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RETURN TO CAMPUS PLANNING
Leader Toolkit
Fall 2021

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of university faculty and staff have been working remotely since March 2020. With the return to campus this fall, we recognize many faculty and staff want more flexibility with respect to how they work.

We will look to our leaders to plan and organize the return of their teams according to the specific requirements, services and nature of work. July and August are naturally quiet times for many groups at the university, so this is intended to make the return to campus gradual as we ease into physically returning to the workplace. SLT and their Managers have flexibility to determine the best return to campus plan for their faculty/unit. Fall plans do not need to be reported centrally.

To assist our leaders with their planning for the return to campus, we have established temporary guidelines to support sound and consistent decision making on remote/hybrid working requests. Here are some general principles to consider which are foundational to the guidelines:

- What are the requirements and demands of the specific work? Is it possible to complete the work remotely?
- What is the impact on student experience?
- What are the needs and preferences of the individual team member?

Finally, it is important to note that the remainder of 2021 is a transitionary period. Remote working arrangements agreed to during this time period will not alter the existing terms and conditions of employment, nor are they guaranteed for any length of time.

By early September, we expect faculty and staff will return to campus in some capacity that is appropriate for the nature of their work and position; leaders have the ability to grant faculty and staff additional flexibility where it is operationally feasible.

This guide will provide decision-making support for leaders who are assessing the feasibility of remote working for their teams and identify resources available to support employee mental health through our return to campus.

Join our Journey to 2022

The university will develop a long-term strategy on flexible, remote, and hybrid work over the coming months. Planning will begin with in-depth community engagement where we will gather input and ideas from employees (faculty and staff), leaders and other stakeholders. A pilot program will be informed by the input we receive and will be launched in early 2022.

In the meantime (between July 1, 2021 and the launch of the long-term remote-working program) we will return to the university campus as our primary work location, but with flexibility. We believe that having our teams back together in-person at times is important to strengthen our work culture, team dynamics and individual working relationships. Our approach is intended to balance these factors with the desire that many employees have for increased flexibility.

Key Milestones

Between now and June 30

- Most faculty and staff continue working remotely as they have been through the pandemic.

Between July 1 and July 31

- Managers discuss return to campus planning with their teams and individually with each employee in their team.
- Managers will discuss and approve remote working options with employees who express interest in continuing to work remotely some of the time where appropriate.

Between July 1 and August 31

- Employees will gradually return to campus over July and August based upon operational requirements.

September 1

- Staff will return to the university campus in some capacity, appropriate to the nature of their work and position. Where appropriate, leaders can allow staff to delay their return to campus to October or November, and/or allow staff to continue to working from home on a part-time basis.

Return to Campus Planning Decision-Making

Although not all roles have the ability to be effectively performed remotely, the university encourages employees and leaders to work together to assess suitability and create an operationally feasible plan for a return to campus.

Step 1: Senior Leadership Guidelines

The university has provided general guidance for the return to campus as follows:

- The University of Calgary will be returning to campus this fall, following a gradual return over the summer months.
- The return plan is grounded in the latest public health guidelines and scientific research.
- More than 70 percent of classes are scheduled to be held in-person; faculties have submitted their instructional plans and allocation of faculty to in-person and online classes.
- By early September, we expect faculty and staff will return to campus in some capacity, appropriate for the nature of their work and position.
- Having our teams back together in-person at times is important to strengthen our work culture, team dynamics and individual working relationships.
- Consideration will be given to requests to work remotely in some capacity through the fall.
- Decisions will be made by managers and will be consistent with expectations set by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) member in the area.
- Managers may allow faculty and staff to continue to work remotely in some capacity if that arrangement does not interfere with the effectiveness of the work.

SLT members will establish additional principles and guidelines for their portfolio. Leaders must ensure they are familiar with these principles and guidelines to ensure their team's return to campus planning is in alignment.

Step 2: Facilitate a Team Discussion

Reports-to-managers are encouraged to bring their teams together for a facilitated discussion on the return to campus planning. This will ensure that all team members understand the need for alignment with the faculty/unit guidelines and principles.

Leaders are advised to be cognizant to create a safe space for employees who wish to share their thoughts on returning to campus, positive or negative. Some individuals will be ready to share, while others may not be. Either way, leaders are encouraged to establish an open and respectful environment; employees will approach their leader and/or the team if or when they are ready to discuss.

By having an open, candid, and respectful discussion, team members can provide input that will inform decisions on a successful return to campus. Engagement levels of employees will be significantly higher having been asked for their input.

Prior to booking the meeting(s), online or on campus, leaders should consider the size of the team. Provide ample time for employees to share their thoughts and opinions. For larger teams (i.e., 20 or more), scheduling more than one meeting for participants may be appropriate. If there are separate meetings, leaders are reminded to remain consistent in the format, content and approach.

Consider discussion topics such as:

- How effectively can our team do our work remotely or in a hybrid mode?
- If we had some or all of our team working a portion of their time remotely, what are the opportunities?
- If we had some or all of our team working a portion of their time remotely, what are the potential challenges and/or gaps?
- If a significant portion of the team is working in hybrid mode, what kinds of events/meetings should we gather in person for?
- How should we onboard/train new team members in this new mode?
- What guidelines should we consider?

A **Team Presentation/Discussion Template** has been developed to support facilitation of team meetings. **Hybrid Scenarios** are available in Appendix B.

Step 3: Individual Meetings with Employees Requesting Remote Arrangements

Invite individual employees who are interested in remote arrangements to a private meeting to discuss their request. Most of these requests will be based upon personal preferences. In some unique cases, a Workplace Accommodation may be appropriate (refer to section below for more details).

A **Leader Guide: Employee Conversations on Returning to Campus** has been developed to help managers engage in effective conversations with employees.

It is important to discuss the suitability of the role, the suitability of the individual and their remote work location, and the impact to the team and stakeholders as considerations for the feasibility of remote work arrangements. For example, remote working cannot be a substitute for family care (e.g., children, aging parents, pets). The following assessment methodology may help with decision-making.

FACTOR	CONSIDERATIONS
Job and Work Suitability	- Will the remote working request create gaps in staffing and/or work distribution? - Will there be a disruption to the continuity of service to internal or external clients? - Is service delivery more effective in person? - Will students and other employees being back on campus create an expectation for face-to-face delivery?

FACTOR	CONSIDERATIONS
	• Can the role be effectively performed on a remote basis? • Can office assets, such as computers/monitors, be set up in such a way to support the employee's work in the proposed arrangement?

Individual Suitability	• Is the employee able to perform at the level required to meet job expectations and commitments, while producing high-quality results?
	• Is the employee able to maintain self-discipline and work effectively with minimum supervision?
	• Does the employee have a suitable remote work environment?
	    ○ An ergonomically appropriate workspace free from distractions.
	    ○ High-speed Internet access and required office equipment.
	    ○ If relevant, confirm the employee has secured arrangements for family care (e.g., children, aging parents, pets).
	• Is the employee well-suited to work from home? Are they proficient using technologies to communicate in a timely and effective way?

Team Effectiveness	• Will remote working affect the team's ability to work collaboratively? • Will there be a negative effect on co-workers and/or direct reports where some continue to work remotely? • Will the established job tasks, duties, and expectations remain reasonable given different work arrangements for others on the team? • Will the request allow for staff to be treated equitably?

All remote work arrangements must be operationally feasible and require managerial approval. All requests should be considered on a case-by-case basis and approval of participation is at the discretion of the manager. **An Employee Workplace Decision Tree** is available in Appendix A.

Workplace Accommodations

An employee may request a Workplace Accommodation on the basis of a Protected Ground (e.g., disability, family status). When supported, a reasonable accommodation must be offered to the employee.

Illustrative examples of situations which may be related to workplace accommodations versus those which are personal preferences are outlined below. In the event an employee requires a workplace accommodation, contact Staff Wellness (disability accommodations) or your HR Partner (non-disability accommodations) for assistance.

Example of request for accommodation on the basis of disability:

- An employee has a medical condition that puts them at a high risk for serious complications from transmission of COVID-19.

Example of request for accommodation on the basis of family status:

- An employee's child is required to self-isolate at home due to a potential COVID contact at their daycare.

Example of personal preferences (where the workplace accommodation policy does not apply):

- An employee prefers to work from home to avoid commuting time.
- An employee no longer has family care (e.g., children, aging parents) arrangements and would like to work remotely to avoid paying for such care.
- An employee has a new puppy and wishes to work remotely more often until the puppy is housebroken.

If you require additional guidance, please work with your leader and/or HR Partner.

Step 4: Communicate Work-Arrangement Decisions

Once decisions have been made regarding requests for remote arrangements, managers are to communicate the decisions with their employees in a confidential manner. Ensure that decisions are communicated well in advance of the scheduled return to campus dates to allow employees time to prepare for a physical return to work.

Following communication of decisions to individual employees, it is important that managers provide their team with information on any changes to team members' work arrangements. This will allow for the discussion of any changes to team norms, communication approaches, scheduling protocols, etc.

It is recommended that leaders share a summary of any remote arrangements with their own leader.

Step 5: Monitoring and Adjusting Work Arrangements

Working in a hybrid environment will require adjustments to the way in which a team operates. Careful consideration must be given to creating new team norms, expectations and accountabilities. Managers will need to monitor the team's operations and make adjustments as necessary.

Managers have the discretion to revert or adjust remote arrangements during the fall (September 2021-early 2022), provided reasonable notice is provided to the employee(s).

Additional resources will be provided to managers to support remote/hybrid teams.

Supporting Employees as they Prepare to Return to Campus

The return to the campus may be exciting for some and stressful for others; during times of change, it is important to be aware of how your employees are doing and how we can help support their overall health and wellness, while maintaining resilience.

Leaders play a critical role in supporting their employees as we return to campus through the following behaviours:

- Share accurate, timely and transparent information.
- Cultivate compassion through succinct and open two-way dialogue.
- Plan for regular check-ins with employees to provide clarity on expectations and plans.
- Be helpful, understanding and demonstrate gratitude.
- Encourage resiliency through creative ways to foster social cohesion and camaraderie.

The following resources are available to support employees in their transition back to the workplace:

- Homewood Health
- The Working Mind
- Embracing Workplace Change
- Building Personal Resilience
- Building Resilience Through Connection
- Leading the Human Side of Change *(for managers)*
- UAdvance: Exploring Change
- UManage: Leading Your Team through Change
- LinkedIn Learning
- Staff Wellness
- Campus Mental Health Strategy

As employees return into this hybrid working environment, empathy and compassion towards one another will be critical as we reconnect with our campus community. For those who continued to work on campus during this time, due to the nature of their job, thank you for continuing to perform your roles so effectively.
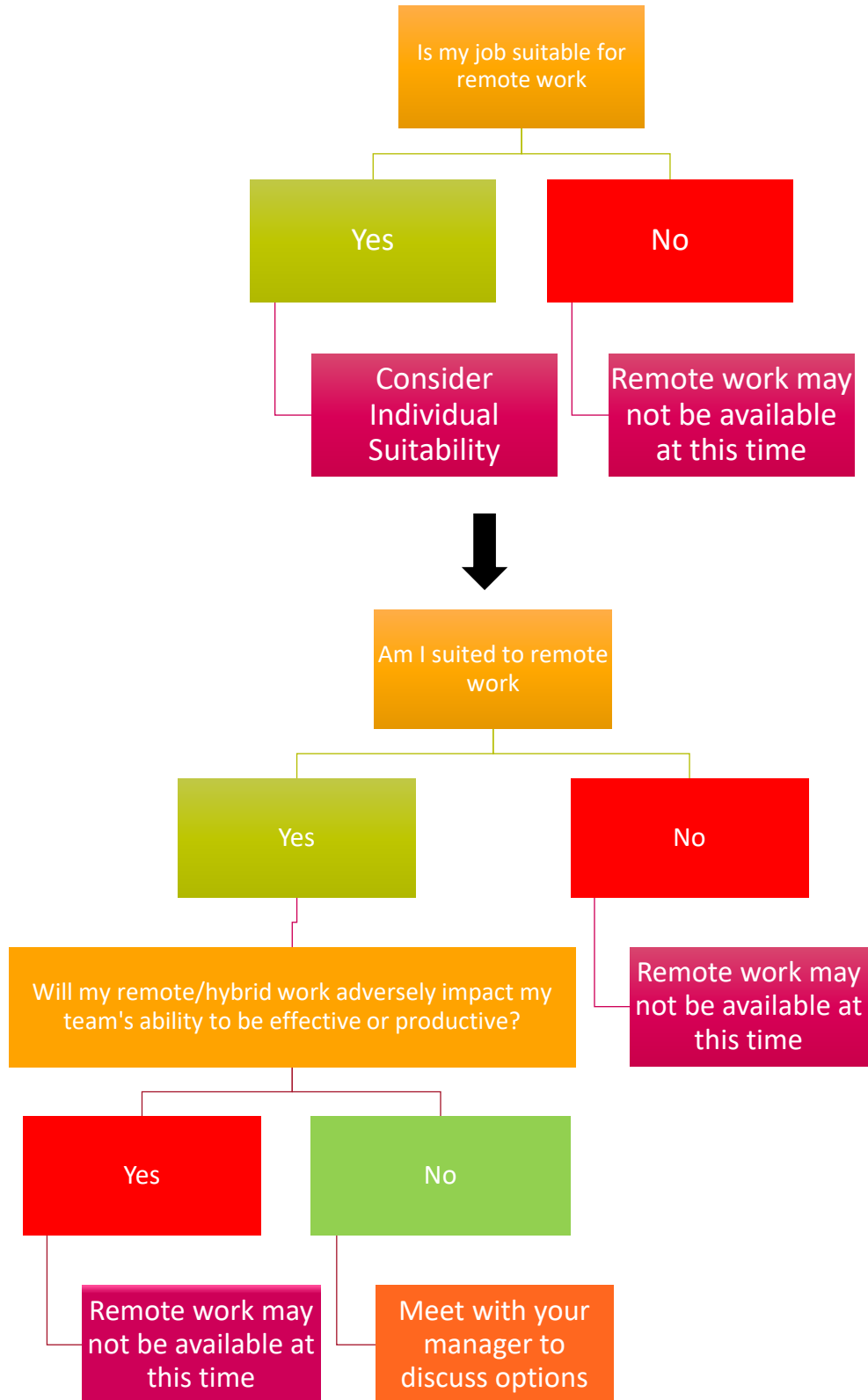
Resources and Contact Information

If you have any questions about this guideline or any specific situations, contact your HR Partner.

- Leader Labs: Return to Campus Planning
- Return to Campus FAQs
- Leader Guide: Employee Conversations on Returning to Campus
- Team Presentation/Discussion Template (PDF version)

Appendix A: Employee Workplace Decision Tree.

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │  Is my job suitable for │
                    │       remote work       │
                    └────────────┬────────────┘
              ┌──────────────────┴──────────────────┐
      ┌───────────────┐                      ┌───────────────┐
      │      Yes      │                      │      No       │
      └───────┬───────┘                      └───────┬───────┘
   ┌──────────────────┐                  ┌──────────────────────┐
   │    Consider      │                  │  Remote work may     │
   │    Individual    │                  │  not be available    │
   │    Suitability   │                  │  at this time        │
   └──────────────────┘                  └──────────────────────┘
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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │   Am I suited to remote  │
                    │           work           │
                    └────────────┬────────────┘
              ┌──────────────────┴──────────────────┐
      ┌───────────────┐                      ┌───────────────┐
      │      Yes      │                      │      No       │
      └───────┬───────┘                      └───────┬───────┘
┌──────────────────────────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Will my remote/hybrid work adversely      │  │  Remote work may     │
│ impact my team's ability to be effective  │  │  not be available at │
│ or productive?                            │  │  this time           │
└────────────────┬─────────────────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘
         ┌───────┴────────┐
  ┌───────────┐    ┌───────────┐
  │    Yes    │    │    No     │
  └─────┬─────┘    └─────┬─────┘
┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
│ Remote work may  │  │ Meet with your   │
│ not be available │  │ manager to       │
│ at this time     │  │ discuss options  │
└──────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘
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Appendix B: Hybrid Scenarios.

For leaders assessing alternative ways of returning their team(s) to campus, consider the following scenarios. For each of these scenarios the team's approach is operationally feasible, and the leader has sought input and feedback from their team members before designing the arrangement.

Scenario 1: The Client-Facing Team

This team works closely with faculty/staff on campus, and 50 percent of the team have roles requiring them to participate in in-person planning/brainstorming meetings that are far more productive when people are face-to-face and not on *Zoom*/MS *Teams*.

The staff workplace arrangements are as follows:

- The client-facing team, a combination of MaPS and AUPE employees, are primarily in the office on key meeting days, which generally are Mondays – Thursdays. Fridays are generally remote workdays, although they schedule their work such that there is always one of them in the office on Friday in the event there is a client issue that requires attention in-person.
- The receptionist is full-time on-site as the team has a drop-in service available to faculty, staff and students and this needs to be covered.
- Several staff have technical roles that do not involve any significant client contact; they tend to work "behind the scenes" and their work is generated by the client-facing team members.

Communication and Collaboration:

- The team uses *MS Teams* and a project-management app for team collaboration and meetings.
- The team has weekly meetings for all staff to participate – from anywhere.

Scenario 2: The Back-Office Team

This team of 12 employees (MaPS and AUPE) manages the operations associated with a back-office function that has no requirement for in-person client services. They provide support for managers and employees in faculties and units by phone and through digital communication. Most of the staff are very familiar with the work and have demonstrated an ability to be highly productive working remotely.

The staff workplace arrangements are as follows:

- Two staff in the office full-time (Jesse is required to be in the office given a need to access paper-files and Taylor's personal preference is to work from the office as he struggles to manage boundaries working remotely).
- Eight staff work on an alternating schedule of three days in the office and two days at home, then switch the following week to three days at home and two days at the office. This ensures there is opportunity for individual work suited to working at home and work that is more collaborative while in the office.

- One staff member, who does highly technical and independent work, works from home most of the time except for biweekly team meetings and occasional planning meetings that are scheduled in advance. They are flexible and able to come to the office with a day's notice if something comes up.
- The manager for this team varies their schedule depending upon the week and the requirements of the team, but typically works three to four days in the office.

Communication and Collaboration:

- The team has a monthly team meeting that requires all members to be in-person. On these days, all staff are present in the office for at least a half-day.
- The team uses *MS Teams* extensively and each group has a daily "huddle" where all staff pop into a meeting to discuss workloads, issues and share information. They encourage everyone to spend at least a few minutes each day on "watercooler"-type conversations.
- The team has a quarterly half-day planning meeting which everyone is required to attend in-person.