



# **Guidelines for Staff who are Temporarily Teleworking (Working Remotely) during COVID-19**

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# Overview

Framingham State University's commitment to safely and effectively meeting the public health challenge presented by COVID-19 extends to ensuring that University staff can work from home or another remote location on a temporary basis where management has determined that such temporary measures are appropriate and viable in the coming weeks. Teleworking (or telecommuting or remote work) arrangements are relatively new to FSU, and because they may be unfamiliar to supervisors and managers who have never done so, this resource will help you and your team navigate potential teleworking scenarios. This Teleworking Guide is expected to be short-term and is to be used only during this public health situation, as defined and communicated by the University.

## Business Continuity

The University is hopeful that we will be able to continue to remain open and that we will maintain business continuity for our community while we manage our way through this unique and challenging time. FSU does not intend to shut down or close in response to COVID-19 unless health and safety considerations rise to a level where it becomes necessary. Instead, we are committed to finding ways to institute temporary telework options for staff.

## Essential Personnel

The University expects that designated essential employees, and critical employees as defined by FSU Health Emergency Plan, will continue to report to work, as directed by Department managers, in the event of a University closure or other extraordinary circumstances. In extreme circumstances, essential employees may have legitimate reasons for being unable to report to work. These employees should follow their normal procedures for calling out of work and talking with their department supervisor. If it is for a confidential health related reason, they may also contact the Office of Human Resources for assistance at [humanresources@framingham.edu](mailto:humanresources@framingham.edu).

## Teleworking

Teleworking is a work arrangement in which some or all of the work is performed from home or another off-site location. In general, regular office hours are worked and deviations from that schedule require supervisor approval.

Teleworking is easiest to implement for jobs or tasks that require reading, writing, research, working with data and talking on the phone but during this unusual time, we will need to think creatively, in a very short time, how other types of job duties may be performed remotely. In general, and at management's discretion, a job is suited to teleworking if the job, or some components of it, can be performed off-site without disruption to the flow of work and communication.

For jobs that teleworking is an appropriate and viable option, supervisors will work with their staff to establish a telework plan. When clearly outlined and executed teleworking arrangements can prove beneficial to employees and managers alike. Managers should articulate clear procedures regarding check-in times and hours of availability. Problems may be minimized with proper planning and communications. Well-planned flexible work arrangements sometimes enable departments to extend their service hours, and to make more effective use of space and equipment. When establishing a work plan, supervisors are responsible for ensuring that their departments perform critical work to maintain operations. Supervisors should regularly communicate with their staff to keep them apprised of changing business needs.

## Expectations for All Staff

Teleworking staff members are responsible for:

Fulfilling the expectations agreed upon with their supervisor regarding the scope of their telework assignment, such as:

Duties and responsibilities

- Hours of work (rest/meal breaks, overtime, and other wage and hour requirements still apply).
- Hours of availability to communicate regarding University business.
- Communication of work assignments and personal needs, including reporting absences due to injury, illness, or caring for a family member.
- The appropriate use of university equipment and materials.
- Completing their timesheets per University policy.
- Protecting University information by following the University's policies governing information security, software licensing, and data protection; ensuring that unauthorized individuals do not access Framingham State data, either in print or electronically; and not accessing restricted-level information in print or electronically unless approved by the supervisor and protected by policy-compliant encryption and/or physical controls.
- Maintaining a safe environment in which to work.

## Expectations for Supervisors

Supervisors should communicate specific expectations to individual team members based on each person's circumstances. To ensure that the telework plan is mutually beneficial for both the University and staff members, planning and communicating expectations of the teleworking is crucial. Supervisors

should remain in regular communication with their staff to address tasks, projects and ongoing needs of the department. If an employee requires a reasonable accommodation due to a health related reason or disability, the supervisor will direct them to Office of Human Resources.

## General Agreement

Staff members must comply with University rules, policies, practices, and instructions. Short-term telework in extraordinary circumstances does not change the basic terms and conditions of employment with the University. Telework assignments do not change a staff member's classification, compensation, or benefits. The policies applicable to leave and accrual use shall be applicable to all benefited staff, regardless of teleworking privileges.

Teleworking Staff will be solely responsible for the configuration of, and all expenses associated with, the teleworking workspace and all services. This includes ensuring and maintaining an ergonomically appropriate and safe teleworking worksite.

All injuries incurred by staff during the performance of official duties and during working hours must be reported promptly to the Office of Human Resources at [humanresources@framingham.edu](mailto:humanresources@framingham.edu), and applicable Workers' Compensation laws will apply. While teleworking, employees are required to maintain a safe working environment.

Teleworking privileges for staff during this temporary limited time shall be reviewed by the supervisor regularly. Teleworking privileges can be canceled at any time and for any reason by the University.

The University has the sole discretion to amend, modify or replace these *Teleworking Guidelines* at any time and for any reason.

# Appendix A – Letter for Supervisors/Managers

## Teleworking During the Coronavirus Disease 2020 Supervisor/Manager Expectations

Dear Supervisors and Managers:

In our rapidly changing environment, supervisors (a.k.a. managers) are faced with changing needs and operational shifts that might require creative solutions. You must begin planning and implementing the teleworking assignment to ensure it will be mutually beneficial to both the employee and the University. We understand this may take a few days to accomplish and some operations may be temporarily interrupted, but you are responsible for ensuring that your department maintains adequate business operations. You should speak with your staff to plan business coverage. In the event a staff member is personally affected by the COVID-19 disease and unable to perform their duties partially or totally, an alternate method for completing critical tasks should be identified.

Emotions may run high, with employees experiencing stress from their personal circumstances, in addition to any anxiety from the disruption to normal routines. Without clear communication, it is easy for people to make assumptions, misinterpret directions, or further compound issues by not being on the same page. Please take the time to speak with each of your staff members to ensure seamless transitions during this time of change. We encourage supervisors to share information about our Employees Assistance Program included in *Appendix D*. The expectations you have for each teleworking assignment may vary among your team members, based on their role, needs, and unique circumstances. Please find the following guidelines related to teleworking:

### APA/NON UNIT:

- Employees should work their regular schedule, take their regular meal period and may be granted flexibility in hours by their manager.
- Employees must be available during their regular schedule hours for phone calls, email and remote meetings.
- Employees should respond to inquiries in a timely manner. If the inquiry requires gathering of information and cannot be answered immediately, they should indicate that they have received the message and will respond fully in a timely manner.
- Unless otherwise directed, employees should email their supervisor each day to provide a progress report on their work, including:
  - Projects completed during the day
  - Pending projects and their estimated date of completion
  - Items requiring supervisory approval and insight

### AFSCME:

- Employees working remotely should work their regular scheduled hours and take their regular meal period.
- While working remotely employees should not work overtime unless requested by their supervisor.
- Employees should take their required fifteen (15) minute breaks.

- Employees must be available during their regularly scheduled hours (exclusive of meal periods and breaks) for phone calls, email and remote meetings.
- Employees should respond to inquiries in a timely manner. If the inquiry requires gathering of information and cannot be answered immediately, they should indicate that have received the message and will respond fully in a timely manner.
- Employees should email their supervisor each day providing a progress report on their work, including:
  - projects completed during the day
  - pending projects and their estimated date of completion
  - items requiring supervisory approval and insight

We extend our gratitude and appreciation in advance as we navigate this unprecedented situation. As always, your immediate supervisor/manager will be your primary point of contact for any concerns you have regarding performing your work. Managers and supervisors are encouraged to contact the Office of Human Resources if there are departmental labor concerns that require HR assistance. Your divisional Vice Presidents and Deans are also available to available to provide support and guidance during this time. As we continue to receive updates from state leaders, governing authorities and public health agencies, information will be shared on the University website Coronavirus Information.

## Appendix B – Temporary Telework Plan and Agreement Form

# Temporary Telework Plan and Agreement Form in Response to COVID-19

The intent of this document is to ensure that both the supervisor and the employee have a clear, shared understanding of the employee’s telework arrangement. Each telework arrangement is unique depending on the needs of the position, supervisor, and employee. This form can be adapted to department requirements as necessary.

This telework agreement is not a contract of employment and does not provide any contractual rights to continued employment. It does not alter or supersede the terms of the existing employment relationship or the terms of any collective bargaining agreements. Employees must be available for regular department meetings/check-ins via appropriate technology and in some cases, employees may be required to to work, or attend meetings, at their regular campus location.

### Employee Telework Information

Employee Name:	
Job Title:	
Department:	
Supervisor:	
Arrangement requested by:	<input type="checkbox"/> Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Employer
Location where telework will be performed:	
Temporary Telework arrangement Effective Dates	Begin Date: — End Date *Please note, this Telework Plan is temporary and will not extend beyond the period of time that the University determines telework is appropriate due to COVID-19 outbreak.

### Job Duties

The general expectation for a telework arrangement is that the employee will effectively accomplish their regular job duties, regardless of work location. If there are telework-specific job duties and/or expectations, other than the regular duties, specify them in the box below, or enter N/A.

Sample text: Employee will indicate telework days in their email signature. In-person attendance is expected to perform x, y, z duties.
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## Work Schedule (Only complete this section if there are changes to an employee’s regular work hours/schedule)

Day of Week	Work Hours
Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

## Temporary Telework Arrangement Modification

Either the employee or their supervisor may end an employee requested telework arrangement. This provision does not apply to telework arrangements made through the disability accommodation process. All employee-proposed changes are subject to supervisor approval.

Telework agreements should be reviewed regularly and ad-hoc modifications to this agreement should be discussed between the employee and supervisor. Substantive modifications should be documented by revising this agreement.

## Telework Review

Specify a date to meet and discuss the effectiveness of the telework arrangement, or enter N/A.

Telework plan review date:	
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## Equipment and technology access

The employee agrees to ensure that the alternate worksite is appropriate and suitable (ergonomically safe) to perform work responsibilities. Employee agrees to specify any equipment or technology access the employee will need to telework and whether it will be employee or employer provided. In the event of equipment failure or service interruption, the employee must notify employer immediately to discuss alternate assignments or other options. Teleworking Staff will be solely responsible for the configuration of, and all expenses associated with, the teleworking workspace and all services.

Equipment	Provided by	Responsible for loss or damage

**Additional details about this Telework arrangement may be provided in the space below:**

### **General Agreement:**

Employees must comply with University rules, policies, practices, and instructions. Teleworking plans in these temporary and extraordinary circumstances do not change the basic terms and conditions of employment with the University. Telework assignments do not change an employee's classification, compensation, or benefits.

The policies applicable to leave and accrual use shall be applicable to all benefited staff, regardless of Telework privileges. Staff will be solely responsible for the configuration of, and all expenses associated with, the Telework workspace. The immediate supervisor will be the primary point of contact regarding any concerns staff members may have regarding performing work.

### **Duties and Responsibilities:**

If the duties and assignments authorized to be performed remotely remain consistent with the employee's current job description that should be noted on the form. The supervisor and the employee will discuss expectations of duties; supervisors will answer any questions from the employee. If there are specific tasks that are critical to maintaining business continuity, the supervisor reserves the right to redirect tasks and assignments. The supervisor will communicate these changes in writing to the employee. Employees must be available for phone calls, email, remote meetings, and in person work and meetings at the office as directed by their supervisor.

Employees should respond to inquiries in a timely manner. If the inquiry requires gathering of information and cannot be answered immediately, they should indicate that they have received the message and will respond fully in a timely manner.

Employees should take regular meal periods and breaks as outlined in the collective bargaining agreements. Employees eligible for overtime, should not work overtime unless requested by their supervisor.

Unless otherwise directed, employees should coordinate with their supervisor for when to provide a progress report on their work, including:

- projects completed
- pending projects and their estimated date of completion
- items requiring supervisory approval and insight

## **Time and Attendance:**

Employees must enter their time and attendance weekly, supervisors must review and approve. Employees must use accrued paid time for vacation, personal and or sick time in the case of illness or personal reason. Employees should notify supervisors by email, text or phone if they are unable to work due to illness following department policy and collective bargaining agreements.

## **Equipment and technology Access:**

The employee and employer agree to protect university information by following the University's policies governing information security, software licensing, and data protection; ensuring that unauthorized individuals do not access Framingham State data, either in print or electronically; and not accessing restricted-level information in print or electronically unless approved by the supervisor and protected by policy-compliant encryption and/or physical controls.

## **Communication:**

Recognizing that effective communication is essential for Telework be successful, supervisors and employees shall determine a method and times for communicating. The employee shall be responsible for any and all costs associated with such arrangements. The employee agrees that in-person work-related meetings will not be conducted at the alternate workplace.

## **Safe Environment:**

The employee agrees to work in a safe work environment. The employee agrees to report any work-related injuries to Human Resources at the earliest opportunity. The University's liability for job related accidents will continue to exist if the injury was incurred in the course and scope of the employee's job duties and during the employee's scheduled hours of work since the employee's remote workspace shall be considered an extension of the regular University work site.

## **Telework Privileges:**

Telework privileges for staff during this limited time period shall be reviewed regularly by the supervisor. Telework privileges can be canceled at any time and for any reason by the University. The University has the sole discretion to amend, modify or replace the Telework Guide/Plan at any time and for any reason.

**Acknowledgement:** By acknowledging this agreement, the employee understands the agreement may be amended, modified, canceled and or replaced at any time and for any reason by the administration. The agreement does not substitute, amend or imply a change to the collective bargaining agreements nor a change to policies and procedures at the University. The Telework plan is a short term program to address the current COVID-19 public emergency.

A copy of this plan will be sent by the supervisor to the divisional VP or President AND to the Office of Human Resources and will be maintained in an employee's official personnel file.

## Policies and Procedure Acknowledgement Employee Initials

I have read and understand the University's Temporary Work from Home/Telework Guidelines.	
I understand my departmental telework policies and expectations as my supervisor discussed with me.	
I have read and understand the <a href="#">FSU IT Acceptable Use Policy</a>	

Signature of Employee:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix C – Supervisor Checklist for Supporting Teleworking

## Supervisor Checklist for Supporting Teleworking

Telework works best when employees and supervisors communicate clearly about expectations. The following checklist will help you establish a foundation for effective teamwork, continued productivity, and service to the FSU community.

Understand relevant policies, applicable collective bargaining agreements for your staff, and these guidelines. Supervisors must ensure that employees who are teleworking understand the expectations.

Review technology needs and resources. Identify technology tools staff use in their daily work and determine whether the resources will be accessible when working from home and ensure employees know how to access your team's local technical support should they need [assistance](#).

Ensure employees know how to set up call forwarding and [how to access voicemail from home](#). The [IT Guide for Staff](#) webpage has helpful information related to remote technology.

Determine which platform(s) you will use to communicate as a team, clarify expectations for online availability and confirm everyone has access to the technology tool(s) and support resources.

Review work schedules. Telework sometimes get confused with flex work. Be clear about your expectations with employees for maintaining their current work schedule or if you are open to flexible scheduling based on employee needs.

Draft a work plan. Review the questions below with staff and work through answers together.

What routine responsibilities/tasks cannot be fulfilled while working remotely and how will it impact operations or other people? What are ways to reduce the impacts?

What routine responsibilities/tasks require regular communication and collaboration with others? Proactively contact each partner to confirm how you will communicate while everyone is working remotely.

Oftentimes employees experience fewer interruptions while teleworking. Are there any special projects or tasks that you can advance while working remotely?

What events or meetings are scheduled during the time in which the temporary telework arrangement is in place? Will they be postponed or canceled, or will they take place using technology? What follow-up needs to occur due to postponements or cancellations?

## Make a Communication and Accountability Plan

Supervisors should tell employees how often they should send updates on work plan progress and what those updates should include. Supervisors should also communicate how quickly they expect the employee to respond while teleworking and the best ways for the employee to contact the supervisor while working remotely.

If you normally make daily rounds to visit employees at their desks, you can give them a call during this period. Maintain team meetings and one-to-one check-ins, altering the schedule if needed to accommodate any alternative schedules that have been approved.

### **Conduct Regular Check-ins**

Start each workday with a phone, video or instant message chat. Your employees will be eager for connection and information during the disruption and the structure will help everyone create a positive routine. Every other day or weekly may be fine, so long as you are in contact frequently enough that your employees are in sync with you and/or with one another.

### **Be Positive**

A positive attitude toward teleworking and a willingness to trust employees to telework effectively is key to making such arrangements successful and productive. Teleworking presents an opportunity for managers to become better supervisors. Instead of focusing on how many hours your employees are working, re-emphasize a focus on measuring results and reaching objectives—regardless of work arrangement. The employee's completed work product is the indicator of success, rather than direct observation. By focusing on the employee's work product, tele-managers will improve their organizational abilities and their own skill in managing by objectives.

### **Debrief after Normal Operations Resume**

Employees and supervisors should review work plans when work returns to normal, assess progress on the employee's work plan and prioritize any unresolved or new work that resulted from temporary operational disruption.

## Appendix D – Mental Health and Wellness

### Mental Health and Wellness

As stated by the CDC, “Public health emergencies, such as the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), are stressful times for people and communities. Fear and anxiety about a disease can lead to social stigma toward people, places, or things.” Please treat others with respect and dignity and for more information please find the link to the CDC website regarding [Stigma and Resilience](#).

### Employee Assistance Plan Information

Take care of yourself physically and mentally. If you are feeling stress or anxiety about these events and need someone to talk to, FSU offers employees access to confidential support and counseling through the Employee Assistance Programs (“EAP”):

EAP for Full-time Employees and their Household Members:

#### **Mass4You**

Confidential Assistance: 844-263-1982

Wellness resources: [liveandworkwell.com](https://liveandworkwell.com) (Browse as guest with a company access code. Enter Access Code: mass4you).

EAP for Part-time Employees and their Household Members:

#### **AllOneHealth**

Confidential Assistance: 800-451-1834

Wellness resources: <https://mylifeexpert.com/login>

Sign-up with company code: fsceap

### Stay Safe

Employees who are or may feel unsafe self-quarantining at home due to violence in the home: We recognize that increased presence and isolation in the home may create an increased risk of violence in the home as well. Please contact Voices Against Violence at 800-593-1125, the National Domestic Violence Hotline (chat option available) or the employee assistance program for more information on support and options if you feel unsafe at home. Additional resources can also be found at SHAPE.

\*This guide was adopted in part by Fitchburg State University and University of Washington’s policies.