

HOMWORKING GUIDELINES

LOCAL WORKING PRACTICE

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Please note that this document describes a local working practice in the Department of Chemistry, and that University-wide policies will override anything stated in these local guidelines.

The Department of Chemistry appreciates that staff are most productive when they have achieved a **work-life balance** that enables them to effectively meet their responsibilities outside of work. It is, therefore, recognised that staff may want to **occasionally** work from home and the Department is supportive in such circumstances. For example, these could be:

- **Caring Responsibilities.** Rather than being prescriptive over the sort of responsibilities that are suitable for homeworking and those that are not, staff are expected to discuss any caring responsibilities with their line manager, and demonstrate how they would manage the responsibilities of work and caring.
- **Academic Responsibilities.** Some of these can occasionally be carried out at home in order to complete urgent tasks without interruption, meet urgent deadlines, or due to caring responsibilities.

Occasional Homeworking (Academic Staff). The nature of academic responsibilities means that this already happens informally without prior notification, on an ad hoc basis, particularly to minimise interruption when meeting deadlines, or due to caring responsibilities. Some general guidelines are:

- There is no agreed pattern of work at home.
- There should be minimal homeworking if the member of staff has teaching or pastoral commitments, or other duties requiring direct student contact.
- The member of staff is expected to be reachable by e-mail and telephone.
- In an emergency, the member of staff working at home should be prepared to be recalled to the department at short notice.

Occasional Homeworking (Support Staff). It is recognised that some support roles do not lend themselves to homeworking as they can only be carried out on site. This is particularly true for roles involving the delivery of a service, e.g. use and maintenance of equipment, safety provision, contact with students and similar. However, some job roles may be carried out equally well on site or from home, particularly if the job involves the handling, processing or creation of information. Some general guidelines are:

- There is no agreed pattern of work at home.
- Homeworking must be approved by the line manager each time, and enough notice of a wish to work at home must be given to enable the line manager to ensure that the working of the team (or department generally) will not be adversely affected.

- The member of staff should communicate which specific tasks they will carry out at home, including any associated outputs and timescales. They should also have the ability to deliver this work effectively without supervision.
- The member of staff is expected to be reachable by e-mail and telephone.
- In an emergency, the member of staff working at home should be prepared to be recalled to the department at short notice.

Further Considerations for Occasional Homeworking. All staff who occasionally work from home are advised to carry out their own *Display Screen Equipment (DSE) risk assessment* on the ergonomics of their desktop/laptop, making sure that the screen is not subject to glare, and that they are sitting at the right height etc. The Departmental Superintendent can provide you with full guidance on this. **N.B.** If you wish to be covered by the Employer's Liability Insurance while working from home, a *full homeworker's risk assessment* must be conducted (see the Departmental Superintendent for further details).

Longer-Term Homeworking (Academic Staff). The Department of Chemistry also recognises that, in exceptional circumstances, academic staff may require longer-term homeworking arrangements in order to best meet caring and other personal responsibilities without invoking a contractual change to their working arrangements. Some general guidelines are:

- There may be an agreed pattern of work at home, but not necessarily.
- Cases for longer exceptional arrangements should be made to the Head of Department *via* the relevant line managers and, where appropriate, the Director of Teaching, who must agree the arrangement.
- The expectation is that exceptional arrangements last at most one year. All such arrangements must be reviewed annually and any case for extension must be explicitly approved.
- Even under exceptional working, if the member of staff has teaching or pastoral commitments, or other duties requiring direct student contact, then they are expected to have a substantial presence on campus during term-time. This is normally no fewer than three working days in each working week and full presence during the examination period. Only those on formal secondment/sabbatical are exempted from this condition without explicit permission from the Head of Department.
- The member of staff is expected to be reachable by e-mail and telephone.
- In an emergency, the member of staff working at home should be prepared to be recalled to the department at short notice.
- If there is a longer-term issue where the academic member of staff cannot meet the normal expectations for their job, including significant presence on campus during term-time, then this would become a contractual matter and would be handled by the normal procedures.
- A *full homeworker's risk assessment* must be conducted (see the Departmental Superintendent for further details).