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# Homeworking

## Policy & Procedure

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## Version Control

Version	Author	Date	Changes

## **1. PURPOSE & SCOPE**

The College recognises that some posts (or some of an employee's duties) may be properly carried out from the employee's home base, and that some employees might prefer to work from home on a permanent basis. This policy and procedure sets out the main considerations that the College and the employee should take into account before making the decision to transfer the employee's place of work.

This policy and procedure applies to all employees of Edinburgh College, with the exception of new employees who are undergoing a probationary period. It does not apply to agency workers or contractors.

This policy and procedure does not cover other aspects of flexible working (such as amended hours) this should be addressed using the College's Flexible Working Policy & Procedure.

This policy and procedure complies with current legislation and seeks to follow best practice.

## **2. POLICY**

The College recognises the flexibility and productivity benefits that homeworking can provide to both the College and the employee. Homeworking arrangements are based on a management philosophy of trust and mutual benefit.

The College is committed to supporting flexibility with working arrangements wherever possible while continuing to be able to meet the needs of both the College and the employee.

There is an expectation from the College that there should be no detriment to the employee's contractual and legal rights, the students' experience, provision of services or quality arrangements and stakeholders' expectations due to homeworking and these will

always be priorities when considering applications and arrangements.

This policy and procedure is intended to provide a clear framework and a fair and consistent process for agreeing home working arrangements (where such agreements are applicable) and outlining the other conditions which may apply to homeworking when undertaken on a regulated and frequent basis.

This policy and procedure is not intended to address the ad hoc one-off arrangements for occasional home working for short periods to complete specific agreed pieces of work, nor are they intended to change existing arrangements or working practices.

The College reserves the right to refuse a homeworking request for legitimate business or logistical reasons or other appropriate concerns (see section 5.1 for further details).

### 3. KEY DEFINITIONS

#### 3.1 Homeworking

Homeworking describes the situation when an employee whose job could be done at the employee's workplace, works from home instead. Homeworking may be agreed for all, or part, of an employee's working week.

#### 3.2 Different types of homeworking

- **Homeworker:**  
Home is the employee's main place of work.
- **Flexible homeworking:**  
Employee's time is split between home and College campus(es).
- **Mobile working:**

Employee has a base at home from which to travel to different campuses and third-party sites etc.

- **Occasional homeworking:**

Employee's main place of work is at a College campus(es) but with working from home occasionally. This is normally approved informally between an employee and their line manager and is not covered by this policy and procedure.

## 4. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 4.1 Line manager responsibilities

- To consider homeworking at their discretion (final approval sits with the Assistant Principal/Director).
- To ensure that their employee is aware of the expectations and the required standard of work including specific deliverables.
- To ensure that the Health and Safety Homeworking Checklist is completed and any actions identified are actioned. See link below for Health and Safety Homeworking Guidance and Checklist <https://sheasure.net/edinburghcollege/Portal/Portal/ModuleDetail/5123641#/information>
- To establish appropriate communication and reporting procedures with the employee including any arrangements for face to face/campus meetings etc.
- To regularly evaluate and provide feedback on the homeworking arrangement ensuring appropriate outcomes are being delivered.

### 4.2 Employee responsibilities

- To abide by the requirements of this homeworking policy and procedure.
- To carry out appropriate assessments in their home regarding health and safety, data security and confidentiality as outlined in this policy and procedure.
- To agree homeworking arrangements with their line manager.

- To ensure that the Health and Safety Homeworking Checklist is completed and any actions identified are actioned. See link below for Health and Safety Homeworking Guidance and Checklist <https://sheasure.net/edinburghcollege/Portal/Portal/ModuleDetail/5123641#/information>
- To complete the mandatory online homeworking training module.
- To be available and contactable at the times agreed with their line manager.
- To take adequate rest breaks during their working day to safeguard their own health.
- To attend College campus(es) when necessary and with the appropriate support in place.
- To deliver the expected work outcomes.
- To return College equipment when requested.

#### 4.3 HR responsibilities

- To provide advice and guidance to managers on how to effectively manage homeworking at team and individual level.
- To assist managers with the fair and consistent application of this policy and procedure

## 5. PROCEDURE

### 5.1 Considerations in applying for homeworking

All College employees may make a request to work from home. However, before they do so, the College will need to consider the following:

- a) Whether or not the post is one that can be carried out satisfactorily by someone who is not working at a College campus(es). The types of posts that lend themselves most easily to this form of working are those which rely heavily on electronic methods of working. Posts which require a lot of day-to-day,

face-to-face interaction between students and/or colleagues may not be suitable. The College will have the final decision.

- b) Whether or not working from home would suit the employee concerned – not all people find it easy to work from home, especially as there tends to be a lack of face-to-face contact with their colleagues. Employees who enjoy the social aspect of work may therefore find it difficult to work on their own all day.
- c) Working from home requires more self-discipline and better time management than working on campus. Employees who are frequently late for work, have a high level of absenteeism, or who frequently miss work deadlines may not be considered ready to manage their own day and work schedule. However, it is also recognised that working from home can lead to improved productivity as it supports employees in managing their home and work responsibilities and so should remain an option in agreed circumstances.
- d) The employee's line manager will agree a work schedule with the employee on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. It will be up to the employer to ensure that appropriate time has been allocated to the employee for their work tasks, and for the employee to manage their time to ensure that the work is completed satisfactorily and on time and that adequate rest breaks are taken. Therefore, the employee needs to feel comfortable about managing their own time. Persistent failure to meet deadlines may result in a management investigation in the first instance and the employee may be required to return to the office on either a temporary or permanent basis. If the employee needs constant help and supervision, working from home may not be suitable for them.

## 5.2 How to apply for homeworking

If an employee wishes to be considered for working from home, they should do the following:

- 5.2.1 Discuss the matter with their line manager, who will tell them if there are any initial objections, e.g. the work is not suitable, or their work performance is not yet at a level where the

College feels the employee or the College would benefit from homeworking. It should be noted that homeworking is not intended to allow the employee to be a full-time carer for children or a dependent adult. The employee will still need to make adequate arrangements for the care of their dependents – see College’s Flexible Working Policy for further details on options available to support you in this. However, each case will be decided on the circumstances of the carer. Full time carers are not automatically ruled out of working from home.

- 5.2.2 Make a formal application in writing to their line manager, setting out their reasons for wishing to work from home, the type of homeworking they are proposing (see definitions under section 3.2) and how they would plan to complete their work accurately and on time.
- 5.2.3 Attend a formal meeting with their line manager and a HR representative to discuss further implications of their homeworking request, ensuring that the employee understands the implications of working from home. The meeting should take place within 15 working days of the receipt of the written application, and the employee has the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a trade union representative or work colleague.
- 5.2.4 At the meeting consideration may need to be given to different types of homeworking than that initially requested by the employee (see section 3.2 for further details). For example, discussion may highlight that working from home full-time would not be practical but that flexible homeworking may be more appropriate.
- 5.2.5 The line manager will also need confirmation at the meeting about the employee’s homeworking arrangements, in particular how they will go about ensuring privacy of information and security of equipment.
- 5.2.6 The line manager should inform the employee, in writing, of their decision within 15 working days of their meeting. The line manager should review all aspects with their Head of

Faculty/Department before reaching a final conclusion, as homeworking must have the support of their Head to proceed. If they are unable to make a decision within this timescale then the employee should be informed of the reason for the delay and the date when the decision will be advised, however, this should be within 30 working days of the initial application at the latest.

- 5.2.7 If the employee's application for homeworking has been approved in principle then the employee will be required to complete a DSE workstation assessment of their potential home work station and to review and discuss any findings/actions with their line manager. Arrangements should be made to ensure an appropriate work-station, including technology, is set up and in place before homeworking commences (see section 5.3 for further details and Appendix 1 for Homeworking self-assessment checklist). The College will offer the support needed to provide employees with the assistive equipment and furniture they may require. However, if concerns from the DSE workstation assessment cannot be addressed the College reserves the right to refuse the homeworking application.
- 5.2.8 If the employee's application for homeworking is not approved, they have the right of appeal against the decision (see section 6 for further details).
- 5.2.9 There will be a six-month review period, from the commencement of homeworking, to ensure that the new arrangement is satisfactory for both the College and the employee. If it is the College's, or the employee's, view that the new arrangement is not satisfactory, the employee will revert to their previous contractual and working arrangements.

If required, previous arrangements will become effective a month after the decision is made to cease home working so as to enable the employee to make any necessary changes to their circumstances.

## 5.3 Setting up a home work station

### 5.3.1 What the College will provide:

- Where possible, the College will provide a computer/laptop if appropriate and facilitate other reasonable requests to enable work to be undertaken at home. These items remain the property of the College and must be returned when either the employee's employment or the arrangement to work at home terminates. The employee must keep the equipment in good condition and be responsible for its physical security. The above applies where the equipment in question is the property of the College and does not belong to the employee. Compliance is required with the College's IT User's Policy.
- Homeworkers are expected to ensure the necessary confidentiality and to only use any equipment supplied by the College for College work. This will help to protect against the introduction of viruses on computer systems.
- IT Helpdesk support will be available during normal College working hours. Problems with employee's hardware will normally be required to be assessed and repaired in the College.
- IT can provide appropriate software (such as Office 365 suite) for the use of homeworkers.
- The employee will be covered by the College's employer's liability insurance when working from home (although the employee may be required to also inform their household insurance – see section 5.5.2 for further details).

### 5.3.2 What the employee is expected to provide:

- A safe and suitable home working environment in order to undertake their work safely (i.e. with adequate heating, lighting, ventilation and other health and safety requirements).
- Reasonable and appropriate security at the employee's home for the safe storage and transmission of data, documents and other information. IT will be able to provide the employee with

guidance and support on this matter, if required. Mandatory cyber security training should also be undertaken by the employee on a regular basis.

- On the exceptional occasion where a home visit is required/requested, and with the express permission from the employee, access to enable the College to review the physical state of the working environment for security or health and safety purposes, to carry out maintenance on property or equipment where necessary, to install new equipment, to recover College property on resignation or dismissal or simply to deliver supplies. Any home visit will normally take place during office hours.

#### 5.3.3 Guidance on costs incurred as a result of homeworking:

- No contribution will be made by the College towards normal household expenses attached to home working, such as heating, lighting, council tax and telephone and internet connections.
- Employees may be able to claim tax relief for any household expenses incurred as a result of working from home, provided the expenses are solely work related. If an employee wishes to benefit from this tax relief, see the Government's guide on claiming tax relief for job expenses at <https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home>.

### 5.4 Keeping in touch when homeworking

5.4.1 Although the employee's main place of work will be their home, they may need to visit the College from time to time as agreed with their line manager. This will be an essential condition of their line manager's agreement to homeworking. The frequency and timing of visits will be agreed with the employee but may include attendance at team meetings and training sessions where these are not suitable to be undertaken online. Employees will not be eligible to claim travel expenses for base campus visits as they form part of their working from home agreement.

- 5.4.2 The employee's colleagues and manager may need to contact them for work updates and the employee is expected to be available at reasonable agreed times.
- 5.4.3 Under no circumstances are arrangements to be made for students, colleagues, clients or representatives to meet with the employee at their home. All such meetings should be carried out at a College campus or similar professional setting in order to maintain the necessary level of professionalism and safety.
- 5.4.4 Any problems which arise during homeworking should be communicated to the employee's line manager as soon as possible, or by exception, to their manager's manager.

## 5.5 Other practical considerations for homeworking

- 5.5.1 The College has a duty of care to its employees so requires a risk assessment ([DSE workstation assessment](#)) to be undertaken and reviewed before a homeworking application can be formally approved.
- 5.5.2 The employee will also be required to check on the health and safety aspects of installing electronic equipment. It is important that there are no trailing cables, which might cause an accident. The employee will also need to establish that there is sufficient security where expensive equipment is being loaned to them and that there is adequate insurance in place to cover the possibility of theft, etc. The employee will also be responsible for ensuring that they take adequate rest breaks throughout their working day. Regular rest breaks are important for both the employee's physical and mental health.
- 5.5.3 The employer agrees to provide essential supplies to the home worker. The employee should agree with their line manager what network files they need access to and make sure that such access is possible. The employee also needs to agree with their line manager what they will need in the way of hard copies, stationery, etc. The employee also needs to agree how their essential supplies will be maintained. For

example, their line manager may wish that the employee collects the supplies that they need when they visit the College.

- 5.5.4 Keeping an employee's domestic and working life separate is not easy and they need to think about how they will manage to persuade those who live with them not to interrupt them while they are working. The employee will also need to ensure adequate security is in place regarding access to their computer and work files. A breach of security is a serious matter and any concern should be reported [here](#). (Please see Appendix 1 for Reporting form, Appendix 2 for Severity Assessment Matrix and Appendix 3 for Flowchart). This will be investigated as appropriate and responded to accordingly.
- 5.5.5 Although the employee may save money (especially the costs of commuting) their home expenses for heating and lighting may increase. The College will not make a contribution towards increased costs however employees can claim the tax-relief on the sum of £6 per week (c.£2.40pw tax saving) permitted by HM Revenue & Customs – see link to government website for further details on how to apply <http://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home>.
- 5.5.6 It is unlikely that the type of work the employee will be undertaking from home would give rise to a claim for business rates from their local council, but it is the employee's responsibility to check their policy. The College will not be responsible for any such costs, nor for any capital gains tax payable should the employee sell their house.
- 5.5.7 If the employee owns their house through a mortgage, the employee should check with their lender that there are no issues regarding homeworking. The employee should also check with their insurer that any equipment etc will be covered by their household insurance. If it is not, then the employee must inform the College before starting work from home so that proper arrangements can be made. If the employee does not inform the College that these arrangements have been made then the employee may be

held personally liable for replacing any stolen or damaged equipment.

- 5.5.8 All office furniture and equipment which may have been loaned to the employee remains the property of the College and must be looked after and maintained properly. Before homeworking commences, the employee and their line manager should agree the process to be followed should any College equipment require repair, servicing or maintenance. These aspects should also be identified as part of any DSE work-station assessment. At the end of the employee's employment, it must be returned to the College.
- 5.5.9 If you are concerned about the implications of lone working while working from home please review the guidance which is available on the Health and Safety SHE Portal – clause 40 on this link: [G001 - Health and Safety Management Procedure.pdf](#). You should make your manager aware if you are lone working and agree an appropriate form of communication to keep in touch.

## 5.6 Managing homeworkers

- 5.6.1 Employees who work from home will be managed consistently in line with other employees and will be given the same opportunities for training, development and promotion.
- 5.6.2 Managers should always keep in mind the additional challenges homeworkers may face, such as problems with connectivity (i.e. internet and remote access) and the need for additional flexibility around actual working hours and the timing and length of breaks. However, this would then be balanced out with the benefits available to the homeworker, such as, responding to emails/completing work tasks at other more suitable times – as long as this does not impact negatively on the service/tasks/function being delivered. Employees and managers should agree on an appropriate work schedule (see section 5.1 on this and other points to consider in regards to homeworking).

- 5.6.3 All College policies, procedures and guidelines will continue to apply to homeworkers including the management and reporting of sickness absence.
- 5.6.4 Homeworking employees should participate in the College's development review process (currently Enhance) in line with other employees. It is recommended that face-to-face meetings are arranged to gain the most benefit for the employee and manager from these meetings and reviews.

## 6. APPEAL

- 6.1. There is a right of appeal against the decision to reject an employee's request for homeworking.
- 6.2. The appeal meeting will be chaired by a manager more senior than the manager(s) involved in making the initial homeworking decision. The employee has the right to be accompanied to the appeal meeting by a College trade union representative or work colleague.
- 6.3. Any appeal must be submitted in writing, (stating the grounds for the appeal and including any documentation or evidence relied upon to support it), to the Director of HR and OD within five working days of receipt of the manager's decision on the homeworking request.
- 6.4. The appeal shall normally be held within 15 working days of receipt of the appeal. Their decision shall be final.
- 6.5. Where an appeal is not upheld, or an earlier application was refused, a further homeworking application will not be considered for six months unless there have been significant changes to the employee's role.

## **7. ASSURANCE**

- 7.1 This policy and procedure will be reviewed following any relevant changes to employment law or alternatively every three years as a minimum.
- 7.2 This policy and procedure will be reviewed and approved in line with the policy review process (see Appendix 2).

## **8. APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1: Homeworking self-assessment checklist

Where working from home has been approved, this form should be completed initially by the homeworker and returned to their line manager. Any matters of concern should be resolved before home working commences, if at all possible.

Name:

Faculty/Department:

Address of home working site:

Please tick the boxes to confirm you will or have carried out the necessary actions:

- I am able to work from home and confirm that I have read and understood the Homeworking Policy and Procedure.
- I agree to complete the Health and Safety Homeworking Checklist and a Display Screen Equipment self-assessment and to discuss the recommendations with my line manager, and agree with them the suitability of working from home for my individual circumstances.
- I will inform my manager of changes to my home or personal circumstances, which could affect the suitability of homeworking for me e.g. change in caring responsibilities, becoming sick.
- If required, I will inform my landlord/mortgage provider of my intention to work at home.
- If required, I will notify my insurance company of my intention to work at home and inform them of any additional equipment which has been provided by the college.
- I agree to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and security of college equipment and data.
- I am aware and understand my responsibility to notify my line manager when I am absent from work due to sickness or any other reason.

- I understand that if I have an accident while working remotely, I must inform my line manager as soon as is practicable, seek appropriate medical help, and record the incident through completing an Accident Incident Report on the College's health and safety intranet portal. I note that my trade union Health and Safety Representatives are also a source of support when submitting an accident Incident Report.



Employee signature.....Date.....