

THE GRADUATE CENTER TELECOMMUTING GUIDELINES

OVERVIEW

On March 11, 2020, in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with the community mitigation strategies set by the Centers for Disease Control, The City University of New York (CUNY) announced that CUNY colleges and schools would convert to distance education for students and faculty starting March 19, 2020. CUNY also issued new guidelines regarding flexible work arrangements for staff, which included flexible scheduling and telecommuting. In response to the fast-evolving nature of the pandemic, on March 20, 2020, New York State Governor Cuomo issued the New York State on PAUSE Executive Order, ordering 100% of non-essential employees to stay home.

These telecommuting guidelines have been developed to assist The Graduate Center (GC) employees and supervisors to memorialize telecommuting plans established as part of GC's COVID-19 response and in response to the New York State on PAUSE Executive Order. Accordingly, these guidelines are temporary in nature and may be modified or revoked in response to further guidance from city, state, or federal government and agencies or if CUNY or the GC deems that telecommuting is no longer necessary or desirable.

SCOPE

These guidelines are applicable to all full-time and part-time tax levy staff, except persons who perform critical functions and are required to be on campus in order to perform their assigned duties. These guidelines are not applicable to the GC faculty who already have been given guidance on distance learning and who will continue to maintain their own distinct responsibilities in terms of instruction, mentorship, and holding of office hours.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Even if employees have already started telecommuting, and have made certain informal arrangements with their supervisor for telecommuting, employees are expected to submit their Telecommuting Plan to their supervisors by April 3, 2020 for their review and approval.
- The employees should submit an approved Telecommuting Plan and an Offsite Workplace Self-Certification Checklist to the Office of Human Resources by April 10, 2020.
- The supervisors should review and respond to telecommuting plans within 3 business days via email.
- If the supervisor rejects a telecommuting plan in whole or in part, the employee may appeal the decision by emailing the Office of Human Resources at hr@gc.cuny.edu. The executive director of the Office of Human Resources or his/her designee will notify the employee of approval or rejection in writing. If a telecommuting request is rejected through the appeal process, a reason will be stated for this rejection. A response to an appeal will be provided within 3 business days.

GENERAL RULES

- Telecommuting Plans submitted under these guidelines are temporary in nature and may be revoked or adjusted mutually between the supervisor and the employee or at the sole discretion of the supervisor based on operational needs of the GC and evolving responses to COVID-19.
- Telecommuting Plans for employees to perform work activities remotely should be prudently reviewed and approved by supervisors.
- While almost all employees would be allowed to telecommute, telecommuting may not be suitable for some employees whose critical and essential job functions require them to be physically present at the GC sites.

EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Telecommuting employees are expected to perform at the same or similar level of productivity as if they were working on-site.
- The Off-site Workplace Self-Certification Checklist applies throughout the duration of the telecommuting arrangement. An updated Off-site Workplace Self-Certification Checklist must be provided to the OHR if the employee's off-site work location changes.
- A summary of activities during a telecommuting day needs to be submitted to the supervisor at the end of each telecommuting day, or on a schedule determined by the supervisor. As required and defined by the supervisor, the employee agrees to provide regular reports to the supervisor.
- All employees who are permitted to telecommute must be easily reachable throughout the entire day, except during lunch and break times. Employees are expected to be available by phone and email throughout their working hours.
- Employees working off-site are expected to participate in group meetings as needed by videoconferencing or conference calling, as appropriate.
- Any GC equipment that has been taken home by the employee must be reported to the supervisor.
- The employee's compensation, benefits, work status, work responsibilities, and the amount of time the employee is expected to work per day or per pay period will not change due to employee's telecommuting.
- The employee's duties, responsibilities, conditions of employment, and salary and benefits are not affected by telecommuting.
- All work hours and leave usage will continue to conform to the established CUNY Policies and applicable collective bargaining agreements. Similarly, employees are expected to follow already established procedures for requesting time off.
- All of CUNY's and GC's policies remain in effect and unchanged by the employee's status as a telecommuter. GC may take appropriate disciplinary action against any employee for failure to comply with policies during approved telecommuting days.
- Each employee must determine any tax or legal implications under IRS, state, and local government laws, and/or restrictions of working out of a home-based office. Responsibility for fulfilling all obligations in this area rests solely with the employee.

- Telecommuting employees are expected to maintain their off-site workspace in a safe manner, free from hazards. Any accidents/incidents and injuries sustained during work hours must be reported to OHR.
- The Telecommuting Plan is limited to the current supervisor/employee reporting relationship and is not guaranteed to continue into a new supervisory or reporting relationship.