

NIPISSING UNIVERSITY

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Policy Name:	Remote Work Policy
Responsible Department:	Human Resources
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A. Purpose

In July of 2022, Nipissing University launched a pilot flexible work arrangement policy for Administrative and Support Staff. Since then, the university has worked toward an adaptive model of work that can support greater employee work-life balance, expand the university's ability to attract and retain talent and identify opportunities for efficiency and sustainability, all while maintaining the goal of achieving the highest level of operational success.

B. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually for potential updates and revisions. Should it be deemed that it no longer meets operational requirements, the policy can be cancelled with four weeks notice.

C. Scope

This policy applies to administrative and support staff employees, where operationally feasible.

D. Guiding Principles

A **Remote Work Agreement (RWA)** is an agreement in which an eligible employee is approved to work a hybrid on-campus/remote schedule while maintaining regular work hours and duties. Based on job requirements and operational needs, eligible employees will work a minimum of three days per week on campus. RWAs are not an entitlement and will not be suitable for all jobs or circumstances.

On-campus presence is an important contributor to a vibrant campus community. As such, maintaining a regular presence on campus will continue to be an important part of the employment relationship. Even with an approved RWA, employees can be required by their supervisor to work on campus on days they might normally be working remotely for any work-related purpose, such as meetings or events, participate in training, cover employee vacation times and leaves, and/or in an emergency. Supervisors will provide sufficient notice of such a requirement where possible, however, such prior notification is not a prerequisite of attendance as there may be situations where employees are required to work on campus without advanced notice. A department's Remote Work Schedule (RWS) may need to be altered to accommodate vacations, leaves, etc. (See more information about departmental RWs in section E below.)

RWAs can be revoked with two weeks' notice if service or operational requirements change or if job performance and/or outcomes are negatively affected.

Employees and Supervisors must maintain the regular standards of professionalism while working remotely.

An ad-hoc Remote Work Arrangement is a one-time or occasional situation that does not form part of an employee's regular work schedule. An employee must make a written request directly to their supervisor for approval of an ad hoc request. Example: unexpected emergencies, departmental coverage, etc.

E. Process

Employees submit a request for a RWA in writing to their supervisor.

The supervisor reviews all RWA requests to determine the operational feasibility and advises each employee in writing of the status of their request.

The supervisor works with their employees to create a Remote Work Schedule (RWS) for their department based on the above assessment. The RWS will list all employees in the department who have been approved for an RWA along with each employee's draft work schedule. As previously noted, each employee must work on campus a minimum of three days per week. It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure operational requirements are met and that there is an appropriate on-campus presence for their department. Operational effectiveness and service delivery standards must not be compromised because of any RWA or RWS.

When assessing an RWA and creating a Remote Work Schedule, the position's job requirements and the departmental needs must be considered including (but not limited to) consideration of the following:

- Can operational and service needs be effectively and efficiently maintained? When assessing any RWA, service needs of the department must be prioritized over individual preferences.
- Can the job requirements be productively and effectively performed remotely to the necessary quality standards?
- Can the work be performed with a degree of independence from the supervisor and co-workers, or do the duties of the job require close supervision and/or in-person collaboration with co-workers?
- Could the RWA have a negative impact on the work of other employees or on the delivery of services?
- Does the employee have a suitable remote workspace (e.g. privacy, free from distractions, ergonomic workstation set-up) and reliable internet access to allow for required connectivity?
- Does the supervisor have any performance concerns or unresolved remote workplace issues that would inhibit the success of an RWA?
- Any other relevant criteria.

The supervisor will then submit the departmental Remote Work Schedule (RWS) draft to Human Resources (attention: Manager, Health & Wellness). Human Resources will review all RWSs for consistency and fairness across the University. Amendments to the submitted RWS may be requested by the supervisor when circumstances change such as employee accommodations, department size, or operational requirements.

The RWS will then be submitted to the Vice-President, Finance & Administration and the Provost & Vice-President, Academic for approval. Approval will be dependent upon the criteria outlined above along with University-wide requirements. As stated above, departmental RWSs will be reviewed for consistency and fairness across the institution.

Human Resources will advise the supervisor if their RWS is approved. Human Resources will maintain a record of each employee's RWA. The supervisor will advise their employees in writing of the status of their RWA application.

Employees must live in a location that allows them to work on campus at least three days per week and when otherwise needed, as outlined above.

F. Employee Requirements

Employees must adhere to the agreed upon terms of the RWA and the terms of this Policy.

Employees must perform the full scope of their regular job duties to the same quality and performance standards as when working on campus. This includes having access to all programs/software required to perform all duties of their position.

Employees must work their regularly scheduled hours of work, including taking their lunch and break periods. Normal hours of work are Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with one (1) hour for lunch. During the period from May to August, employees have the option to take a one-half (1/2) hour meal period instead of the normal one (1) hour meal period. The work schedule may vary in order to meet operational requirements.

Employees are required to be available by MS Teams chat and or videoconferencing during scheduled work hours, exclusive of unpaid lunch and break periods.

It is critical that employees working remotely remain available during regular working hours and maintain contact with their colleagues, clients and supervisors. Supervisors and employees have a joint responsibility in fostering and maintaining this connectivity.

Employees may be required to attend meetings, training, or other events in-person on a day they would normally be working remotely. Wherever possible in these circumstances, the employee will be provided with advance notice of the requirement to attend work in-person and may be provided the opportunity to work an alternate remote day, if operationally feasible.

Employees must submit vacation requests in a reasonable and timely fashion.

Employees may be required to attend campus in the event of an emergency without advance notice.

Employees must have a suitable remote workspace (e.g. private, free from distractions, ergonomic workstation set-up) and reliable internet access to allow for required connectivity. The cost of such internet service is the sole responsibility of the employee.

Employees must maintain the regular standards of professionalism while performing remote work. This includes maintaining positive communication, wearing professional work attire and ensuring appropriate backgrounds.

G. Supervisor Requirements

Supervisors will take a consistent approach when assessing RWAs in their department to ensure they are meeting operational and service needs.

Supervisors will ensure they are managing remote work and performance of employees in line with on-campus employee management, including regularly communicating with employees regarding work expectations.

It is critical that Supervisors working remotely remain available during regular working hours and maintain contact with their colleagues, clients and employees. Supervisors and employees have a joint responsibility in fostering and maintaining this connectivity.

Supervisors will monitor hours of work to ensure compliance with overtime requirements and collective agreement obligations.

Supervisors will conduct any departmental meetings and communications in a manner that allows for meaningful participation by employees who are working in-person and remotely.

Supervisors will review their departmental Remote Work Arrangements at least on an annual basis to ensure it continues to meet departmental operational requirements and needs.

H. Terms and Conditions of Employment

Employees with an RWA continue to be subject to all existing terms and conditions of their employment with the University and must abide by those terms and conditions when working in-person and remotely.

Employees with an RWA will continue to be governed by the relevant collective agreements, guidelines, policies and procedures, and all relevant legislative requirements.

Employees shall not conduct any in-person business or meetings with others at their remote work location (i.e. in-person meetings should not be conducted at an employee's place of residence).

A Remote Work Arrangement terminates upon the employee's transfer to another position. A new request for a RWA must be submitted by the employee to their new supervisor if the employee wishes to work remotely.

I. Health and Safety

Employees must comply with all health and safety standards and regulations while working remotely.

Employees are responsible to ensure their remote workspace and workstation setup is safe and ergonomically sound.

Employees must immediately report to their supervisor any safety concerns that occur in the course of their employment.

All work-related injuries incurred by an employee working remotely during work hours in the course and scope of employment, as well as all work-related illnesses, must be reported immediately to their supervisor and Human Resources.

The University will not be responsible for injuries incurred by others in the employee's remote work location.

J. Workplace Leaves and Accommodation

An RWA is not a substitute for a leave of absence that may be needed by an employee for illness, childcare, eldercare, dependent care, or other personal obligations during working hours.

Employees should refer to existing University policies and provisions in their applicable Collective Agreement or guidelines/regulations if there are personal circumstances that arise that prevent the employee from fulfilling their required job responsibilities.

An RWA is not to be confused with a formal workplace accommodation in accordance with the University's Accommodation Policy.

Regular reporting requirements for absences apply to days when the employee is scheduled to work remotely.

A department's Remote Work Schedule may need to be altered to accommodate vacations, leaves, etc.

K. Information Security and Privacy

Employees must take all reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality and privacy of University documents and information while working remotely.

University records, including confidential and restricted information and personally identifiable information (PII) must be protected in accordance with University policies and processes to prevent unauthorized access, disclosure or destruction during transit to/from the in-person work location and the remote work location. This includes ensuring University computing equipment, and documents are stored in a safe and secure location with safeguards put in place to ensure privacy, confidentiality, and data security are maintained.

University records and information should be created, retained and disposed of in accordance with University retention and records management protocols.

L. University Property, Technology and Equipment

Remote work will be performed using Nipissing University leased or owned computing equipment with the appropriate updates and security maintained.

Employees with an approved RWA will use a laptop as opposed to a desktop computer for ease of transitioning between remote work and on campus work. The University will not be responsible for any additional costs related to an RWA. Any additional technology or equipment required to support the RWA will be the responsibility of the employee.

The use of University property, technology and equipment while working remotely shall conform to all relevant University policies and procedures. Including but not limited to the Computing Equipment Policy, AI guidelines.

The employee shall take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and security of University property, technology and equipment while working remotely.

In general, the University will not be responsible for operating costs associated with an employee's remote workspace, including damages to personal property or space associated with remote work.

M. Expenses

Eligible and approved business-related expenses incurred by an employee with an RWA will follow the University's business expense procedures and guidelines.

Employees are responsible for covering the costs related to any additional expenses for home internet, telephone access, property/liability insurance, or for any optional technology or equipment not provided by the University.

N. Change or Termination of Flexible Work Arrangements

The University reserves the right to terminate or alter an RWA at its sole discretion at any time. At least two weeks' written notice will be provided by the University to the employee regarding the termination of or change to the RWA. As stated in section G of this policy, advanced notice regarding a temporary change to the RWA is not guaranteed in the event of an emergency.

The employee may submit a request to change their RWA in writing (by email) to their supervisor. Review and approval of the change will follow the same process and criteria as outlined in section E (Process) of this Policy.

The employee may terminate their RWA by providing as much written notice as possible to their supervisor.

An RWA is not transferable in the event an employee moves to another position.

When a new employee is hired within a department, an RWA may be discussed as part of the hiring process. Supervisors will be required to review the RWS of their department and submit any changes/additions to the RWS as outlined in section E (Process) of this policy.

New hires must complete their probationary period on campus before requesting an RWA. Exceptions may apply.

O. Remote Work FAQ's

Can I use my personal computer for work related activities?

No. Employees must utilize Nipissing University issued computers provided through the UTS Department that are managed by appropriate Nipissing University personnel.

Who pays for my workspace?

The employee is responsible for all costs associated with establishing an appropriate, professional, and ergonomically optimized workspace with proper furnishings and adequate space that supports working efficiently and safely.

Who pays for the internet?

Employees are responsible for providing internet connectivity that functions consistently with sufficient bandwidth to work effectively and meet the expectations of the role. Internet is not eligible for reimbursement. Professional Development (PD) funds may not be used for internet fees for remote workspaces.

What home office expenses can I claim on my tax return?

We don't currently know what will be available for the 2024 tax year for work from home expense deductions. Communication on any updated process will be sent out if available. In the meantime, employees should continue to retain receipts for all out-of-pocket purchases made to perform their duties remotely. Expenses covered by Nipissing University should not be claimed on your annual tax return.

Nipissing University does not cover the cost of printer ink cartridges or other supplies for a remote workstation.

Will employees have to give up their office if they are on an RWA?

Employees with an RWA may be asked to relocate to a shared workspace when working on campus in order to optimize workspaces. This will be determined at the departmental level based on need.

Under what circumstance can a supervisor change or terminate an RWA?

Supervisors can change or terminate an RWA based on operational changes, staffing changes, performance and/or seasonal peak work requirements.

What if my internet service is disrupted while I'm working remotely?

Employees shall contact their supervisor when unable to perform work due to service interruptions. Depending on the length of outage, the employee may be required to return to work on campus or request to take vacation time.

Is a request for a formal work accommodation determined under the Remote Work Policy?

No, all requests for a formal work accommodation follow the University Accommodation Policy.
