

Background

The hybrid work pilot is designed to assess the ongoing feasibility, benefits, challenges, technical and logistical considerations of work from home (WFH) arrangements. In addition, the pilot project aims to explore how effective hybrid work arrangements are for employees and the university, how such arrangements support work/life balance, well-being, productivity, recruitment, and retention.

Possible benefits of the pilot include:

- Retaining and attracting valued employees who benefit from the flexibility of being able to WFH some of the time.
- With a suitable remote work environment, employees can work with minimal distractions, reduced commuting time, resulting in improved productivity and efficiency.
- Organizing one's workday around peak productivity periods, peak work demand periods, as well as accommodating personal and family needs.
- Improving space utilization/efficiency in some units on campus.
- Optimizing service levels, as well as employee productivity, through flexibility and the use of technology.
- Providing departments with an opportunity to explore key considerations, unique opportunities and barriers related to their unit's work arrangements.
- Reducing commuting strains and carbon footprint on the environment and the campus.
- Supporting employees' well-being, work/life balance.

Decisions regarding hybrid work arrangements will take into consideration the university's guiding principles of:

- Student-centered learning, learner success and the student experience.
- Physical and mental wellness of employees and students.
- Optimal instructional and service modality.
- Effective service levels and productivity measures.
- Collaboration and teamwork needs.
- Campus culture and vibrancy.
- Operational requirements.
- Alternate work environment suitability.
- Ability to support the IT equipment needs of employees in the pilot.
- Opportunities for optimized space utilization and financial sustainability considerations.

Managers may review a hybrid arrangement at any time. This process is to ensure that supervisors can adjust arrangements to meet operational needs, additional details are found in the section below on Administering Hybrid Arrangements.

Following the pilot project, the university will evaluate the success of the pilot and determine whether a formal hybrid work policy should be implemented.

Introduction

NSCAD is exploring the possible value of ongoing flexible work arrangements for both employees and the university. Benefits of hybrid work arrangements will be maximized by promoting the use of flexible work arrangements across the university community.

A hybrid work arrangement in this pilot would challenge the historical norm of a traditional 9-to-5, five-day week, office-based work structure. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that flexible work arrangements can be possible and can provide opportunities to modify when, where, or how people fulfill their roles while meeting the needs of the university. The pilot program will initially be offered between April 1, 2022-March 31, 2023, and will be evaluated to determine whether a hybrid work policy is feasible on an ongoing basis.

Definitions:

Work from home (WFH) is defined as recurring, scheduled or approved work performed from a remote location that is not the employee's regular worksite. This will normally be from within Nova Scotia and is to be at an approved location.

Hybrid work is defined as a mixture of on campus and work from home flexibility. For the purpose of this pilot, this includes up to two days working from home and the remainder of the work week on campus.

Eligibility:

Positions with a high level of autonomy and minimal requirements for face-to-face interaction are most appropriate for hybrid work arrangements. Supervisors need to consider and establish means and methods for supervision and monitoring of workload and results. They should determine the frequency and method of communication with their employees to ensure performance expectations are met, and communication channels are open. Employees working remotely are expected to maintain their regular hours of work unless alternate arrangements are made with their supervisor. It is expected that anyone working remotely will maintain a normal workload.

The hybrid work pilot may be applied to non-instructional employees of the university at the sole discretion of the university and may not be suitable in situations where:

- the functions of the position require a face-to-face, on-campus presence in order to meet student and employee needs,
- team projects require in-person participation and collaboration,
- departmental or operational requirements demand an on-campus presence,
- An individual is unable to demonstrate the competencies necessary to be effective working from home or performance considerations around work expectations are a concern.

Employees who are approved for hybrid work during the pilot project will be able to do so under the same terms of employment, collective agreements and provincial labour standards as if they were working solely on campus. Employees are required to comply with all the rules, policies, practices and instructions that would apply if the employee were working on site.

Guidelines:

In general, during the pilot project, employees approved in the pilot will work a hybrid of on-campus and at-home. The initial pilot will permit employees to work up to two (2) days at home per week with the approval of their manager.

The pilot project does not contemplate opportunities for full time work from home. Arrangements in excess of 2 days per week are possible on exception or as an approved accommodation and must be applied for through the office of Human Resources.

Prior to initiating a hybrid work arrangement, managers and employees should consider the full impacts of the arrangement to maximize the potential for success. This may include everyone in the working area all understanding their role in administering successful hybrid work arrangements and fully considering the implications of hybrid work arrangements before these are formalized.

While it is the university's goal to offer hybrid work arrangements where there is alignment with the guiding principles outlined in this document, it is also recognized that such arrangements will not be suitable for all positions, and situations. Managers, supervisors, and employees should be open to discussing the various factors involved, and decisions should be based on full consideration of all of the reasons, facts and options.

- Employees on hybrid arrangements that normally include designated days, understand that they must be available to be on-site for operational reasons on their WFH day should the need arise. WFH schedules should be considered when scheduling in person meetings however, if advance notice of a required in-person meeting is provided, the employee would be expected to shift their WFH day to accommodate the in-person meeting. This may mean that in some weeks, it will not be possible to work from home for the full two days normally permitted. Where possible, arrangements will simply be made to shift the work from home day to meet operational needs.
- Please note that hybrid arrangements are not entitlements.
- The university may return to fully in person operations at any time, even during the pilot period.
- There may be times during the year when the operational work cycle of a department or unit is at a peak and flexible work arrangements may need to be paused.
- Participation in the hybrid work pilot may be constrained by a shortage of IT equipment; specifically, employees who are using a desktop may be unable to move to a laptop until their computer is due for replacement or until such time as the appropriate equipment becomes available.
- Participants in the hybrid work pilot will agree to provide feedback while the program is being evaluated.

Application, Approval and Administering Process:

Application:

Employees interested in participating in the hybrid work pilot will meet with their manager and indicate their interest in the pilot. Employees will follow this up with a written request to participate using the [hybrid work application](#).

Managers will meet with interested employees to consider their request prior to determining whether a hybrid work arrangement is possible and feasible.

Approval:

Hybrid work arrangements must be approved in advance by your manager. All hybrid arrangements will be made on an individual basis with consideration of operational requirements and the employee's specific role and responsibilities and is therefore not guaranteed. The manager shall determine if the arrangement is feasible, taking into consideration established policies and practices within the unit as well as any formal accommodation requests. Consultation with Human Resources is available if necessary.

Once approved, managers will document the hybrid work arrangement in writing, copying Human Resources. Documenting hybrid work arrangements provides a shared understanding of the terms of the arrangement and should be reviewed on a regular basis by both parties.

As part of the approval process, Human Resources will also review overall departmental WFH plans with the goal of ensuring a level of consistency in application across the university.

Administering Hybrid Work Arrangements:

Over the pilot period, both the manager and the employee should expect ongoing adjustments. A periodic review is suggested and will allow issues to be identified and corrected, resulting in possible modifications to the arrangement. The hybrid work pilot must not impact an employee's ability to complete regular work functions and duties, including communications. You will be expected to be available by telephone, email and any other electronic means during work hours. Employees will need to agree to regular communications, including video meetings whereby video cameras may be turned on.

Several factors could trigger the need to modify the arrangement, including operational impact, work performance, and employee satisfaction, with some examples as follows:

- Productivity / ability to meet deadlines
- Attention to detail
- Quality of work output
- Collaboration with colleagues
- Quality of communication with co-workers and leaders
- Performance metrics for service delivery

- Availability for meetings without distraction
- Employee satisfaction with duties, responsibilities, and autonomy
- Relationships with co-workers and leaders

Additional conditions:

- Hours of work, compensation, leave scheduling and notification must continue to follow applicable policies, terms of employment, and collective agreements.
- Hybrid employees must not hold in-person business visits or meetings with colleagues, students or the public in their home.
- Employees working remotely must ensure, in advance, that they have appropriate dependent care arrangements in place.

Managers or employees who have concerns with the hybrid arrangements should first attempt to eliminate the concerns together which may include setting more clear performance standards, partnering to develop an action plan, or modifying the hybrid arrangement. Consultation with Human Resources is available if there are questions about WFH effectiveness.

If an arrangement needs to be modified, managers will communicate the rationale clearly, first in person and then in writing.

In some situations, it may be necessary to discontinue the original plan or seek an alternative. The process used in revising or ending an employees approved hybrid arrangement should be just as carefully thought out as when initiating one. Employees should have a role in determining any modifications to arrangements and should be given appropriate notice before an arrangement is modified or concluded.

Data Security

Hybrid employees will continue to be bound by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and any other applicable legislation. Employees must take all reasonable precautions to ensure the protection of data and personal information accessible from the remote location.

Hybrid employees must take additional care to ensure they are safeguarding workplace information. By participating in the pilot, all employees acknowledge and agree to:

- Follow all data security guidelines, policies, and procedures in place by Computer Services.
- Electronic documents should never be saved on local drives (hard drive) or an employee's personal computer. Documents should always be saved to OneDrive, SharePoint or a NSCAD file server so that they are available both on- and off-campus. Files that are shared between departments should always have the most recent versions available in the locations that they are stored.
- Conduct work-related telephone and video calls in private.
- Only take campus-based physical files home when necessary to complete the work.

Health and Safety

NSCAD is responsible for ensuring that safety guidelines and procedures exist at all work locations, including remote work sites. The university is responsible for workplace injuries but not responsible for any injuries at the remote work location that are not work-related. Employees are liable for any injuries

to third parties that occur on their premises. Employer representatives may make on-site visits at an agreed time to ensure that the workspace is safe and free from hazards.

Employees participating in the hybrid work pilot program are responsible for the following:

- Maintaining a designated and dedicated workspace that is safely maintained, free from hazards, and that meets occupational safety standards for workplaces and office ergonomics.
- Complying with all safe work procedures applicable at NSCAD.
- Timely reporting of all work-related injuries, incidents, or accidents to your supervisor by contact and completion of the [Incident Report Form](#).
- Agreeing to check in regularly with their supervisor or members of their team.
- Reporting unsafe conditions or hazards to your supervisor immediately and resolving unsafe conditions or hazards and reporting the resolution to your supervisor.