

Telecommuting Policy and Procedure

What is telecommuting?

Telecommuting allows employees to work at home, on the road, or in a satellite location for all or part of their workweek. Notre Dame de Namur University considers telecommuting a viable, flexible work option when both the employee and the job are suited to such an arrangement. Telecommuting may be appropriate for some employees and jobs but not for others. Telecommuting is not an entitlement, it is not a companywide benefit, and it in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment with Notre Dame de Namur University.

How to Request a Telecommuting Agreement?

Telecommuting can be informal, such as working from home for a short-term project or on the road during business travel, or a formal, set schedule of working away from the office, as described below. Either an employee or a supervisor can suggest telecommuting as a possible work arrangement.

Any telecommuting arrangement may be discontinued “at-will” and at any time at the request of either the telecommuter or the organization. Every effort will be made to provide 30 days’ notice of such change to accommodate commuting, child care, and other issues that may arise from the termination of a telecommuting arrangement. There may be instances, however, when no notice is possible.

Eligibility

Before entering into any telecommuting agreement, the employee and manager, with the assistance of the human resource department, will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement, reviewing the following areas:

- Employee suitability. The employee and manager will assess the needs and work habits of the employee, compared to traits customarily recognized as appropriate for successful telecommuters (e.g., current job performance and attendance and the ability to work independently).
- Job responsibilities. The employee and manager will discuss the job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement.
- Tax and other legal implications. The employee must determine any tax or legal consequences under IRS, state and local government laws, and/or restrictions of working out of a home-based office. Responsibility for fulfilling all obligations in this area rests solely with the employee.

If the employee and manager agree and the human resource department concurs, a draft telecommuting agreement will be prepared and signed by all parties.

Evaluation of telecommuter performance during the trial period will include regular interaction by phone and e-mail between the employee and the manager and weekly face-to-face meetings to discuss work progress and problems. At the end of the trial period, the employee and manager will each complete an evaluation of the arrangement and make recommendations for continuance or modifications. Evaluation of telecommuter performance beyond the trial period will be consistent with that received by employees working at the office in content and frequency. Still, it will focus on work output and completion of objectives rather than on time-based performance.

An appropriate level of communication between the telecommuter and supervisor will be agreed to as part of the discussion process and will be more formal during the trial period. After the conclusion of the trial period, the manager and telecommuter will communicate at a level consistent with employees working at the office or in a manner and frequency that is appropriate for the job and the individuals involved.

Equipment

Equipment supplied by the employee, if deemed appropriate by the organization, will be maintained by the employee. Notre Dame de Namur University accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment. Notre Dame de Namur University reserves the right to determine appropriate equipment, subject to change at any time. Equipment supplied by the organization is to be used for business purposes only. The telecommuter must sign an inventory of all Notre Dame de Namur University property received and agree to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. Upon termination of employment, all company property will be returned to the company unless other arrangements have been made.

The employee will establish an appropriate work environment within their home for work purposes. Notre Dame de Namur University will not be responsible for costs associated with the setup of the employee's home office, such as remodeling, furniture, or lighting, nor for repairs or modifications to the home office space.

Security

Consistent with the organization's expectations of information security for employees working at the office, telecommuting employees will be expected to protect the proprietary company and customer information accessible from their home office. Steps include using regular password maintenance, storing confidential electronic files on NDNU shared drives via VPN, not printing confidential documents at home, and other measures appropriate for the job and the environment.

Time Worked

Telecommuting employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to accurately record all hours worked using the NDNU online payroll system. Hours worked more than those scheduled per day and per workweek requires the advance approval of the telecommuter's supervisor. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the immediate termination of the telecommuting agreement.

Ad Hoc Arrangements

Temporary telecommuting arrangements may be approved for circumstances such as inclement weather, special projects, or business travel. These arrangements are approved on an as-needed basis only, with no expectation of ongoing continuance.

Other informal, short-term arrangements may be made for employees on family or medical leave to the extent practical for the employee and the organization and with the consent of the employee's health care provider, if appropriate.

All informal telecommuting arrangements are made case-by-case, focusing first on the organization's business needs.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

1. Does an employee have a right to telecommute? Could an employee be forced to work at home?

- No, to both questions.
- Management decides whether the employee can work off-site, depending on the nature of the position and the characteristics of the employee. Management also has the right to end an employee's use of the option to telecommute. For example, the employee's performance declines or if the arrangement no longer meets the organization's needs.

2. Will an employee's work suffer without direct, on-site supervision?

- Research has shown employee working at home has fewer interruptions and distractions.

3. How can a supervisor monitor work performance when the employee is not physically present?

- Work performance can be measured by examining the product or results of the employee's efforts through project schedules, key milestones, regular status reports, and team reviews.
- Managers may also call employees working at home at any time during work hours.

4. What equipment will the employee need at the home-based worksite, and who will provide it?

- NDNU will furnish all equipment used for telecommuting. Management decides what equipment will be issued case-by-case, depending on the employee's situation.

5. Who does the telecommuter call if they have a problem getting into the system or with the equipment itself?

- Any problems with getting into the system or equipment should be directed to IT for resolution. You can call 650.508.3555 or email NDNU OIT Helpdesk (helpdesk@ndnu.edu).

6. Will I have to bring in the equipment, or will there be an at-home service for technical support?

- The telecommuter will have to bring the equipment into their official workplace for problems that the IT Support Desk cannot resolve over the phone.

7. What is the minimum/maximum time allowed for Telecommuting?

- Each telecommuter might be on a different schedule approved by their immediate manager. The telecommuter's direct manager has the authority to determine this factor, and each request will be considered case-by-case.

8. Who is eligible for Telecommuting?

- Management determines which positions are eligible for telecommuting. Suitable employees occupying eligible positions will be offered the opportunity to participate in the telecommuting program.

9. How much notice does a manager have to give a telecommuter if they decide to terminate their privilege?

- Management shall provide 30 days' notice before canceling an employee's participation to allow sufficient time for the employee to reestablish arrangements for commuting to work, or for child/elder care, etc. NOTE: Although telecommuting will give some employees more time for their family responsibilities, they may not use duty time for providing dependent care or any purpose other than official duties. Failure to adhere to this shall be sufficient reason for a manager to terminate an employee's participation in the telecommuting program.

10. Can a Manager deny telecommuting privileges if they deem the alternate work site unsafe?

- Yes, a manager can deny an employee the opportunity to participate or may rescind a telecommuting agreement based on safety problems or suspected hazardous materials in the home. The manager may also inspect the home office for compliance with health and safety requirements when deemed appropriate.

11. Will Notre Dame de Namur University pay for communication services and extra charges encountered for the alternate work site?

- No, at this time

12. Can telecommuters take home confidential and or important original documents?

- No, the telecommuting employee cannot bring home confidential or essential original documents. If they need to use any dept. documents to do their work, and they will have to come to the office to complete those tasks.

13. How much time should be given to a telecommuter if needed to come into the office on a work from the home day if called in for an emergency?

- The telecommute should be able to get into work as soon as possible, but no later than 2 hours after being notified to come into the office.