

Remote Work Procedures and Practices

Background and Considerations

GRCC recognizes that there are many considerations at issue with respect to remote work for employees. The College acknowledges that, in some instances, remote work may create benefits and drawbacks, both for the institution and individual employees. In an attempt to implement a reasonable and consistent plan regarding remote work, the College considered the following factors:

1. A review of College policies and procedures, with a goal of ensuring that an employee's work location does not negatively impact productivity or an employee's ability to perform essential job functions.
2. Legal requirements as an employer, with a goal of ensuring that College policy and procedures allow for supervisors to maintain institutional legal compliance, including with respect to compensation for both exempt and nonexempt employees.
3. Opportunities for interaction, with a goal of ensuring that employees work with their colleagues and peers to connect regularly, which the College understands broadens connections and perspective. With this consideration in mind, GRCC policies and procedures must call for employees to work on campus at a frequency that is appropriate for their department, position and the employee's capabilities, while still ensuring sufficient overlap to prioritize connections and engagement.
4. A work environment that is conducive to productive and focused work time. It is important for any employee working remotely to accept responsibility for maintaining a work environment that is conducive to remote work and meetings, including: limiting background noise, distractions and interruptions; keeping the ability to maintain confidentiality; and working from an ergonomic workspace and having the proper infrastructure (network connectivity, power, etc.).
5. Supervision for remote employees does require additional effort, and the College needs to enable and prepare supervisors to fulfill their responsibilities and support their employees.

The College understands and recognizes that employees may request to work remotely for a number of reasons, and would like to be able to offer this benefit where it can be mutually beneficial. It is important that the College's policy and procedures provide for clear and consistent rules which will be followed by supervisors and employees for both: (1) the request process; and (2) remote work guidelines, if such work is approved.

Process Overview

The first step in developing a remote work plan is to evaluate overall employee eligibility. To maintain College wide operations, oversight and customer service it has been determined that Professional, Management & Administration (PMA) employees at levels P5, M5 and all S levels are not eligible for remote work agreements. APSS employees are not eligible for remote work agreements. Executive Leadership team members are not eligible for remote work agreements. These employees may still be eligible for occasional remote work. Other position eligibility information is noted below in the Position Eligibility Section of this document.

In light of the foregoing considerations, the College has identified a process by which remote work will be considered. Beginning at the departmental level, the leader of a department must obtain approval from an Executive Leadership Team (ELT) member of a plan to allow for remote work in the leader's area. Only certain departments and positions within departments will be eligible for remote work, and such positions will need to be preliminarily identified prior to communicating with the ELT member. If a department is not eligible for any regular remote work agreements due to the nature of the work and needs of the department, employees may still be offered the option of occasional remote work.

If a department is eligible to allow remote work agreements (vs only occasional remote work), the Department Leader must then review and determine positional eligibility. Positional eligibility will be based on the essential functions of the position, the amount of oversight needed for the position, the direct support, and departmental coverage needs. If an employee works in a department with approval for regular remote work agreements, and is employed in an eligible role, they may request a regular remote work schedule. Regular remote work schedules will be approved by the supervisor, and reviewed annually. A copy of an associated remote work agreement, as well as the planned remote work schedule, must be submitted to Human Resources. The College may adjust or revoke remote work at any time if the needs of the department, position and/or employee eligibility change.

If a leader believes their department may be eligible to consider individual regular remote work agreements, they should work to review departmental eligibility followed by position eligibility and then work through individual employee eligibility with any interested employees. If a department or a position within a department is not eligible for remote work agreements individual employees may still be eligible for occasional remote work. If an employee will be engaging in any type of remote work (a remote work agreement or occasional remote work) they MUST complete and sign a remote work request and acknowledgement form (which must be approved by the supervisor and retained in HR) and must record all remote work appropriately on bi-weekly timesheets.

Departmental Eligibility

The first step in allowing for remote work is departmental approval by an ELT member. In order for a department to obtain approval, the supervisor or department leader must submit a plan to their ELT member. It is expected that supervisors who do not report directly to an ELT member will seek approval beginning with their supervisor, and subsequently with their respective ELT member. Expectations for departments that have regular remote work schedules include:

1. Offices and departments must remain appropriately staffed and open during core hours between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Some departments may have staffing expectations beyond these hours, and will need to discuss such expectations with the department's ELT member.
2. Front desk and/or reception areas must be appropriately covered.
3. The office must continue to create a welcoming environment, and it must be clear that the office is open for students and stakeholders.
4. Remote work requests and Agreements will not be considered until departmental approval has been granted.
5. The departmental remote work plan should include a description of the impact on students and/or stakeholders (e.g., how remote work allows for increased flexibility for students by extended service hours, etc.).

Position Eligibility

Once a department has obtained approval to allow remote work, the next step is to review positions for eligibility based on the work performed, oversight needed, collaboration with other campus stakeholders, and accessibility to on-campus infrastructure to complete essential functions.

Positions eligible for remote work are those positions that: do not require close supervision (non-exempt positions typically do require close supervision); do not require access to on-campus property to perform their essential job functions; and do not involve duties that require the employee to otherwise work within a college office space or on-campus property.

Ineligible positions include: Professional, Management, and Administration employees at levels P5, M5 and all S levels, APSS employees, and Executive Leadership team members as well as positions that require employees to complete their work on-campus; employees that require more direct supervision; or those that are direct service or administrative support in nature. Employees in contingency roles, student employees, custodial and maintenance staff, GRCC Police and office or direct support positions are not eligible for remote work.

Exceptions to position-based eligibility will be rare and must be approved in advance by the appropriate Executive Leadership Team member. Justification for the exception must be included on the remote work request document.

Employee Eligibility

The third step in the process is to review employee eligibility for remote work (this step will be performed after the department and position are both approved for remote work). Employees seeking to work remotely will submit a Remote Work Request & Agreement Form to their supervisor for review. This form will ensure the following:

1. The employee has been evaluated as performing satisfactorily on their performance reviews and will have the ability to fulfill their essential job functions while working remotely. This means that care-giving or other multitasking while performing remote work is not acceptable for either the employee or the College.
2. The employee accepts responsibility for maintaining a hazard free, ergonomically acceptable, audibly and visually private, productivity supporting work space, where they are able to maintain the College's commitments to professionalism and the confidentiality of College and student information.
3. Any equipment or technology removed from campus for remote work must be returned at the expiration of a remote work agreement, or upon termination of an individual's employment. The College will not provide additional equipment, desks, chairs, standing desk equipment, or similar items for a remote work location.
4. The employee's and the employee's coworkers' productivity, including their supervisor, will not be negatively impacted.
5. Employees must be able to function similarly to how they would on campus. This means that employees will be available to provide services to students and/or stakeholders during their normal work hours using a virtual method of contact; work and productivity will remain structured.
6. Employees who have approved remote work agreements will acknowledge that they will be expected to work on campus if needed for meetings, to provide for backup for coworker absences, other functions that require in-person attendance, etc.

7. The employee will acknowledge and accept responsibility for reading, understanding and complying with the Remote Work Policy as well as any related policies and/or documents.

Expectations

As noted in several areas above, it is of utmost importance that work being done remotely is held to the same standards and expectations as work that is performed on-campus. It is also expected that with the flexibility given to employees with Remote Work Agreements, they will also be flexible and accommodating with respect to campus attendance, when required, for meetings, office coverage or other work-related reasons. The College expects that employees working remotely will provide a real-time indicator of their work status for the benefit of their co-workers and supervisor. This will help everyone manage expectations relating to response time and availability. Regardless of work location, all College policies and contract/handbook provisions will apply to College employees.

All remote work must be done within the State of Michigan.

Employees are not expected to work remotely if the College is closed due to inclement weather or other unscheduled shutdowns.

Frequency of Regular Remote Work Agreements

As part of the review process for positional eligibility, approved employees will be allowed to work remotely on a limited basis and on a regular schedule. Remote work schedules should be consistent and coordinated to maximize collaboration opportunities with peers and colleagues. Generally, employees working in student or staff support departments should be in the office four (4) or more days per week, allowing for up to one (1) day to work remotely. The same applies to employees with supervisory responsibilities, as such employees need to be available to their direct reports, in-person for a large majority of the work-week.

Employees in highly technical roles, and roles that do not provide regular direct services or involve front-facing positions, may work remotely for up to two (2) days per week on a regular schedule. Exceptions to allow for up to three (3) days for highly technical positions within Information Technology may be considered on a case-by-case basis, and must be approved by the Executive Leadership Team member.