



University Local Telework Guidelines

Responsible Division: Finance and Administrative Services
Responsible Office: Office of Human Resources Management
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Next Scheduled Review:

Purpose:

This guidance is meant to supplement Alcorn State University Alternate Work Location Guidelines and intended to assist employees affected by naturally occurring or man-made disasters. These guidelines apply to University staff in positions classified as either administrative or professional. These guidelines are intended to address regular telework arrangements, not occasional instances, such as working from home for a day or two at a time due to unique or unforeseen circumstances with supervisory permission.

The ability to telework is a privilege and not an entitlement, and is granted at the discretion of the University. The determination of whether an employee is eligible to participate and will be approved for telework, will be made in accordance with these guidelines and the department's business needs.

The teleworking employee must comply with all University and departmental policies and procedures. The teleworking employee's compensation, benefits, work status, work responsibilities, and all other conditions of employment with Alcorn State University remain the same. The supervisor, in concurrence with the University Department Head or Vice President, the Director for Human Resources, and the President/IEO, is ultimately responsible for any decision to start or discontinue a telework arrangement. Telework arrangements should be approved and managed on a consistently and must not adversely affect departmental operations or productivity. **(Review of employees who are telecommuting must be done on a weekly basis.)**

DEFINITIONS

“Administrative” Administrators of the university are those persons whose positions require primary responsibility for management of the institution or one or more of its recognized departments. Administrative level personnel include vice presidents, the Secretary of the University, persons appointed by the President and some persons reporting directly to vice presidents. This category does not include persons holding faculty appointments.

“Professional” Professional level employees have responsibility for planning, organizing, directing, and attaining goals and objectives, and performing duties for the university under the organizational jurisdiction of Administrators.

“Telework” is an approved ongoing, regularly scheduled work arrangement that allows an employee to perform work during any part of the employee’s regular work hours at an approved alternative worksite such as an employee’s home or a telework center. This definition of telework includes what is sometimes referred to as working remotely. The definition of telework does not include any work done while on official travel or work that is approved on a case-by-case basis, where the hours worked remotely were not part of a previously approved, ongoing and regular telework schedule (i.e. for inclement weather, doctor appointment, or special work assignments).

Criteria

Requests for a regular or short-term telework arrangement may be initiated by an employee or a supervisor. Final approval for telework is at the discretion of the department head, with approval from Human Resources, the appropriate Vice President or designee, and President/IEO.

An approved Telework Agreement must be signed by the employee, the supervisor, Human Resources and one of the following: Vice President or Designee, President or Designee. The Telework Agreement will specify the terms and conditions of the employee's off-site work, as outlined in the guidelines. Agreements will be reviewed by Human Resources on a quarterly basis. The Telework Agreement will become part of the employee’s personnel record. A Telework Agreement is mandatory in order for an employee to participate in telework.

Telework is not to be used as a substitute for leave for personal needs or dependent care including, but not limited to, childcare or elder care. Eligibility for a telework arrangement includes satisfactory completion of applicable probationary periods, and absence of active disciplinary actions.

Schedules

The supervisor will agree on the number of days of telework allowed each week, and the daily work schedule the employee will maintain. Employees who are telecommuting are expected to establish work practices that make working remotely as seamless as possible to colleagues, students, and clients.

Salary, benefits, and job responsibilities will not change when participating in telework. All University policies and procedures will continue to apply, including but not limited to those relating to leave and working overtime. Teleworking employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to record all hours worked in a manner designated by the university. Hours worked in excess of those specified in the telework agreement will require the advance approval of the supervisor.

Supervisors may require employees to report to a central workplace as needed for work-related meetings or other events or may meet with employee in the alternate work location as needed to discuss work progress or other work related issues.

Work Area

The employee must establish an appropriate and safe work environment consistent with the guidelines outlined in the telework agreement. Teleworkers are expected to ensure that the expectations for information security are met and that University property is secured the way it is for employees working at the office. The university is not obligated to assume responsibility for operating costs, home maintenance (heating, electricity, water, security, insurance, and space, usage, etc.), or other costs incurred by employees in the use of their homes as alternate work locations. It should not be expected that the University would incur equipment costs in order to permit an employee to telework. Generally, the

University will be responsible for the service and maintenance of University-owned equipment and an individual teleworker will be responsible for the service and maintenance of his or her own equipment. The supervisor may make an on-site visit to the teleworker's remote work site during the employee's scheduled telework hours for the purposes of verifying that the employee is teleworking as scheduled, determining that the site is safe and free from hazards and to maintain, repair, inspect or retrieve University property.

Management and Supervision

Supervisors are responsible for managing the telework arrangement and work product with the employee, and must ensure that departmental needs are met and all work is accomplished at or above existing levels absent the telework arrangement. Supervisors shall maintain regular and necessary communications with the teleworker, and include the teleworker as appropriate in meetings and other interactions.

Evaluation and Discontinuation

All telework arrangements will be periodically assessed for their effectiveness. They will be reviewed for renewal on at least a quarterly basis. The University has the right to terminate a teleworking arrangement at any time at the discretion of the supervisor. Where practicable, employees will be given a 14-business day notice regarding the termination of the telework agreement, so all arrangements may be appropriately concluded.

RESPONSIBILITY

Departments are responsible for ensuring that employees follow the procedures in accordance with the policies and abide by the Telework Agreement. Supervisors must ensure that telecommuting decisions are made for appropriate, non-discriminatory reasons.

General Expectations and Conditions

Compliance with Policies. Employees must agree to comply with university rules, policies, practices and instructions and understand that violation of such may result in the termination of the telework arrangement and/or disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Employees who telework will be subject to the same policies as other employees, including policies relating to information security and data protection.

Use of Leave. Employees cannot use telework in place of sick leave, Family and Medical Leave, Workers' Compensation, or other types of leave.

However, the university may determine whether it is appropriate to offer telework as an opportunity for partial or full return to work based on the university's return-to-work policies following an injury or illness and the criteria normally applied to decisions regarding the approval of telework.

Liability. The university assumes no responsibility for injuries occurring in the employee's alternate work location outside the agreed upon work hours or for injuries that occur during working hours but do not arise out of and in the course of employment. The university also assumes no liability for damages to employee's real or personal property resulting from participation in the telework program.

Workers' compensation coverage is limited to designated work areas in the employee's homes or alternate work location. Employees agree to practice the same safety habits they would use in the university and to maintain safe conditions in their alternate work locations. Employees must follow normal procedures for reporting illness or injury.

Teleworking employees may use university-owned equipment only for legitimate university purposes and are responsible for protecting university-owned equipment from theft, damage and unauthorized use. The university will maintain service and repair university-owned equipment used in the normal course of employment. The university will stipulate who is responsible for transporting and installing equipment, and for returning it to the central workplace for repairs or service. The telework agreement may also permit employees to use their own equipment, provided the use of such equipment has been approved by the Chief Information Officer or designee.

When employees are authorized to use their own equipment, the university is not responsible for the cost, repair or service of the employee's personal equipment, unless otherwise expressly agreed to in advance in the telecommuting agreement.

The university must grant permission according to university procedures for employees to work on restricted-access information or material, as defined by the university, at alternate work locations. Telecommuting employees must agree to follow university-approved security procedures in order to ensure confidentiality and security of data.

Training for Managers and Supervisors. The university encourages the successful and appropriate use of telework within the university by providing training to supervisors and managers in effectively managing teleworking employees. The university has provided guidance on Managing Employee Performance Expectations.

Telework Agreement

Telework must be documented as approved through a telework agreement. The telework agreement establishes the specific conditions that apply to employees working in alternate locations. The telework agreement must be approved by the Department head, the Vice President or designee, the Office of Human Resources, and the President or designee.

A telework agreement typically will be for one year, with a renewable term, but an agreement may be made for a shorter term. Renewal is not guaranteed; the telework arrangement, employee performance and other circumstances will be considered by the supervisor in determining whether to renew the agreement.

Exceptions to the Telework Agreement Requirement. It is an accepted practice for teaching and research faculty to carry out their work with varied schedules on campus and at alternate locations. Normally, a formal telework agreement will not be required for faculty unless the normal work assignment is consistently at an alternate location (i.e. not the standard assigned office).

On occasion, the President or the President's designee(s) may declare a temporary suspension of any or all University operations due to an emergency that adversely affects University operations, public health, or the well-being and safety of employees and students. Events, which might require suspending operations, include, but are not limited to:

- Severe weather or natural disaster.
- Spread of a communicable disease.
- Fire or related hazard.
- Immediate threat to the safety of the campus community.
- Damage to or failure of Alcorn State University's infrastructure, equipment or mechanical systems.

When a decision to suspend operations has been made, information will be shared through the ASU Alert System and on the Alcorn State University Home Page.

Employees identified by their unit as performing an essential service are required to report to work during any period of declared suspended operation. Employees in positions that are not designated as essential do not report to work when operations are suspended. Alcorn State University will adhere to provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and Mississippi law with regard to pay during suspension of operations.


Modification or Termination of the Telework Agreement. The supervisor, in consultation with Human Resources, may modify or terminate the telework agreement early (before the end of the specified term) for performance concerns, changing operational needs, or any other non-discriminatory reason. The employee may also terminate the telework agreement at any time, unless it was a condition of employment. Any termination typically will be made, with at least 14-day advance notice.


Enforcement; Complaints, Grievances, or Appeals


An employee who disagrees with a denial of a request to telework or any other action relating to these guidelines is encouraged to discuss the concern with his or her supervisor. If the discussion with the supervisor does not resolve the issue, an employee may request an informal review of a telework decision by the Office of Human Resources. Telework decisions also may be grievable under existing grievance/complaint processes.

Approvals:


Dr. Wanda C. Fleming, MBA/SHRM-SCP
Chief Human Resources Officer

 3/25/2020
Dr. Cornelius Wooten
Senior Vice President for Finance, Administrative Services & Operations/Chief Financial Officer

 3/25/2020
Alfred L. Galtney, JD
Executive Director for Institutional Compliance/CCO

 3/26/2020
Dr. Felecia M. Nave, President/IEO