Working from home – interim policy and guidelines in response to COVID-19

1. Introduction and scope

1.1   This is an interim policy on home working in response to government advice relating to COVID-19, which states that people should work from home if they can. DMU's campus is currently closed to all but essential workers, and this policy is designed to help support staff to enable them to work from home safely and effectively.

1.2   A small number of posts still need to be carried out on campus, and members of staff for whom this is the case will be supported by their line manager to ensure they are able to carry out their role in as safe a manner as possible. Some other posts are not currently required on campus and cannot be undertaken remotely either, and, where appropriate, colleagues in this position will have been contacted regarding the option to be furloughed. For all other staff who are undertaking any work from home, this policy will apply.

1.3   For the purposes of this policy, home-based work, home working or working from home mean the performance of some or all of an employee's work/duties, from a home or private setting.

1.4   This policy does not apply to staff who wish to submit a request to support regular home working as part of a formal flexible working request. Employees should refer to the [Flexible Working Policy](#) in these circumstances.

1.5   This is a temporary position which will be continually assessed over the coming weeks and months, with reviews of this interim policy taking place at regular intervals as and when required.

2. Guiding principles

2.1   DMU understands that staff may be working from home in difficult situations so we:

- Do not expect them to work core hours all the time and understand that hours of work may flex;
- Accept that during these exceptional times colleagues will be working on a best effort basis, not on a business as usual basis;
- Will consider work from an output and quality perspective rather than how long it took to produce it, accepting that individual situations may reduce employees' speed and capacity;
- Trust staff to work productively and give their best endeavours;
- Recognise that staff are juggling caring responsibilities with work. Staff in this situation should be encouraged to ask for support where possible and encouraged to take annual leave as a respite from work.

2.2   In these extraordinary circumstances, we recognise that many people may be required to provide care for others. Where this applies, employees should discuss this with their manager so that an appropriate solution can be found – this may include the consideration of flexible working hours, special leave and/or the use of annual leave.

2.3   If an employee is due to work remotely but is unwell, they must inform their manager using the normal sickness reporting procedure.

3. Ability and agreement to work from home

3.1 This policy can be applied to all university employees, regardless of contract type or duration, other than those employed on bank contracts, although it is recognised that because of the nature of some roles, home working would not be practical/possible.

3.2 To support working from home taking place, staff may be asked to undertake a self-assessment of their homeworking provision by completing the checklist at Appendix 1. This should be sent to the appropriate line manager.

3.3 In addition to completing the checklist, staff should agree / consider with their managers:

- Contact arrangements and frequency of contact. For those colleagues who normally have a standard working pattern or a contract with fixed working hours, a discussion around if/how this may need to temporarily flex or vary due to, for example, other commitments such as childcare, should also take place;
- IT requirements as determined by the job (e.g. laptop, mobile phone, access to SAP), and whether they are able to use personal equipment to support home working;
- Whether equipment that will be used is in safe working order;
- Revising familiarity with the relevant health and safety policies including the need to record incidences;
- Forms, including DSE are available through clicking on your directorate / faculty link on the right hand side of this page.

3.4 It is important to complete a DSE, and for the employee and their manager to consider the recommendations. If no space is available that meets the guidance in the DSE, the employee should discuss their options with their manager. Employees may, if necessary, obtain permission via their Dean/Director to collect their office furniture/equipment (e.g. chairs etc.) from campus, to enable home working.

3.5 Where a member of staff who otherwise would be able to work from home is not able to do so because of a disability or other health condition, they should discuss with their line manager whether reasonable adjustments may be made.

4. Communications and safety

4.1 Home working is a form of lone working. This means that there may be a risk of staff not having immediate access to another person for assistance or supervision if circumstances require, i.e. in an emergency situation.

4.2 To mitigate against this risk, staff that are working from home are required to:

- Keep their work diary up-to-date.
- Agree a schedule or protocol for keeping in touch with their manager.
- Be contactable via email and/or by voice as agreed with their line manager, either through home phone/mobile phone or via Skype.

4.3 Under no circumstances should students be invited to visit a member of staff at home when remote working, nor should any member of staff provide a private phone number or address for correspondence (e.g. to assess coursework). In addition,

staff should not under any circumstances access a student's device via a remote desktop session.

5. Use of DMU or personal IT equipment and mobile devices.

5.1   Staff, regardless of whether using DMU or personal equipment, should familiarise themselves with, and adhere to the Mobile Computing Policy. For the purposes of this policy, the principles of the Mobile Computing Policy should be applied to personal computers and laptops. It is the responsibility of staff to:

- Treat DMU property with due regard and care;
- Ensure personal devices feature up to date antivirus software and ensure whenever possible that operating systems and software are kept reasonably up-to date;
- Be conscious of other individuals within their household who may have access to their devices and where possible restrict such access;
- Log out of university systems and not allow the device to remember passwords, or write passwords down / share passwords with others;
- Be conscious that other people within their household may be able to see information on their screen/overhear phone calls and take measures to ensure confidentiality;
- Refrain from storing data on their personal device unless absolutely necessary (use of Office 365/OneDrive may help here);
- Refrain from taking paper documents containing personal or otherwise confidential information home with them unless absolutely necessary. If paper documents are taken home they must be kept secure;
- Be cautious of phishing emails and other fraudulent activity, especially in light of the current situation.

5.2   Staff can find additional support for using home/DMU equipment and IT Services on DMU Connect here.

6. Expenses and reimbursement

6.1   Internet services and utilities (e.g. water, gas and electricity) will not normally be paid for or reimbursed. Call costs will only be reimbursed in exceptional circumstances and only when the costs to be incurred have been agreed in advance with line managers. Itemised billing is required. Staff should view the Business Expenses Policy in advance of submitting any claim.

6.2   Employees may be able to claim tax relief for some household bills if they have had to work from home, either because their workplace has closed, or they are following advice to self-isolate and are working from home. Staff can visit the HMRC tax relief webpage to find out if they are eligible and to complete the process.

7. Insurance

7.1   It is the employee's responsibility to assess the personal implications of home-based work with respect to household insurance.

8. Terms and Conditions and other DMU policies

8.1   An employee who is remote working is still governed by the same terms and conditions of their standard contract of employment.

8.2   This interim policy does not form part of any contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

8.3   The Code of Conduct and all other DMU policies, procedures and associated guidance remain in place and should be adhered to during any period of remote working.