



## TELEWORK POLICY

In concert with the University System of Georgia, VSU will allow teleworking, on a voluntary basis, to employees who fill job classifications/positions that have been designated as eligible for telework. The Telework is an employer option, not an employee right and is appropriate only when it results in a benefit to the institution.

Telework may not be suitable for all employees and/or positions. As such, we will utilize telework as a work option for certain eligible positions based on specific criteria and procedures consistently applied throughout the University. A successful telework program can improve organizational efficiency, raise the quality and quantity of work, boost employee morale and job satisfaction, and lower the employee turnover rate. Telework arrangements can also enhance the recruitment and retention of a high-quality, diverse workforce; ensure the continuity of operations in an emergency; reduce travel-related costs; allow for more space; and facilitate employee productivity toward VSU's overall mission and vision.

The purpose of this policy is to define the program for telework and the guidelines and rules under which it will operate. This policy is designed to help managers and employees understand this type of work environment and their associated rights and responsibilities. This policy and its accompanying guidelines provide a general framework for teleworkers. It does not attempt to address the special conditions and needs of all employees, nor is it intended to interfere with existing faculty schedules driven by teaching, research, service, and/or clinical responsibilities, which can vary daily.

### Definitions:

Employees should note that telework is different from remote work.

- Telework allows employees to carry out their duties and responsibilities from an offsite or satellite location other than their office or official workplace but typically within the state or able to commute.
- Remote work is also known as “work from anywhere,” and is a flexible way of working which allows employees to work from any remote location (inside or outside the state), as long as they have stable internet connectivity. (Please note that VSU will be designating and posting some positions as 100% remote. While these positions may share the same classifications with current employees, positions that were not deemed 100% remote and posted as such are only eligible for telework options).

This policy is only referencing teleworking opportunities.

As such, the Office of Human Resources is recommending the use of two types of telework arrangements at VSU: 1) Core Telework and 2) Situational (Occasional) Telework.

- Core telework is an arrangement in which eligible employees telework from an approved alternative worksite on a recurring, scheduled basis—i.e., fixed day(s) per week or pay period.



- For example, a teleworker who has an approved telework arrangement wherein the employee teleworks every Wednesday or every day would be considered a Core teleworker. The Core telework schedule must be documented on the telework agreement and approved by the Supervisor, VP/Unit Head, and Telework Coordinator, in advance.
- Situational (Occasional) telework is an arrangement in which eligible employees telework without a set schedule.
  - Examples of situational telework include telework as a result of inclement weather lasting more than a week, campus incident, pandemic, and special work assignments. An employee with an approved situational telework arrangement must obtain advance approval from his or her supervisor for each instance of telework.

Regardless of the type of telework arrangement, an approved telework agreement must be in place in order for an employee to telework. The final decision regarding the type of telework arrangement and days an employee is scheduled to telework rests with management and administration.

### Suitability

- The suitability of a position for telework depends on the duties and functions of the position. Positions suitable for telework must have quantifiable, project-oriented, or other portable job tasks that can be performed satisfactorily at the approved alternative worksite (e.g., reading, reports, analyzing documents and studies, preparing written documents); limited need for access to classified information; and off-site access to needed technology.
- Positions **not suitable** for either telework option are those that require the following on a daily basis (every work day):
  - Direct handling of confidential or other secure materials determined to be inappropriate for telework by management.
  - Governing controls over the access to sensitive information (e.g. Personally Identifiable (PII), Protected Health (PHI) and/or University Confidential Information) cannot be implemented, maintained, and audited at the alternate work site.
  - On-site activity that cannot be handled via teleworking or at an alternative worksite (e.g., face-to-face teaching assignments or personal contacts; intake or distribution of mail; hands-on contact with machinery, equipment, or vehicles; public safety; plant operations).
- When the nature and scope of the employee's position (based on the profile and assigned tasks) are determined not normally suitable for Core telework, there may be circumstances or portions of the employee's work (e.g., reading and analyzing documents and preparing reports or other types of correspondence, non-classified assignments) that may be considered for telework on a situational basis if the supervisor deems it to be in the best interest of the University.
  - The following classifications/positions are not eligible for a Core Telework arrangement; but may be considered for situational (occasional) telework:
    - Positions that supervise, given the value and importance of their interpersonal interactions with staff, students, and faculty.
    - Positions whereby the majority of job activities involve direct interaction or contact with faculty, staff, students, and/or alumni.

### Eligibility

Once a position is determined suitable for telework, the supervisor must determine the employee's eligibility to telework. To be considered eligible for telework, an employee must:

- Have demonstrated characteristics indicating his or her ability to effectively work away from the official worksite using the self-assessment.

- Displayed dependability, responsibility, and conscientiousness; the ability to work independently and without close supervision; self-motivation and self-discipline; and the ability to prioritize work and manage time wisely.
- Have the required work necessities (e.g., equipment, materials) to effectively perform the employee's duties at an approved alternative worksite.
  - Office supplies (e.g. pens and paper) shall be provided by the department and should be obtained during the teleworker's in-office work period.
  - The ability to provide office equipment (e.g., VSU laptops, phones, etc.) will be based upon availability.
- Have participated in telework-ready training.
- Have an approved telework agreement in place.

All telework agreements will be reviewed on an annual basis or at the start of a new agreement, whichever comes first.

### **Ineligibility**

An employee would be ineligible to telework for the following reasons noted either in the personnel file or a performance improvement plan:

- For excessive unapproved absences or tardiness.
- For ethical violations.
- For violating any IT policies/procedures including viewing or downloading inappropriate materials.
- For engaging in other work outside the University without prior approval that has resulted either a conflict of interest or conflict of commitment.
- For behavior/conduct that has resulted in an official disciplinary action taken against them (e.g., written reprimand, suspension, demotion) for any type of misconduct.
- For performance issues.
- For less than an overall "meets" expectations on the performance evaluation.
- For failure to adhere to all the requirements listed below.

The period of ineligibility for employees who have been officially disciplined for the type of misconduct will be determined by the Office of Human Resources on a case by case basis and depends on the type of action taken, consistent with all who are similarly situated.

### **Requirements (Supervisors must ensure)**

- An onsite employee entering into a Core telework agreement may be required to forfeit use of an onsite work station. Therefore, the assigned work area or office space may be different.
- As deemed appropriate by the supervisor, Core Teleworkers must physically report to the regular work site at least two full work days per bi-weekly pay period or four times per monthly pay period, except for rare short-term circumstances or as a reasonable accommodation.
- Telework employees may not engage in work related to other jobs or non-work (personal) activities during scheduled work hours unless time off has been requested and approved for such time in advance. Any adjustment of work hours must be pre-approved by their Supervisor. The normal process for outside work must still be followed.
- Telework employees are obligated to follow all policies, participation and communication requirements, rules and department processes.
- Telework employees are required to take their lunch period after 4½ hours of work. The lunch period cannot be taken at the beginning or end of their shift.
- Telework employees must notify their supervisor if they leave their work site during scheduled work hours (outside of lunch).
- Telework employees are required to make daily contact with their supervisor.
- Telework employees must be available by phone, email, jabber, etc., during their scheduled work hours.

- Supervisors will establish a communication standard platform that the teleworker will have online throughout designated work hours.
- Telework employees must return calls, emails, etc., promptly.
- Telework employees must answer phone calls, emails, etc., in a professional manner at all times.
- Telework employees are required to carry out their work duties during their scheduled work hours. Changes in work schedules must be pre-approved by their Supervisor. Any falsification of work time will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- Telework employees must maintain the required level of productivity and accurate completion of work assignments. If productivity, innovation and/or quality begin to decline, the employee will be required to return onsite, participate in a Performance Improvement Plan if needed, etc., and may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- Telework employees are required to attend onsite meetings, conference calls, and/or online department meetings at their scheduled times.
- Telework employees must be fully engaged and fully present (via video and audio) during all meetings, training, etc. for the full duration of the activity.
- In the event of technical or connectivity issues (not related to VSU and on the employee's side) that prohibit the completion of or participation in work, it is the telework employee's responsibility to make arrangements with the supervisor to make up the time or to use their leave time to cover the missed hours.
- If there is a VSU closure due to weather or other reasons that does not impact employees with access from home, teleworkers are required to continue working their scheduled hours.
- Telework employees are responsible for staying current on University and department events, policies, or other requirements.
- Inappropriate use of VSU resources is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- Telework employees must understand and agree to the fact that all devices used to perform University work and data produced and consumed while teleworking will be in scope regarding a Georgia Open Records Act data request in which the teleworking employee's data produced is called out in a request. This will include, per the specifics of a request, any devices used to perform work on behalf of VSU (e.g. VSU issued devices, personal computers, smart devices, tablets, etc.).
- Teleworking from home is not a substitute to care for dependents, both children and adults. This includes, but is not limited to, taking dependents to and from school, activities, appointments, or caring for dependents due to illness during your scheduled work hours.
  - As such, the teleworker shall continue to make arrangements for child or dependent care to the same extent as if the teleworker was working at the primary workplace.
  - These arrangements must be included in the agreement and supervisors will be notified of changes in advance and in writing, when possible.

### **Performance Standards and Management expectations**

Standards and expectations for teleworking employees are exactly the same as those for non-teleworking employees. All employees are held accountable for their productivity, appropriate level of innovation and accurate completion of work assignments. Furthermore, telework employees should request vacation and sick leave, plan for coverage while away, report close contact and positive COVID results, provide effective customer service, and maintain appropriate communication with their supervisors.

### **Telework Agreement**

- Decisions to approve a telework agreement must be based on mission related reasons and what is in the best interest of the University (e.g., departmental needs, performance, and office coverage, etc.).
- At any time, leadership or management may deny an employee's request to telework or terminate an existing telework agreement.

\* Note: If at any point the request is determined not to be appropriate, the Supervisor or VP/Unit Head should notify the Telework Coordinator to document the decision. The Telework Coordinator will notify all parties involved.

## Process

The Office of Human Resources will serve as the Telework Coordinator.

**Note: Telework MUST NOT begin until final approval is received from Telework Coordinator.**

- Employee completes Telework assessment
- Employee completes Work Space Self Certification Checklist
- Employee and Supervisor completes required Telework Training assigned by EOD
- Department Manager reviews and documents the following:
  - o Department positions within the same classification and the impact to other positions and department as a whole.
  - o Technology needs and specific tools to be used
    - Review security considerations with IT, including voicemail, if applicable, and obtain approval.
  - o Proposed work schedule by day and hour. Must cover VSU Core Operating hours.
  - o Proposed detailed work plan that outlines specific
    - employee responsibilities by employee.
    - supervisor responsibilities
  - o Proposed communication and accountability plan (by employee) that addresses the following, at a minimum.
    - How often employees should send updates on work plan progress and what those updates should include; how quickly the employee should respond while teleworking; the ways for the employee to contact the supervisor; how standards of performance will be measured and when.
    - Format for documenting communications and performance measurements and dates. This documentation must be maintained in a single summary document and be available for review at any time.
  - o Review all items with Supervisor and VP/Unit Head and obtain decision.
  - o Forward all forms to HR for review at [Telework@valdosta.edu](mailto:Telework@valdosta.edu)
  - o If approved, HR will initiate the Teleworking Agreement to be signed by all parties. A copy will be maintained in the employee's personnel file.