces and personal (remote) workspaces, please refer to our Guiding Principles.

Safe, Effective and Flexible Ways of Working

Colleague safety is of paramount importance and whilst established safety arrangements continue, the following considerations should be taken into account.

Campus Working Health, Safety and Security Considerations

With significant increases in flexible working and growing potential for hot desking, colleagues need to ensure they follow all workplace safety guidance and are conversant with the following:

- University safeguarding arrangements
- Emergency evacuation and assembly points
- Records management and how to manage and store sensitive data
- Adjusting a workstation, seating etc.
- General housekeeping

For more specific information in this regard please refer to

Health and Safety - University-Health-and-Safety-Policy

Display Screen Equipment Procedures

Health and Safety SharePoint area

Home or Remote Working

Working hours

While working remotely, colleagues are expected to be available and working during the normal established hours of work, as agreed with their manager. However with flexibility and balance in mind, colleagues are encouraged to determine the working hours that work best for them and discuss and agree these with the line manager.

This could for example be to enable someone to fulfil caring responsibilities.

Colleagues must be mindful to avoid overworking. Creating boundaries to ensure "downtime" from work is essential. To maintain wellbeing, taking regular and adequate rest breaks is essential:

Please refer to our CHW SharePoint area Connected Hybrid Working for more specific guidance.

Sickness

When working remotely, you should not work if you are too unwell to do so. If you are sick and unable to work, please follow the University's Absence reporting procedures

and notify your line manager (by telephone or by message) as early as possible on the first day of absence (normally within one hour of notional starting time) to explain the reason for your absence and to give an estimate of its probable duration.

Note* Please refer to the range of supporting policies in Section 8 for specific information on support mechanisms for colleagues with particular needs or health support requirements.

Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing
This policy seeks to avoid a one size to fit all approach to CHW by ensuring all colleagues are treated fairly and within consistent principles and that no colleague misses out on opportunities or involvement because of where they might be working.

No colleague will be disadvantaged either when working on campus or working from home or hybrid working.

Wherever our colleagues are working they will have access to the same:
- **support** - including access to peers, line manager, coaching/mentoring and their representatives (for example, trade union)
- **opportunities** - for learning, development and career advancement.

Similarly colleagues who are working at home or remotely should be available to their manager and colleagues and students as if they were working on campus.

Task allocation will be managed carefully to ensure both fairness and equal workload balance regardless of where and when the work is taking place.

6.

LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY
<u>Directors or Executive Deans</u> will:
- Ensure the effectiveness of CHW is regularly monitored, evaluated and reviewed
- Reserve the right to adapt the University approach to CHW.
- Respond constructively to concerns about inconsistent application raised by staff in their area

<u>All University Managers will:</u>
- Ensure the principles are applied in their areas and that the campus first approach is delivered consistently
- Support and actively manage flexible and agile working arrangements that fit within these principles, ensuring service quality and efficiency is not negatively impacted whilst enabling staff to manage their work in a way that supports their preferences and needs where practicable.
- Engage their respective team(s) in surfacing 'team norms' relevant to local area and service needs. Whilst respecting individual personal information, ensure that arrangements across the team are transparent and fair in line with these principles.
- Engage in regular conversations with staff to discuss ongoing individual needs and how to best support these
- Seek advice from their own manager and/or HR in situations where they feel a requested work arrangement goes beyond the principles set out in this policy.
- Ensure any CHW team agreements are based on service requirements and fairness.
- Allocate tasks and responsibilities to ensure fairness and workload balance regardless of where and when colleagues are working

- Ensure any CHW team agreements in place are regularly monitored, reviewed annually and adapted to ensure CHW remains effective at individual/team/service level.
- Keep a local record of the arrangements agreed with individual staff and for teams, ensuring there is a common understanding whilst reserving the right to revise any individual/team arrangements(s) to ensure service needs can be met.

All Individual Employees will:
- Act in accordance with this policy and CHW Guidelines at all times
- Ensure they are on campus more than off and, irrespective of work location clearly available as necessary to deliver their role and the activities of their department.
- Engage in regular conversations with the line manager and relevant colleagues around CHW to agree the approach to be taken Seek agreement from the line manager to any ongoing change to the agreed approach.
- Ensure flexibility is applied and that any line manager decisions to adapt any agreements in place to ensure effective service delivery are respected.
- Comply with any local arrangements for recording work location on any particular day so that managers are able to contact staff as required and fulfil their responsibilities to provide services to staff and students.

7.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This Policy and related Guiding Principles will be reviewed every **five years** from the date of implementation, or earlier should circumstances dictate. Any amendments will be notified to employees through the normal communication channels and/or e-mail. This Policy and related Procedures will be maintained on the HR Hub.

8.

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND FURTHER REFERENCE
Policies
 Please visit the HR Policy Web Page to find the following:
- Flexible Working Policy
- Global, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Stress Awareness Policy
- Mental Health Policy
- Redeployment Ill Health Policy

Click here for the Health and Safety Policy

Further guidance may also be found on the Staff Intranet:
HR Hub
Health and Safety Staff Intranet

Procedures
CHW Guiding Principles

Further reference
https://heriotwatt.sharepoint.com/sites/hr-connectedhybridworking

- HR UK HR helpdesk
- HR Dubai hrdubai@hw.ac.uk
- HR Malaysia hr.my@hw.ac.uk

9.

POLICY VERSION AND HISTORY

Version No	Date of Approval	Approving Authority	Brief Description of Amendment
V. 1.0	01 June 2024	UE	New Policy developed from existing Guiding Principles introduced 2021

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