

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
PRESIDENT'S OFFICE**

Telecommuting Guidelines

March 29, 2005

Massachusetts State Policy

The Massachusetts State Policy states, “It is the policy of the Commonwealth to encourage, in appropriate circumstances, the creation of telecommuting opportunities for state employees. Telecommuting has been found to benefit society by reducing energy consumption, decreasing environmental pollution and reducing traffic congestion. Additionally, telecommuting has been found to benefit employers and employees by reducing office costs, saving commuting costs and allowing flexibility in work schedules.”

The University of Massachusetts, President’s Office and Central Administrative Services has adopted the Commonwealth’s Telecommuting Policy. The employee’s manager must approve his/her employee. **Telecommuting is a privilege that may be allowed for some, it is not a right given to all.**

Definition of Telecommuting

Telecommuting is a form of telework, which is the use of telecommunications technology to work from any remote location. In most instances, it is the act of working from home, thus eliminating travel to and from an office. There are very few jobs where it would be practical to telecommute five (5) days per week; we advocate the standard of one day per week, but senior management has the discretion to allow a second day for employees with extenuating circumstances and/or hardship. Some jobs have tasks that could be accomplished while telecommuting one to two (1-2) days per week or on an ad hoc, project-specific basis. These tasks may include, but are not limited to: auditing reports; batch work; calculating; computer programming; data entry; systems analysis; systems design; editing; planning; reading; research; spreadsheets; bookkeeping/budgeting; word processing and writing. Tasks that would not be suitable for telecommuting may include, but are not limited to: operating equipment; greeting visitors; etc.

Generally, jobs suitable for telecommuting will have defined tasks with clearly measurable results. Ultimately, whether or not management decides to utilize telecommuting as an option will depend on the operational needs of the Supervisor/Manager. The Supervisor/Manager has the right to terminate telecommuting for anyone with or without cause at any time.

It is the University’s intention that Supervisor/Manager specific policies allow that employee participation in telecommuting arrangements is voluntary in nature. Employees who have the option made available to them have the right to refuse to telecommute.

Limitations/Benefits of Telecommuting

Limitations of telecommuting can include:

- The potential for distractions at home
- Reduced exposure and interaction with coworkers
- Lack of supervisory control
- Difficulty in locating telecommuters during work hours
- Should not be a substitute for primary childcare or eldercare arrangements

Benefits of telecommuting can include:

- Increased productivity (including better time management and work quality)
- Improved employee morale (including reduced stress and a better work/family balance)
- Reduced overhead and operational expenses of the employer including real estate associated costs
- Improved employee retention and recruitment
- Reduced use of sick or personal time among employees

Telecommuting Program Criteria

The decision to have a University President's Office telecommuting program is at the sole discretion of the department's Executive Officer. Additionally, the decision to approve an individual telecommuting arrangement is also at the sole discretion of Management.

Departments that wish to develop a formal telecommuting program must address all of the following criteria in their program development:

- Develop a formal telecommuting policy that is reviewed and approved by the Human Resources Department.
- Designate a "Telecommuting Coordinator" and state what responsibilities he/she will hold.
- Consider potential telecommuting candidates based on their demonstrated ability to work independently with limited supervision.
- Determine what equipment, if any, the Supervisor/Manager will supply and which equipment the employee must supply.
- Determine what operational expenses, if any, the Supervisor/Manager will bear and what expenses the employee must bear.
- Provide training to telecommuters, supervisors, and/or coworkers regarding participation in a telecommuting program.
- Execute a "telecommuting agreement" with employees outlining the specific parameters of their telecommuting arrangement, including the method of recording and approving work time and a provision requiring prior authorization for the use of overtime (See sample contract).

- Submit a copy of each telecommuting agreement to the Human Resources Department.
- Notify Human Resources in writing of any changes to, or cancellation of, telecommuting arrangements.

Employees and Roles

Not all jobs are suitable for telecommuting. To assess whether telecommuting would fit the job, the supervisor needs to look at each position and carefully assess its benefits to the University, employee and the employee's customers. Can work and tasks be completed without undue hardship on co-workers and others, or compromising service delivery to customers?

- The employee must have a minimal performance rating of "meets standards" in the current and prior year.
- The employee must be in his or her current position for more than one year and be proficient in that position.
- The employee must have a designated work space that is safe and conducive to long periods of work.
- Employee must have high speed internet access.
- Employee must have access to a phone.
- Employee must sign-up for the 'follow me phone forwarding' feature.
- Distance from the office is not a limiting factor, but may serve to help prioritize requests to telecommute.
- Telecommuting is not a substitute for a babysitter, or any other non-work activities that may interfere with work responsibilities.
- The employee's home office is subject to periodic inspections with reasonable notice.
- The employee, supervisor must file a Telecommuting Agreement with the Human Resources Department.
- Hourly employees may not receive overtime pay without having secured permission to work overtime from their supervisors, in advance.

In terms of supervision, clear expectations and measurable tasks are essential components in considering whether or not telecommuting will be an option. Management must supervise telecommuting employees by developing a system of distributing work appropriate for telecommuting and designating tasks with measurable outputs that can ensure appropriate levels of employee accessibility, accountability and predictability.

The department's Executive Officer may discontinue a telecommuting arrangement at any time if continuation would not be productive, efficient or otherwise not in the best interest of the University, Supervisor/Manager, customers and/or co-workers. Loss of productivity or disruption/hardship to others will not be tolerated and can result in immediate loss of the telecommuting privilege for an employee.

Liability

The University will be liable for job-related accidents that occur in the employee's off-site workspace during the employee's established working hours. The University assumes no liability for injuries occurring in the employee's off-site workspace outside the agreed-upon work hours. The University will not be liable for injury to others in the employee's home or other off-site location during working hours.

In the case of an injury, it is the employees' responsibility to report the incident to the University as soon as circumstances permit.

Capital Costs

Many expenses are initial start-up costs incurred only as the program is established but there are ongoing expenses. The telecommuting employee will assume all costs. But if there are extraordinary phone expenses employees should consult with their manager.

Medical Hardships

Medical Hardships are not covered by this Guideline. Medical hardships and disabilities should be discussed individually between the employee, University management, and Human Resources.

I have read, understand and agree to follow the above guidelines:

Telecommuter	Date
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Manager	Date
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Department's Executive Signature UITs – Associate VP COO/CTO	Date
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Forward original documents to HR.