TEMPORARY University Policy 20-T1: COVID-19 and Temporary Work Arrangements

Covered Individuals: All Employees
Responsible Executive: Vice President for Business and Finance
Policy Custodian: Office of Human Resources, Associate Vice President of Human Resources
Last Revised: August 13, 2021
Previous USU Policy Number: Temporary

20-T1.1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

During unexpected or unusual emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the health and safety of Utah State University (USU) community members including students, faculty, and staff are a top priority as is the preservation and continuity of USU’s mission and its ongoing operations.

This temporary policy provides a framework for supervisors and employees to design temporary work arrangements that align with USU’s Infectious Disease Plan and provide for continuity of university operations and, wherever possible, employee pay. This framework includes providing flexible temporary work arrangements that support risk reduction, supporting telework in the event of a campus closure, designating Essential Onsite Employees in the event of a campus closure, and redirecting employees whose hours or positions are eliminated to vacant positions. This temporary policy applies to all employees regardless of the location of their worksite or the funding source for their position.

20-T1.2 POLICY

To reduce the spread of an infectious disease such as COVID-19, USU’s Infectious Disease Plan requires various mitigation strategies, including increasing social distancing, adjusting workspaces, schedules, and locations and requiring employees who are ill to stay home. During this time, supervisors must be flexible and adaptable to temporary work arrangements and employees must cooperate and collaborate with their supervisors to identify innovative solutions to ensure university operations, including onsite and/or in-person services, continue.

From time to time during the COVID-19 pandemic, and consistent with the University’s Infectious Disease Plan, the President or their delegate, in consultation with the COVID-19 Safety Committee and COVID-19 Action Committee, may direct employees to make changes to their work arrangements and/or schedules, to limit the time they are present in the workplace, to not report to their worksite, and/or change service delivery methods. The President or their delegate may also direct employees to limit travel and in-person meetings. Additionally, USU may reassign employees to other functions based on operational needs and capacity during these times.

In severe circumstances, USU’s Infectious Disease Plan contemplates a closure of the university’s physical locations, wherein only onsite essential services are performed and university operations are continued through remote work. In an effort to continue essential services during such situations, many workers will be able to perform their functions via telework. Others, due to the onsite nature of their role, will be required to continue to work onsite. Supervisors should assess which employees may temporarily work remotely and which employees’ work can only be performed onsite. All such decisions are subject to the approval of the vice president or dean responsible for the unit.
Under all scenarios, all employees, including supervisors, must follow all federal, state, or local government, and university guidance. Corrective or disciplinary action may be imposed for employees who fail to follow these policies.

**20T-1.2.1 Flexible Work Arrangements to Reduce Transmission Risk**

Absent an order not to report to work or a campus closure, all employees will be expected to report to and perform their work onsite. Individuals who may need an accommodation to this policy based on a disability or their own medical condition should contact USU’s ADA Coordinator.

Supervisors are directed to identify work arrangements for employees that reduce transmission risk in the workplace while also ensuring the continuity of university operations, including onsite and/or in-person services. Specifically, Supervisors will implement appropriate and reasonable standards to facilitate social distancing for employees working on-site, including but not limited to:

- Implementing flexible onsite work hours (e.g., staggered or split shifts);
- Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite;
- Increasing physical space between employees and customers (e.g., partitions, contactless payments, etc.);
- Implementing flexible meeting and travel options;
- Providing Zoom access for meetings and events; and/or
- Delivering products through curbside pick-up or delivery.

If social distancing is not possible in the workplace or there are other compelling COVID-related circumstances, a supervisor with the support of the dean or vice president may approve limited hybrid work arrangements.

A request to perform all work remotely will require an exception to USU’s policy and expectation that employees report to and perform their work onsite. An exception request to perform all work remotely that is not related to a disability should be made by the employee to their supervisor first and, if approved, then to the dean or Vice President of their unit. The exception request should outline the reason why the employee cannot work onsite and why other flexible work arrangements under this policy do not address the employee’s needs. If the supervisor and the dean or vice president support the exception request, the request should be directed by the dean or vice president to the USU COVID-19 Safety Committee. An appeal of a final exception request may be appealed to the president. The president’s decision is final.

Employees who are not feeling well and/or who have COVID-19 symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor, complete a USU COVID-19 Questionnaire, get tested, and stay home until they receive their test results and their symptoms subside. See USU Policy 20T.2. Employees who test positive for COVID-19 should follow CDC-recommended steps and submit a USU COVID-19 Questionnaire. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and the USU Case Containment Team. Employees who are well but who have been exposed during close contact to a positive COVID-19 case should notify their supervisor, submit a USU COVID-19 Questionnaire, and follow CDC recommended precautions. With the approval of their supervisor, employees may work remotely during a period of quarantine and self-isolation.

**20T-1.2.2 Task Reassignment to Ensure Risk Reduction and Continuity of Operations**

In the event the President or their delegee directs that all or certain employees do not report to work onsite (for any period of time) or orders a campus closure, supervisors may reassign job duties to cover staffing needs to ensure essential campus services are provided and that employees can telework. These reassignments may involve work that is not part of the employee’s regular duties and/or is located away from their current workplace. Benefitted employees can continue to be paid their regular salary despite changes to task assignments and/or the
inability to perform certain job responsibilities due to restrictions of onsite work, travel, or in-person gatherings, or other restrictions due to the extraordinary circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For employees whose job duties are reassigned, the following provisions will apply:

- Employees will be given information and direction about the work they are being asked to perform.
- Reassignment work will be reasonable and will consider current campus emergency circumstances, university business operation needs, and the employee’s skills and abilities to the best extent practicable under the circumstances.
- If an employee has concerns with newly assigned tasks, they should discuss it with their supervisor, someone else in their management chain, and/or the Office of Human Resources.

20-T1.2.3 Employees Working Remotely (Teleworking)

In the event the President or their delegate directs that all or certain employees do not report to work onsite (for any period of time) or orders a campus closure, supervisors may assign employees to perform all work remotely. Supervisors may also permit employees to work remotely to facilitate directions to quarantine or self-isolation.

For employees working remotely, the following provisions apply:

- Supervisors will review and determine whether an employee’s work may be performed remotely temporarily by reviewing the employee’s job responsibilities and available resources to perform these responsibilities remotely. To protect the USU community and preserve the continuity of USU operations, supervisors are encouraged to be creative and supportive of assigning and redesigning tasks and responsibilities so they can be completed via telework.
- When telework is approved, the supervisor will work with the employee to set clear expectations and determine work schedules and communication methods to ensure that department needs are met.
- Teleworkers are required to set up and maintain an appropriate workspace at the alternative work location that safeguards university information.
- Employees assigned to telework are expected to maintain regular business hours unless an exception is approved by their supervisor. Employees must remain responsive to work-related inquiries and requests during designated work hours.
- Employees approved for telework will continue to receive their standard pay for hours worked. Employees who have been assigned to telework, but instead, wish to use their accrued leave time or leave without pay during their absence, must submit a request to their supervisor for approval.

20-T1.2.4 Onsite Essential Employees

In the event the President or their delegate directs that all or certain employees do not report to work onsite (for any period of time) or orders a campus closure, supervisors will designate Onsite Essential Employees and direct them to report to work onsite. For employees whose work can only be performed onsite, the following provisions apply:

- Supervisors will notify employees who are designated as Onsite Essential Employees.
- Supervisors will notify Onsite Essential Employees which job responsibilities must be performed onsite.
- Onsite Essential Employees will be provided with credentials. Onsite Essential Employees must carry these credentials with them whenever they are on their worksite during a campus closure and cannot share or provide these credentials to others.
- Onsite Essential Employees are expected to report to work unless they have a qualifying reason and they have been approved to be absent. Qualifying reasons for not reporting may include
eligibility for the Family and Medical Leave Act (“FMLA”), eligibility for COVID-19 Paid Leave (see USU Policy 20T.2), and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”). Additionally, there may be other qualifying reasons specific to the circumstances that prevent onsite work or which are covered under federal, state, or local government-approved leave. All requests to be excused from Onsite Essential Employee responsibilities, including the qualifying reason, should be submitted to USU Human Resources.

20-T1.2.5 Reduction of Hours

Non-benefitted employees who have their hours reduced or eliminated due to changes in business operations due to COVID-19 are encouraged to go to www.jobs.usu.edu to view available positions. The Office of Human Resources is available to assist employees with identifying open positions and alternative employment opportunities within the University.

20-T1.3 TERM

This is a temporary policy created to address an emergency situation. This policy will expire on December 31, 2021. USU reserves the right to rescind, retire, or modify this policy at any time, with or without notice, as deemed necessary and appropriate by the president and the USU COVID-19 Action Committee.