

# Working from Home (WFH) Arrangements



After UQ's extended lockdown experience, supervisors may receive questions from professional staff members about ongoing access to flexible work arrangements (FWA), specifically, entering into a regular working from home (WFH) arrangement.

The University recognises that WFH (referred to as **telecommuting in UQ policy and procedures**) is a type of FWA that, if implemented effectively, may result in a range of positive outcomes, including (but not limited to):

- improved productivity and operational outcomes
- enhanced work/life balance
- reduced absenteeism
- reduced environmental impact of commuting
- improved mental health
- increased job satisfaction, resulting in lower staff turnover and recruitment costs

Supervisors are encouraged to read UQ's comprehensive **Flexible Work Policy and Procedures**, especially Telecommuting Procedures before implementing enduring WFH arrangements and/or discussing options with individual staff members or their teams. Certain staff have a 'right to request' FWA under the Fair Work Act 2009.

WFH agreements may be approved for a period of up to 12 months, subject to review. Note: Academic staff do not require a formal approval to access WFH arrangements.

## Staff member considerations

1. Have I discussed or planned to discuss FWA/WFH with my Supervisor?
2. Is my role suitable to be performed on a FWA/WFH arrangement?
3. Do I have somewhere suitable to perform this work?
4. Do I have a 'right to request' under the Fair Work Act 2009?
5. Have I developed a viable WFH proposal?

## Application process

1. Formalise your request for FWA/WFH in writing (email, proposal).
2. Compile the:
  - **Telecommuting Agreement Form**
  - **Home Office Inspection Checklist**
  - **Equipment Being Taken to a Private Residence Advice Form**
3. Send the application to your supervisor.

## Supervisor considerations

1. Will WFH be offered on an individual basis or as part of a more systematic, team-based approach?
2. Do certain staff members have the 'right to request' under the Fair Work Act 2009?
3. Can this role, or aspects of the role, be performed on a FWA/WFH arrangement?
4. Has this staff member previously demonstrated they can work independently, in a 'high trust' context?
5. Will this arrangement meet the team's operational requirements?
6. How will you effectively monitor performance?
7. How will you retain staff engagement/culture for the team?
8. How will you support the staff member's wellbeing while they are in a FWA/WFH arrangement?

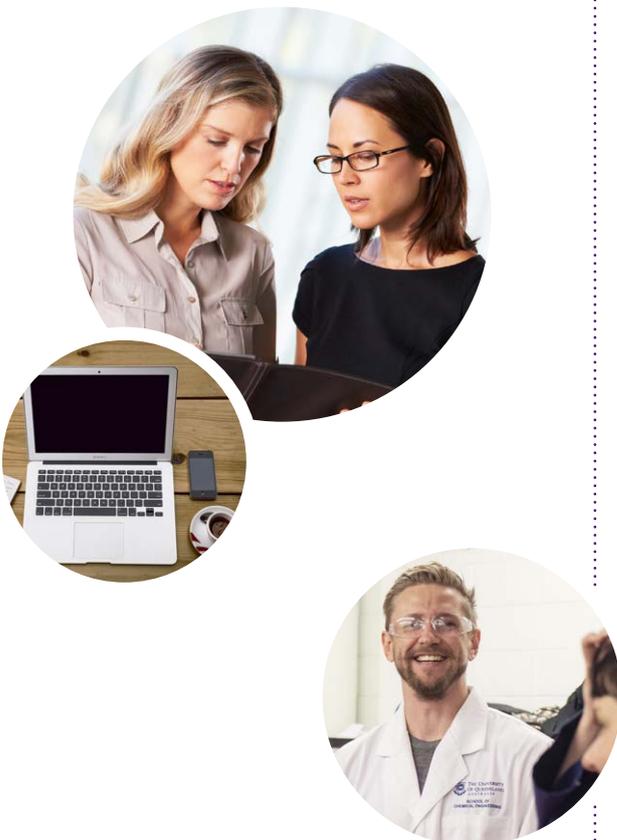
If WFH is not achievable, explain your reasons to the staff member and discuss other options for meeting their flexibility requirements. If unsure, consider a trial period.

1. Review:
  - **Telecommuting Agreement Form**
  - **Home Office Inspection Checklist**
  - **Equipment Being Taken to a Private Residence Advice Form**
2. Progress the application to the Authorised Officer, with your recommendation to approval/not approve.
3. Forward to the School/Centre Manager for final approval, as applicable.
4. Human Resources are to retain all applications, including non approvals, on UQ systems.

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## Supervisor considerations

Consider having a proactive discussion with your team regarding the feasibility of ongoing WFH/FWA, in light of the team's function at the University. This may encourage staff to consider the suitability of a WFH/FWA arrangement prior to submitting an application. All applications should be reviewed in a consistent and fair manner.



### WFH may require alternative supervisory practice

- How will you effectively monitor the output of the staff member while WFH?
- How will you manage expectations around task responsiveness, meeting participation and consultation?
- Has the staff member demonstrated that they are able to work independently? If so, what strategies have and haven't worked in the past?
- What discussions have been had with the team member about concerns with their WFH arrangement? What supports have been put in place to address these concerns?
- Do you know where to go for help/advice if you are concerned for the health and wellbeing of the staff member who is working remotely (e.g. HR, Workplace Psychologist?)?

It will be critical to ensure that performance continues to be appropriately monitored and measured.

### Office Equipment and Setup Costs?

- The staff member is responsible for providing all office/computer equipment and also bear any mobile or network charges required to perform a WFH arrangement.
- Should relevant equipment be required, approval may be sought to use University equipment at a WFH location provided it is recorded (see [Equipment Being Taken to a Private Residence Advice Form](#)).
- Any staff on a WFH arrangement should be compliant with UQ's cyber security and data protection principles and practices.

### Is it suitable for this role to be performed on a WFH arrangement?

- Does this role need to be physically performed on campus?
- What is the interaction with other functions?
- What are the stakeholder expectations?
- How will other stakeholder groups (staff and students) be able to effectively communicate and collaborate with your staff on a WFH arrangement?
- How will you manage and respond to the impact a WFH arrangement may have on other team members?

### Will this WFH/FWA arrangement meet the team's operational requirements?

- Are there core hours that need to be considered?
- Will service coverage be impacted?
- How would you manage a future change to the WFH/FWA arrangement both internally to the unit or due to external changes?

### Span of hours

- Staff have a prescribed span of hours as outlined in the [UQ EA](#) (clause 69.2 & 69.4)
- As part of the Fair Work Act (Cth), staff may request to work outside of the prescribed span of hours [UQ EA](#) (clause 69.6)
- If the request meets operational requirements it can progress by mutual agreement.

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## If not, why not?

Rather than saying “no”, why not trial for three months and reassess?

Supervisors and employees need to ensure any flexible working arrangement works for everyone, with a real understanding of the risks and benefits.

A part of this is the need to get flexible about flexibility – and an understanding that things change and that a FWA may need to be altered or even reversed over time to ensure that it remains effective.

Remember WFH arrangements may be approved for a period of up to 12 months and are subject to review at any time on reasonable grounds by either party.

## Tools and support

The University provides tools to support all flexible working arrangements:



## A balanced approach

UQ organisational culture values campus life, the student experience and collaboration. The University also values a supportive and inclusive community. These values should be balanced when considering any flexible working arrangement.

## Provisions under the Fair Work Act 2009

While UQ is committed to providing a flexible work environment for all continuing, research (contingent funded) and fixed-term staff members, the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) includes a “right to request” flexible working arrangements provision for certain categories of staff, including Parents or people who have the responsibility for the care of a child who is of school age or younger, carers, people with disability, people aged 55 years and older, people experiencing violence from a family member, people who are providing care/support to a member of their immediate family/household who is experiencing violence from their family.

Where a request is made in accordance with the **Fair Work Act 2009**, the University is required to respond in writing within 21 days.

## More information

Queries can be directed to your local HR Advisor, the **Health, Safety & Wellness Division** or **ITS Support**.

Wellbeing coaching and counseling, including for managers, is also available under the **Employee Assistance Program** for all staff.

**Mycoach**, is a 24 hour phone-based service that can be used in conjunction with EAP, and can be helpful for supervisors to negotiate their specific challenges.

*This advice relates to Professional Staff covered by the EBA*



If you need support  
please contact your  
local HR Advisor.