

VII-6.15 UMCES TELEWORK POLICY

I. POLICY STATEMENT

As a research-focused Maryland institution of higher education, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (“UMCES” or the “University”) is committed to providing unparalleled educational and research experiences and a working environment that fosters collaboration, inclusion, and equity. The University recognizes that many institutions of higher education are increasingly moving to a hybrid model of employment arrangements that includes Telework.

Telework is a viable work option that can foster productivity and alternative means of collaboration, allow for greater flexibility of University physical space, produce savings in the use of energy and fossil fuels, and significantly improve employee satisfaction, morale and retention. As such Telework can serve the interests of UMCES, its employees and significantly, the environment.

II. PURPOSE

The University has established this Telework policy and procedures to provide for alternative work arrangements for Eligible Employees to work at Remote Workplaces under circumstances that are identified and approved by both the employee and the University. Telework typically means using telecommunications and other technology to work at a location away from the Main Workplace.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Main Workplace. The employee’s usual and customary work site, generally at the University campus or a satellite location.
- B. Remote Workplace. A work site other than the Main Workplace, including a private home, a non-campus office space, a telework center, etc.
- C. Telework. Work by an Eligible Employee who is approved to work in a Remote Workplace. Telework does not include site visits or attendance at meetings away from the employee’s Main Workplace or Remote Workplace that are part of the employee’s regular job duties.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Any employee may request a hybrid schedule by notifying their supervisor in writing. Fully remote work is not permitted.
 - 1. If the employee is currently or has been successfully working remotely, this request can

be a simple statement of their desire to continue or resume that arrangement.

2. If the employee has not previously worked remotely, this request must include an explanation of why the employee believes their position to be eligible for telework (i.e. how assigned duties will be completed), what day(s) or time(s) the employee would like to telework, and what resources (if any) the employee would need to successfully transition to a Remote Workplace.

B. To approve the request:

1. A supervisor may approve the request of any employee who is currently or has been successfully working remotely. Copies of the employee's request and the subsequent supervisory approval will be filed with the lab/unit director or VP equivalent and UMCES Human Resources. The supervisor and the employee will likewise retain copies.
2. If the supervisor receives a request for telework from an employee who either has not, or has not successfully, teleworked in the past or who is in a position not previously considered eligible for telework, the supervisor must carefully consider the following:
 - a. The best interests of the University and the employee; and
 - b. The reasonable potential for the work duties associated with the position to be performed effectively outside the Main Workplace; and
 - c. The position's requirement for face-to-face contact with other employees, students, clients, and members of the public and whether those requirements can be replaced by telephone, virtual applications, and/or e-mail communication without loss of effectiveness or productivity; and
 - d. Whether the Eligible Employee's Telework arrangement would inequitably increase the workload of other employees; and
 - e. The Eligible Employee's performance overall.
3. If the supervisor believes the criteria outlined in section IV.B.2 above will be satisfied with the telework plan submitted by the employee and wishes to approve the request, the supervisor will file copies of both the employee request and the subsequent approval with the lab/unit director or VP equivalent and UMCES Human Resources. The supervisor and the employee will likewise retain copies.

- C. To disapprove an employee request, the employee's supervisor must respond in writing no later than 10 business days after receipt of the employee's request. This response must include the reason(s) for the disapproval. The supervisor shall not withhold approval due to concerns not directly tied to business necessity. The notice of disapproval will also include steps (if possible) for the employee to take in order to have their request be reconsidered at a date no more than twelve (12) weeks from the date of the disapproval notice.

- D. Supervisors who are unsure whether or not to approve an employee request are encouraged to discuss their concerns with the employee, as well as with the supervisor's own supervisor and/or UMCES HR. Once the request is resolved, either by modifications to or approval of the original request or by disapproval, copies of all pertinent documentation will be filed with the lab/unit director or VP equivalent and UMCES Human Resources. The supervisor and the employee will likewise retain copies.
- E. An approved telework request may be revised or rescinded by the supervisor if subsequent review of the agreement indicates a need to change course. Unless this need is deemed urgent by both the supervisor and HR Director, the employee shall be provided with fourteen (14) calendar days' notice of the revision or rescission of a signed Telework agreement. The employee may elect to adopt the modifications requested by their supervisor or termination of the Telework agreement prior to the fourteen-day period if they so desire.
- F. Telework may not be approved for a non-exempt employee unless the employee acknowledges that shift differentials are not available for Telework and any overtime must be approved by the employee's supervisor in advance. Eligible non-exempt employees are to record and report time worked in the same manner as if they were working at their Main Workplace.
- G. If an employee believes that their request for Telework approval has been denied, modified, or revoked for reasons that do not align with the University's dedication to excellence, equity, and collegiality, that employee may request a review of their application by the UMCES Human Resources.
- H. UMCES HR will meet with the employee and the employee's supervisor, as well as any other individual(s) with insight into the matter. After hearing from all parties UMCES HR will render a decision. Resolution of employee appeals shall take no longer than thirty (30) calendar days.

V. UMCES RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. UMCES will make available the normal IT infrastructure necessary for successful telework. This may include but is not limited to adequate equipment, secure network access, etc.
- B. UMCES reserves the right to institute additional means of supervision if deemed necessary by the teleworker's supervisor and approved by UMCES HR. These means may include but are not limited to site visits, the installation of monitoring software, mandatory check-ins with the teleworker's supervisor or team, etc.

VI. TELEWORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Teleworkers are expected to adhere to all requirements set forth in this Policy and the scheduling expectations set forth in the employee's executed Telework agreement.

- B. Teleworkers must comply with all UMCES and University System of Maryland (“USM”) policies as if the employee were working at the Main Workplace.
- C. Teleworkers are subject to the same conditions of employment, policies, and performance expectations that apply to employees who do not Telework.
- D. Remote access to UMCES confidential data or sensitive information must be through approved campus secure connections only. Teleworkers must consult with the Office of Information Technology for information on remote access and appropriate IT security requirements.
- E. Teleworkers are responsible for maintaining the security and confidentiality of UMCES documents and equipment that are in the possession of Teleworker anywhere other than the Main Workplace.
- F. Teleworkers who are issued UMCES equipment are required to comply with all rules applicable to the use and maintenance of UMCES property including [UMCES Computer Use Guidelines](#).
- G. Teleworkers are required to demonstrate and maintain reliable internet connectivity to meet the minimum standards as specified by UMCES CIO.

VII. LIABILITY FOR INJURIES

- A. The Teleworker or someone acting on the Teleworker’s behalf is required to immediately notify the employee’s supervisor of any accident or injury that occurs at the employee’s Remote Workplace.
- B. UMCES is not liable or otherwise responsible for damages to the Teleworker’s personal or real property while the employee is working at the Remote Workplace, except to the extent required by Maryland law.
- C. UMCES will follow its policies regarding reporting of injuries for employees injured while at work.

VIII. RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT

Questions or concerns regarding this policy and/or its applicability should be referred to the Human Resources Office.

Implemented by the Vice President for Administration and Finance March 7, 2022.