New Ways of Working

Supporting the University's mission: the advancement of learning by teaching and research and its dissemination by every means.

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INTRODUCTION

Why?

Work changed dramatically for many staff during the Covid-19 pandemic, with the requirement for staff to work remotely and communicate virtually. As part of the University's planning for professional services and support activities once pandemic restrictions are lifted, the New Ways of Working (NWW) project has been developing a Framework that will support the University's continuing evolution. It provides for a new way of working that enables individuals and teams to be highly effective and fulfilled - whilst we support the University's mission. The NWW Framework outlines three phases of activity - the first being discussions and planning of an appropriate balance between remote and on-site working; the second phase, trial and adjust; and the third, consolidation of arrangements for the long-term.
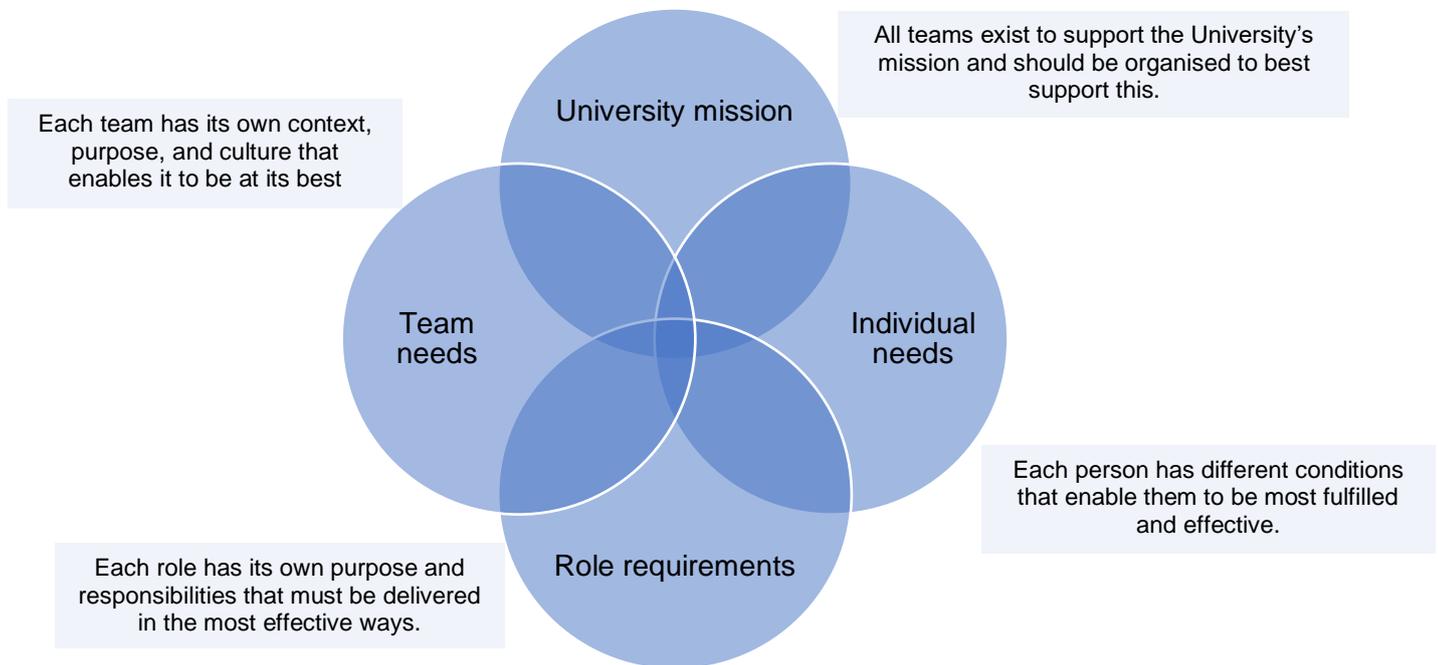
Principles

The University is a complex place and whilst the Framework is intended to ensure consistency of opportunity, no single set of arrangements will suit all areas. Leaders and managers are invited to adopt the framework in a way that suits their area. The following principles provide a common foundation for the Framework, to which all requirements and recommendations can be linked:

- We work to support the academic mission of the University of Oxford

- We recognise the value and benefits of in-person interaction with colleagues and those to whom we are delivering a service

- We use our insights from the pandemic to optimise the benefits and opportunities associated with remote and online working, and we are open-minded about what work can be delivered remotely

- We support decision-making about new ways of working arrangements at a local level to balance fairly the needs of the department with the aspirations of individuals

- We arrive at these decisions through inclusive, open, transparent discussions

- We help people to be fulfilled, balancing their work and home lives, respecting and supporting individual differences

- We learn from our experiences, trial arrangements and evolve our working practices, workplaces and support for individuals

Aims

Building on these principles, this Framework aims to support the University to evolve so that the new ways of working enable individuals and teams to be highly effective and fulfilled. To achieve this, the Framework addresses the following:

Each team has its own context, purpose, and culture that enables it to be at its best

All teams exist to support the University's mission and should be organised to best support this.

University mission

Team needs

Individual needs

Role requirements

Each person has different conditions that enable them to be most fulfilled and effective.

Each role has its own purpose and responsibilities that must be delivered in the most effective ways.

Who is this guidance for?

This Framework has been produced to support the needs and circumstances of professional services and support staff. It is anticipated however that the Framework may be a helpful tool across the University more broadly. Therefore, the Framework is available for departments to discuss and decide locally, how else it might be used.

Academic colleagues who would like to know more about how NWW is being approached in their department and how they can be involved should contact their Head of Department or HAF for more information.

NWW FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

Structure

The Framework provides four models of working:

- On site

- Occasional Remote

- Regular Remote

- Primarily Remote

It contains information and guidance on key factors in making decisions about working arrangements for teams and individuals:

- Business and operational needs, including impact on service users

- Place of work

- Wellbeing and safety

- Working at our best

- Operational support

The Framework Summary is set out on the following page and is also available to download on the **NWW webpage.**
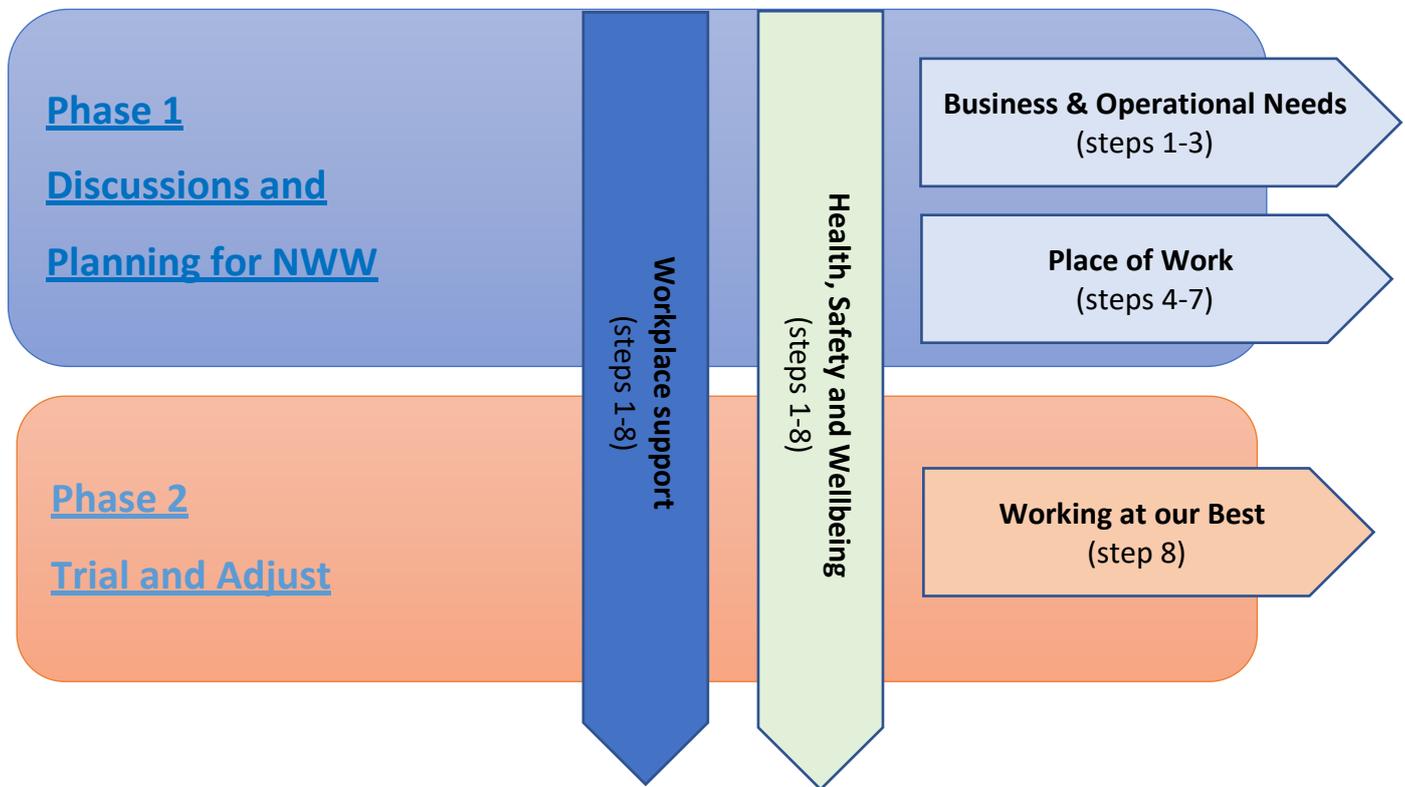
NWW Phases and timeframe

This table explains the different phases for the NWW Framework. The timeframes shown are the earliest departments might begin to progress through each phase; each department will make use of the Framework at a pace and timeframe suited to their local situation.

Piloting Spring 2021	Completed in two UAS departments, two academic departments and a department in GLAM. Feedback from the pilots, the NWW staff survey and other engagement activity has been used to develop the latest version of the Framework and guidance.
Phase 1 (short-term): Discussions and Planning Summer 2021	The Framework is released in June 2021, to support professional services across the wider University find an appropriate balance between remote and on-site working for the longer term, in a way that meets academic and research needs as well as local team and building requirements. It will be for departments and services to decide how and when they use the Framework to support appropriate conversations with staff.
Phase 2 (medium-term): Trial and adjust Autumn 2021	Gradual implementation of new working arrangements as this becomes possible and at a pace that meets the needs and circumstances of the department. Lessons learnt from across the University will be shared. The Framework will be reviewed and updated based on these lessons.
Phase 3 (long-term): Consolidation 2022 and onwards	The Framework will be aligned to strategic priorities as they evolve.

The guidance

The NWW process involves discussing and planning for future working arrangements followed by a period when new working arrangements are gradually implemented, trialled and reviewed and adjustments are made to support the on-going success of these arrangements. The diagram outlines how the guidance on process and supporting themes fits in with the phases of NWW.

Phase 1

Discussions and

Planning for NWW

Phase 2

Trial and Adjust

Workplace support
(steps 1-8)

Health, Safety and Wellbeing
(steps 1-8)

Business & Operational Needs
(steps 1-3)

Place of Work
(steps 4-7)

Working at our Best
(step 8)

A flow chart setting out the steps involved is provided on the following page.

PHASE 1: DISCUSSIONS AND PLANNING

Each of the steps involved in this key, foundation phase for NWW is summarised below. Detailed guidance is provided at Annexe A.

Business and operational needs

Business and operational needs, and the needs of stakeholders and service users, are central to consideration of how we work in the future.

Step 1

Discussions about future working arrangements for teams and indviduals should start from a clear understanding of these needs. **Senior leaders and the senior management team** in each department should consider any specific requirements and local paremeters for decision making for their area and ensure these are clearly communicated to all staff, before team and individual discussions begin. A slide pack to help with briefing staff is provided in the Resources tab of the NWW website. **(***See* **Step 1 guidance** *which includes a link to a template workshop designed to support this stage of the process.***)**

Step 2 and 3

Team leaders and line managers should arrange a time for their team to meet to discuss their future working arrangements. They will do this in the context of the local parameters set by the senior leadership, the team objectives, operational needs, team culture and the needs of their stakeholders and service users. (***See* Step 2** *and* **Step 3 guidance**)

Place of work

There are a wide variety of roles across the University. Whatever your role, it is expected that one of the following models will describe your future working arrangements.

1 On site	2 Occasional remote	3 Regular remote (<80%)	4 Primarily Remote (80%+)
Wholly on site	You work on site and occasionally remotely	You work on site and have an agreed pattern of remote working	You work remotely for much of your working hours and have agreed activities for which you will be on site.

Steps 4, 5, 6 and 7

Which of these models is a fit for you will depend on a number of factors. In addition to the local parameters and team priorities already considered, you will need to consider the needs of your role and the people you support. No-one will be required to change their pre-pandemic place of work , but if you believe there could be some flexibility in terms of where you work, you can discuss your needs and preferences with your line manager. Managers should approach discussions with an open mind, seeking to balance the individual wishes of each team member with the team's needs and objectives. These discussions should be informal and set within the context of parameters agreed by local leaders.

Team leaders/line managers should:

- be open-minded and think creatively about ways to enable remote working while delivering the team's objectives;

- be fair to everyone in the team: understand each person's needs and aspirations before agreeing requests. You may need to 'share' opportunities for flexible working;

- consider the equality impacts of your decisions, and seek advice if needed;

- consider how you will manage and support all of your team equally in future, whatever their working arrangements may be.

Individuals seeking a change to their pre-pandemic working arrangements should:

- think through the demands of their role - be creative and learn from the experiences of the pandemic, but also be realistic about what can be done more effectively on site;

- explore options, be flexible and be prepared to adjust their own duties to help others work flexibly and the team to meet its goals; and,

- if they cannot reach agreement straight away, be prepared to reflect on their discussions and explore alternative arrangements. If agreement is not possible consider whether to submit a formal flexible working request.

Step 4 guidance
Step 5 guidance
Step 6 guidance
Step 7 guidance

For further information and support for Place of Work

Also view the **FAQs on the NWW Website**

PHASE 2: TRIAL AND ADJUST

Step 8

With step 8, you are moving into the 'trial and adjust' phase of NWW. This involves the gradual implementation of new working arrangements, on a trial basis, as this becomes possible and at a pace that meets the needs and circumstances of your department.

In carrying out the review activities in **step 8**, you should continue to consider and evolve arrangements for:

- **Health Safety and Wellbeing**

- **Operational support**

- **Working at Our best**

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

First and foremost, wherever we work, we must work safely. But the University wants to achieve more than simply a safe environment, it wants everyone to feel supported to flourish and perform at their best as part of the University community. This is its vision for Wellbeing. This Framework can be helpful in promoting support for individuals' wellbeing and we must always remember that working in ways that are safe and support our wellbeing are equally important wherever and however we work. Wellbeing and safety information is accessible to all online. We can only optimise the benefits of this Framework if we are able to ensure that we are all safe and comfortable wherever we are working.

For senior leaders to consider
For team leaders and line managers to consider
For individuals to consider

For senior leaders to consider

Much of the activity to ensure the health and safety and wellbeing of all of our staff will happen at local level. However, in their areas, members of the leadership team should:

Embed a wellbeing and safety mindset

- Develop a positive, proactive culture around health and safety to ensure routine engagement at all levels. Make it the norm that health and safety and wellbeing are considered in decisions about ways of working. Be seen to take it seriously.

- Make sure that budget or workload never become an obstacle to health and safety or wellbeing. Emphasise the importance of taking the right actions to address risks.

Be proactive

- Engage with the ongoing Health and Safety Review, and use it as an opportunity to kickstart and build the health and safety culture.

Pay attention

- Be aware of risks to wellbeing and mental health – for those working remotely and for those who may feel 'left behind' on site – as a result of workloads, isolation, and change. Tackle any trends you identify, seeking advice if you need it.

Further Information and support for Health, Safety and Wellbeing

For team leaders and line managers to consider

There are a number of factors for team leaders and line managers to think about when agreeing remote working arrangements or managing staff remotely. It is important to:

Consider the needs of each individual

- Make sure that each individual's needs, including any needs relating to a disability, are factored in, as well as any temporary conditions, such as pregnancy or convalescence.

- Conduct risk assessments and share the findings with the staff members, and take the necessary steps to ensure people work safely.

- Ensure that your team members conduct **DSE assessments** before trialling a regular pattern of remote working and that they have all the equipment they need to work safely and comfortably.

Communicate regularly

- Check in regularly with any team member working remotely to ensure that you are aware of accidents, ill health, stress caused by workload or isolation, changes in circumstances that should be risk assessed, or wellbeing concerns. Be proactive. Don't pry, but ask questions.

- Encourage everyone in your team to look after their wellbeing, and make sure they are aware of University sources of support.

Take responsibility

- Consider the health and safety implications of having fewer staff on site – do you have enough first aiders? Evacuation chair operators?

- Feel responsible: read the **University's Health and Safety Policy**, attend training if you need it, and think about whether there is any more you can reasonably do to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your team.

Further Information and support for Health, Safety and Wellbeing

For individuals to consider

You are responsible for your own safety, with support from your line manager and the University. In practice, this means that you should:

Be aware

- Make sure you have read and understood the **University Health and Safety Policy**, and follow any advice or rules that apply to you. Ask your line manager if you are not sure about anything.

- Read any guidance you are given on how to work safely, and attend any training you are invited to. Seek further advice from your line manager, local health and safety officer, or **Occupational Health** if you are not sure about anything, or need extra help.

- Be aware that working remotely can be an isolating experience. Familiarise yourself with the University's range of support for wellbeing and mental health, and check back regularly – new services are being added to take new ways of working into account.

Do your risk assessment

- If you work at a screen, conduct an on-line display screen equipment **(DSE) risk assessment** for any work station at which you work regularly. Take action on the advice it gives you.

- If you need additional furniture or other equipment in order to work safely and comfortably, discuss that with your line manager.

Speak up

- If you are concerned about your physical or mental health or wellbeing, if you have an accident, or if your circumstances have changed, talk to your line manager, your local HR or Health and Safety rep, or to Occupational Health.

Further Information and support for Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Operational support

Wherever we are working, being able to work effectively requires certain support structures to be in place. We need access to equipment and to understand how security, sustainability and processes are impacted by new ways of working. Here we outline key support and equipment requirements that will enable you to adapt to New Ways of Working. Some of these issues will require further thought and development and pilot studies to ensure that we make decisions which are appropriate for the new workplace environment.

For senior leaders to consider
For team leaders and line managers to consider
For individuals to consider

For senior leaders to consider

Space

- As less space is likely to be needed across your teams there will be opportunities to consolidate within the space you are using.

- As we adapt to new ways of working, we need to understand what space is needed and how we can best support teams. We may want to consider hot-desking spaces that can be accessed by different service areas. We will need to think about working patterns in teams, if we are considering hot-desking but also expecting people to attend in person meetings – how are we going to ensure these are possible simultaneously?

- Expect to initiate and participate in space-planning discussions over the coming months.

Role modelling

- What you do and prioritise will reveal your views on new ways of working and have an impact on your area and beyond.

- Take the initiative and talk about data security arrangements with your own direct reports. Are you compliant? Do you practice good habits? Do you have a sustainability plan for your team of direct reports and for the division which reflects the new Environmental Sustainability Strategy? What process improvements, technological gains, paper reduction arrangements do you want to see continued and extended in your area?

- Now is the time to be seen to be showing leadership in these areas and role modelling good practices.

Further information and support for operational support

For team leaders and line managers to consider

Desks

- If some of your team will be working remotely more of the time, you may have more desk space than you need. You should start to consider the medium and long-term implications of the space requirements of your team.

- For those working in open offices, participating in online meetings may require access to closed rooms. Consider using small offices as meeting rooms to increase access to confidential spaces.

- Work with your team to introduce agile practices including clear and shareable desks.

- The University is exploring options for supporting desk-shares, hot-desks and ensuring that on-site meeting rooms will be equipped with facilities to support hybrid meetings, workshops and other activities.

Equipment

- Staff working on site normally have a desktop PC with webcam and headset unless their role-based duties are best performed using a laptop and associated equipment.

- If you occasionally work remotely you will be using a work laptop or your own equipment when not on site.

- A typical IT setup for staff who work regularly remotely is a laptop with built-in webcam, headset, a docking station, external display and (optionally) keyboard and mouse in the office and at home. Staff should only have one work PC, whether on-site, at home, or portable.

- It is expected that costs to support staff working arrangements can be met by local or service area budgets.

- Staff who work primarily remotely could use either a desktop PC with webcam and headset at home, or a laptop with built-in webcam and headset, plus a docking station, external display and (optionally) keyboard and mouse in the office and at home. Staff should only have one work PC, whether this is on-site, at home, or portable.

- If working remotely, team members will require an adequate desk and chair. The expectation is that staff who wish to work remotely should be able to provide their own, although in certain circumstances a line manager may need to prioritise the provision of a University desk and or chair, or to support the purchase of these.

Data security

- Support your team to complete the IT security training. Talk to them about the importance of this and the implications if something were to go wrong. Check the **data and compliance guide** from the **Manager's Toolkit** for a refresher of key principles and requirements.

Sustainability

- Every team has environmental impacts. If you haven't done it before, now is a perfect time to consider **Green Impact**, which will help the team focus on reducing their environmental impact and contributing to the environmental sustainability strategy.

Work processes

- On return to the office, you should consider how use of technology can continue to support and improve working arrangements. More information is available on the IT Services **IT Services 'collaborate' web page**

Further information and support for operational support

For individuals to consider

Desks

- If you are working remotely, you should think openly and flexibly about where you work when you are on site. The University will need to understand space requirements in the medium and long term and so it would be useful for you to start thinking how you might adapt if we move to more use of hot or shared desk spaces.

- You will also need to work out how to provide a suitable location to work remotely – noise, light, heating, fresh air, away from dependencies on your time and distractions. You will need enough space for a suitable desk and chair along with any IT equipment and files.

- When on site, you might want to consider clearing your desk and workspace at the end of each day so that when you are not there, others can use your desk if appropriate.

- You can read more about adopting **considerate and inclusive practices** on the University's website.

Equipment

- If you work remotely, regularly or primarily, you will need access to an adequately-equipped workstation in two locations, but this may mean desk-sharing or hot-desking on site. Think about what is going to make most sense for you and how you can accommodate flexible working practically.

- You will need to ensure that you have adequate internet access to be effective when working remotely. This includes providing any equipment required to establish sufficient reliability and speed, and the maintenance and security of your home network

- Reflect on any challenges or frustrations you have experienced while working remotely or on site and whether these could be addressed through additional or different equipment, such as headsets with microphones. Discuss this with your line manager.

Data security

- Ensure that your **IT security training** is up to date and that you have completed the online course within the last 12 months. For those choosing to work remotely, you are responsible for ensuring the security of your own equipment by making sure all applications and operating systems are **up to date**, and you have appropriate anti-virus software.

- It is important to consider the steps that you need to take to ensure that data is kept secure and that people who may enter your work environment cannot access information or data related to your work. If you live in shared accommodation then you will need to think carefully about how to ensure security of equipment and data.

- Remember that this applies to paperwork as well as electronic files, and security needs to be maintained when working on site, working remotely, and travelling between locations.

Training

- Seek and take opportunities to learn how to work efficiently and effectively, ensuring that you are familiar, confident and efficient in the use of remote working methods, collaboration tools and IT in general (*See* **digital skills website** *and* **IT help site**).

Sustainability

- One of the biggest wastes of energy across the University is caused by electrical equipment, including monitors and lighting, being left on when not in use. Always shut down electrical equipment, including IT, when not in use and turn off lights when you are the last to leave a building. (These are good habits for at home too.) See the University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy for more information.

- Get involved in your team's **Green Impact** priorities and if they don't exist, support your line manager to identify your team's priorities.

Work processes

- You may have changed the way you work during lockdown, perhaps by replacing use of paper forms with online equivalents or finding new ways of sharing information with colleagues using MS Teams or SharePoint. Discuss these changes with your manager to agree which of them will continue.

Further information for operational support

Working at our best

As we continue to adapt to hybrid working, good practices, whether in managing ourselves or managing others, become even more important. We have to make sure that we are being as deliberate, clear, empathetic and constructive as we can be. The ways that we work need to evolve to ensure that whatever our working arrangements, we can be effective in our roles and participate actively within our teams and the University community. To make this a success for the University and each of our experiences as staff, we all need to be proactive and kind – towards others and ourselves in adjusting our working practices.

For senior leaders to consider
For team leaders and line managers to consider
For individuals to consider

For senior leaders to consider

Leadership

- You will need to motivate all staff in your area to adapt successfully to new ways of working. You will need to present a compelling case and rationale for staff.

- What you do will affect the behaviour of your team and their teams, setting expectations of leaders and leadership across the University. Set the tone by modelling beneficial behaviours and practices, clearly and consistently.

- Be visible and vocal in your own use of meaningful **PDRs,** in your commitment to completing staff surveys, in your own team's green action plan, in your commitment to data security compliance, in your actions to embed equality initiatives and in your own wellbeing habits and practices.

People priorities

- Take this opportunity to understand common people challenges, concerns and patterns. What are the themes and is there a plan in place to address them? Talk to your **Organisational Development Adviser** for support and be proactive about people development, rather than waiting for problems to arise.

Community

- Regular all-staff communications, online all-staff meetings, and open forum meetings have all been appreciated during lockdown.

- Enable and support similar activities, encouraging people to make connections across your area, and with colleagues elsewhere within the organisation.

- Be visible at these events and join in with activities; the gains in engagement and connection will easily be worthwhile.

- Enable staff to attend community building events such as the VC's Oration, Registrar's Q&A, and encourage connections with external organisations too.

Further Information and support for working at our best

For team leaders and line managers to consider

Productivity

- Be clear on the priorities for the team and make sure these are agreed with your own line manager. See our guides to **Setting Objectives and Delegating Work.**

- Maximise the effectiveness of your team by keeping yourself updated on how each individual works at their best and supporting them to create the conditions to do this. See the **Guide to Managing a Dispersed Team** for a helpful introduction.

- Deal with performance issues as soon as they arise. Performance issues are performance issues regardless of where your team are working.

- Are you aware of what your team are working on and confident that they will deliver? Is your team direction and purpose clear and well understood by the team and your stakeholders? Join the **People Managers' MS Teams Group** group to share tips and get support from other managers in your position.

Communication

- Good two-way communication provides clarity and focus and is critical to foster trust amongst your team. See the guides **Listening skills** and **Feedback guides** for further support. Where possible, try to be transparent about work allocation.

- Be disciplined about the basics: maintain scheduled, supportive one-to-ones and hold PDRs at least annually. Don't put off **difficult conversations**.

- Pay extra attention to keeping your team practices inclusive. See the guide to **managing inclusively** and **creating an inclusive workplace** for more ideas and guidance.

Development

- Healthy teams grow and evolve as they get to know themselves and one another better. Do you and the team have clear development goals?

- Do you know what challenges you are trying to solve and have a plan to address them? This goes beyond the cumulation of individual development needs; it is about becoming more effective and high-performing as a collective team.

- Plan proactively for your **team's development** so that they are able to meet changes and challenges in the future with a sense of ownership and personal agency.

Further Information and support for working at our best

For individuals to consider

Focus

- It is essential that you are clear about the purpose of your role and have clear responsibilities and priorities agreed with your manager.

- Understand the priorities of your team and how you are contributing; agree objectives and key dates with your line manager.

- Keep your PDR 'alive' throughout the year by bringing your objectives to your routine one-to-one meetings and discussing progress or possible adaptations with your manager.

- Considering the needs of the team and how you work best, in discussion with your line manager; do as much as you can to create the conditions that will support you and the team.

Relationships

- Good relationships at work make your job more enjoyable and help you to be more productive.

- Dedicate time to strengthening your relationships with your manager, your team and colleagues, and the wider University community.

- Support your colleagues, especially those working remotely, by keeping meetings inclusive; in mixed on-site/online meetings, don't use communication methods that those joining online can't see.

Development

- It is good practice to be developing and growing in your role. Development is much more than participating in training workshops; it means **growing**: we tend to develop when we are working on new and challenging things.

- Consider what you are working on and what is challenging. How is this experience helping you to develop? Make time to identify your own development goals and talk these through with your line manager. These POD **'developing myself' pages** will help.

- Explore what you can do to work towards these goals. This might include enrolling on the **University mentoring scheme** engaging with online courses, working on new and stretching projects, reflecting on recent achievements and translating these into development outcomes. Talk to your line manager for guidance and support.

Further Information and support for working at our best

ANNEXE A: NWW PLACE OF WORK GUIDANCE STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

New Ways of Working guidance on considering and agreeing changes to place of work

Step-by-step guide

Through the Covid-19 pandemic some staff have continued to work on-site and as restrictions ease many staff are returning to on-site working. In the immediate term the Return to on-site working (RTOSW) guidance applies and many departments will be keen to get staff back into the workplace as soon as it is possible and safe to do so. The New Ways of Working (NWW) project and this guidance complements the RTOSW, rather than replaces it. The step-by-step guidance below may be used either before or after a RTOSW has happened. It applies where New Ways of Working are being discussed as possible longer-term arrangements which aim to best meet the operational needs of the department, whilst building on any positive experiences during the emergency remote working measures. This doesn't prevent conversations about NWW taking place while RTOSW is underway.

The step-by-step guidance is summarised in a flow chart which can be downloaded from the NWW website.

Roles which cannot be carried out remotely

It will be clear to line managers if there are roles within their teams that, despite their best intentions, offer no flexibility for remote working, due to the nature of the work. However, staff who need to be on-site to carry out their role may nonetheless have views about broader departmental plans for new working arrangements or may be able to identify elements of their own roles which could be done remotely. It will be important, therefore, to include those team members in group and individual discussions, and to take their views into account, although those conversations may be shorter and simpler than with other team members.

Where whole teams need to simply return to their contracted, pre-pandemic on-site working patterns (for example staff who were furloughed as it was not possible to do their job remotely), the conversations outlined under the NWW guidance here may not apply. However, it is recommended that a discussion is held with these teams so that they can think through and discuss the implications for their team, and the department more generally, of greater remote working in other teams.

Staff who remain on furlough for any reason, including caring responsibilities, should be included in the discussions outlined here. This will not 'break' the furlough period.

The guidance does not affect formal, written agreements with staff to work 100% remotely.

Step 1. Senior management team planning stage

The senior management team within the departments will need to understand the principles, aims and scope of the **NWW Framework.** The first step is for the senior management team to consider the factors that are critical to the successful operation of the department **(a template workshop structure is available to help with this which can be customised to suit local arrangements - see the Resources tab of the NWW website).** As part of this stage, senior leaders will want to consider how to:

- gather the views of customers/stakeholders on the working models which they consider best support them in their roles eg through surveys of users or discussions with key individuals, or team meetings within the department;

- communicate the NWW Framework positively in their department so as to:

    o engender the culture they wish to promote in the department and 'set the tone' for productive, supportive conversations;

    o encourage informal decision-making where possible;

- ensure that all teams in the department understand the 'bigger picture' of departmental aims and objectives, which will form the context to team and individual discussions;

- explain the rationale for any new norms, parameters or etiquette that will operate in the department, such as core hours or anchor days (when particular groups should be on-site for meetings or to promote teamworking), to make sure that departmental objectives are met and consistency is maximised; and,

- engage with their own reports, supporting them to consider new approaches in an open-minded way and make fair and objective decisions that balance the needs of the team and the individual and enable more flexibility where possible.

Departments will run this stage of the process as works best for them. Some departments will adopt a whole department approach to discussion at this stage whilst others may create a working group or run the workshop at existing departmental leadership groups. Whichever model is followed, the resulting parameters and approach need to be shared with team leaders in preparation for their local discussions.

Step 2. Team leaders: read the NWW framework and consider any local parameters set for their department

Think about the work of your team, its objectives and operation and practical issues, as set out in step 1 above. Consider which stakeholders and teams rely on your own, and ways in which you could consult them to ensure any new arrangements meet their needs.

Step 3. Team leaders: discuss the NWW project with the whole team

Team leaders should ensure that their teams read the **NWW framework** and understand its aims, which include to support the academic mission, whilst building on the positive experiences of remote

working during the pandemic, and the **principles** behind it. It will be important to look carefully at the needs of the department and its local parameters, and other departmental teams and those who rely on services offered by the team. Everyone in the team should be fully aware of these, since they form the context for discussions about individual preferences.

To inform these discussions, team leaders should hold a team workshop to think about their service users' and stakeholders' needs, their own and the department's objectives, and how these might best be met in future. The team should consider:

- What culture would you like to establish in the team, and how can the team's working arrangements support that?

- Do you want in-person meetings on a regular or occasional basis?

- How can the team best support relationships and communication if some members work remotely?

- What working practices have worked well and given good outcomes during the pandemic and therefore should be retained?

- How can you ensure that the customers of your service are not adversely affected by any changes to team ways of working?

You should involve the team in thinking this through: they will have insights to share with you, and you will all feel more committed to ways of working that you have developed together. You can download workshop guidance materials from the Resources tab of the NWW website to facilitate a team meeting to discuss this.

Remember to invite all members of the team, including those on furlough or on leave, including long-term sickness absence and family leave.

Step 4. All team members: consider previous, current and future working patterns

The issues that both team leaders and members of staff should think about in advance of individual discussions are set out below. Fuller guidance is available for team leaders on holding individuals meetings and on decision-making after those meetings (see the Resources tab of the NWW website "Guidance for team leaders on decision-making")

Actions for team leaders

Bearing in mind the outcomes of your discussion about customer/stakeholder and departmental needs, review the working arrangements that each of your team had before the pandemic, and the period since the first lockdown measures began. In the context of any conclusions reached as part of Step 3 above, consider:

- Has the team been able to work effectively and meet objectives, meeting stakeholder needs to a high standard?

- What expectations do colleagues or customers have of the team? How will those change once everyone can return to working on site?

- Are there working practices that you would wish to retain going forwards?

- What has been challenging for individual members of your team?

- If members of your team have a disability, what has been beneficial and what has been detrimental to their work and health? How can any benefits be maintained?

- How have individual members of the team coped with remote working?

- Are there operational requirements that mean some or all of the team need to work on-site for part or all of the week?

- Is there a requirement for core hours?

Bear in mind that during the pandemic some temporary measures were introduced which will not form part of normal working post-pandemic. For example, an individual may have had special dispensation to work irregular hours or to have children under their care while working. Once pandemic measures lift staff will be expected to work their full contracted hours and may need to return to standard office hours for the team to meet its aims.

You should give particular consideration to the needs of disabled staff (colleagues, or service-users), bearing in mind that the University has a legal obligation to put in place reasonable adjustments to support disabled staff members to carry out their role effectively.

Remember – this is an evolving situation. In planning new arrangements you should be setting up trial periods that allow everyone involved to learn what works well and what needs to be changed in the light of experience. Some things will work better than others and all involved should expect a period of adjustment as teams embark on new ways of working.

Actions for team members

Think about your working arrangement before and during the pandemic:

- What impact does your place of work have on your colleagues or your team's customers?

- Who else relies on you, and how can their needs be met?

- What working arrangements do you think will be best suited to achieving the objectives of your team?

- If you worked remotely, what worked well for you? What were the challenges?

- If you have experienced any benefits or challenges associated with a disability or long-term health condition, have you discussed this with your team leader?

- Are there any aspects of your role that you can perform better on-site or remotely?

- Would you like to return to your previous working arrangements (hours, location)? Or would you prefer to request a new pattern of working? What arrangements do you want, and are there others that might work for you?

Step 5. All team members: take part in informal meetings to discuss preferences and concerns

Action for team leaders

Following the team discussion and consideration of future working arrangements, invite each member of the team to meet privately and informally to discuss the outcome of the discussions about the operational needs, and their own preferences. This may be a remote meeting or, where the department has returned to on-site working, it could be held face-to-face. This can form part of the regular 1:1 or a separate meeting (a template invite is available from the Resources tab of the NWW website). Let the team member know what the meeting is about and remind them to read the framework and to think about the matters listed in Step 4 (above) in advance. No accompaniment or formal record of the meeting is required.

Read the guidance on decision-making before the meetings:

Make sure the discussion covers:

- The requirements of the work/team. Focus on the future, and how the team can operate as effectively as possible - avoid making assumptions based on ways of working in 2020-21.

- The potential impact of future working arrangements on working relationships or practices, or career development, and how these might be mitigated.

- What working pattern the individual would prefer and why.

- Consideration of any disability-related needs, if the individual discloses them.

- The individual's circumstances, such as their caring responsibilities and their ability to establish a suitable work station at home.

- If an individual wishes to work remotely for the majority of their hours, how they think interaction with the workplace will work effectively.

NB: Do not make assumptions about an individual's circumstances based on gender, disability, etc but do encourage them to be open about them.

A checklist is available for those who would find it useful.

Things to remember

Pre-existing remote working agreements should only be reviewed if the staff member wishes to do so. No one will be required to work remotely.

If you have team members who are currently away from the workplace (eg on family leave or furloughed) ensure that they are given the opportunity to have the same discussion with you and to join team discussions, if they wish.

If a team member has a disability and working remotely would be a reasonable adjustment to assist them in managing this, it will be a priority to meet this need, where operationally possible. This may

have financial implications, eg if the individual would need adaptive equipment both at home and in the office, and the University would be expected to find this.

Separate authorisation is required if the individual wishes to apply to work from outside the UK.

Actions for team members

Prepare for the meeting as set out in Step 4 above.

- If you would like to work remotely for some of your hours and/or to have a different working pattern, explain this and how you think that will work in practice. Explain how you think that will support team objectives, and any challenges you anticipate.

- There may be more than one working arrangement that will meet your needs and aspirations, so explain your circumstances and where you can be flexible. Team leaders will need to balance operational requirements with the preferences of each team member, so be prepared to discuss different possibilities.

- If your request relates to a disability or long-term health condition, make sure your team leader is aware of this.

- Consider whether your proposal might have longer-term impacts on your career development and how these might be mitigated.

- Be honest about any concerns you may have about your future working arrangements or change in the dynamics or working practices of the team.

Step 6. Team leaders: note individual preferences on future working arrangements

Team leaders should take a note of the preferences of each team member, to help them in considering how to balance the needs of the team, its operations and customers, and the individual. No formal meeting notes are required; a simple grid is sufficient, for example:

Name	Date of meeting	Pre-COVID work pattern	Preference for post-COVID work pattern	Notes

The **meeting checklist** which is available from the Resources tab of the NWW website includes space for these details to be noted, so where the checklist is being used no separate note needs to be kept.

If there was any uncertainty or lack of clarity in the meeting about what the individual is seeking, email them to summarise your understanding of what working pattern they want and why, and ask them to confirm that your understanding is accurate.

Step 7(a) Team leaders: review how far operational needs match individuals' preferences

Once you have met with each member of the team, you should review how far the operational needs you have identified might accommodate the preferences your team have expressed. Guidance on decision-making for team leaders is provided in the Resources tab of the NWW website.

Individual departments may ask line managers to refer their recommendations to a senior management team before any new arrangements are agreed, to ensure that changes to working practices work well across the whole department, particularly where 'primarily remote' arrangement are being considered.

If it is not possible to accommodate the individual preferences of all team members, or if there are conflicting demands, you may wish to seek advice from your local HR contact. It is important that decisions are seen to be fair and non-discriminatory and that any individual circumstances are considered.

It is recommended that any new arrangements are subject to a trial period of 3-6 months. The NWW framework provides an opportunity to try out new approaches to working practices, as well as new arrangements for individuals, and trial periods will be beneficial during this period of experimentation. They also allow individuals to adjust to new processes and arrangements, and test them over time, when their colleagues are also working in new ways. It will often be appropriate to use trial periods across the team, for a consistent period. Trial periods will be terminable, with reasonable notice, by either party if the arrangement does not prove satisfactory; if this happens, the individual will revert to their pre-pandemic working pattern, unless an alternative arrangement is agreed for a further trial period. It will be important to confirm to the individual in writing what will signify success in the trial period, and how that will be assessed, to ensure a smooth review at the end of the trial.

If it is possible to agree to all the new working patterns that are requested (and, where relevant, the head of departments/senior management team have approved the changes), go to Step 7(c) below.

Step 7(b) All team members: if questions remain about whether new working patterns can be accommodated, hold further individual meetings

It is important for team leaders to be open to discussion and new ideas about how to manage work effectively, and for staff to consider the needs of the work / other team members and to be prepared to compromise. If the initial round of discussions has not led to agreement on all new working arrangement requests, team leaders should have further discussions with team members.

In that meeting, the team leader should:

- Explain the reasons they do not think they can agree the original request, with reference to the team's objectives, and the desired culture and ways of working in the team.

- Where relevant, ensure that the individual is aware of any changes that may arise due to other members of the team changing their working pattern eg someone who wishes to work primarily remotely may reconsider if most of their colleagues are returning full-time to on-site working.

- Ensure they do not share personal data relating to other members of the team, including why they have certain working arrangements.

- Explore other possibilities, so as to provide as much flexibility as possible to the individual, within the parameters of operational requirements, if their original request cannot be met.

As previously, these conversations are not formal meetings; a brief note of the key points of the discussion should be retained.

Step 7(c) Team leaders: if agreement is reached, confirm the working arrangements

If you are able to agree a change to working arrangements (and, where appropriate, this is approved by the department's senior management team), the pro-forma **confirmation of change form** (available from the [Resources tab of the NWW website](#)) is sufficient to note the agreed changes. Both team leader and employee should sign the form which should be passed to the HR contact to be filed on the individual's personnel file. A copy should be provided to the individual. As the formal place of work remains the University department referenced in the employment contract, no further contract amendment is required.

Step 8. Team leaders: review working arrangements regularly

Team leaders should monitor the success of the new working arrangements. They should consider the performance of the team as a whole, gain feedback where possible from service users and other stakeholders who might be impacted by the changes, and identify whether any adjustments are required to optimise effectiveness and ensure continued support for the academic mission. Team discussions should be held as part of this process, as a means of ensuring commitment to the team's preferred culture and ways of working.

Team Leaders should also consider how well the new arrangements are working for individual members of the team, discussing any emerging concerns with them so that they can be addressed early, and recognising successes where arrangements are working well.

The NWW framework and guidance will be reviewed regularly as we all learn from experience, so team leaders should read any announcements about adjustments to the guidance, and consider how they might apply to their own team.

Trial periods should be reviewed at their specified end date, in one-to-one discussions with the team member. Team Leaders should then decide whether working arrangements need to be adjusted or can be confirmed.

Next steps: if agreement cannot be reached informally

If, after informal discussion, it is not possible to agree a new set of working arrangements (either the original request, or a compromise), the team leader should confirm this in writing, and explain why it is not possible (a **template** is available from the [Resources tab of the NWW website](#).). As this is an informal process there is no right of appeal for the team member. Instead, individuals should be advised that they can submit a [formal flexible working request](#), which will be considered through the normal formal routes, at a management level higher than that at which the informal decision was made.

Guidance for team leaders on decision-making

The **decision-making guidance for team leaders** (available in the [Resources tab of the NWW website](#)) builds on the overview provided in the step-by-step guidance, above, giving you more detailed advice on what issues you should think through when preparing for those conversations, talking to your team members, and making decisions afterwards.

If, having read the step-by-step guidance, you would like some more detailed advice on these issues the Guidance for team leaders on decision-making is available via the NWW website

FAQs are also available on [the NWW website](#).

ANNEXE B: LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Defining business and operational needs

Workshop guidance and materials (see **Resources** tab)

Slide pack to support staff briefing (see **Resources** tab)

Focus tools – *'Stop-Start-Continue'*

Place of work

Step-by-step guide **Annex A** (of this document) and **NWW website**

The Resources tab of the NWW website hosts:

- Workshop guidance and materials for facilitating team discussions
- Team Leader's checklist for meetings with staff
- Team Leaders guide to decision-making
- Confirmation of change template form

Working from outside of the UK

Travel to work and Active travel planning pilot

Health, safety and wellbeing

Information about University Health and Safety Policy

Occupational Health

Display screen equipment

DSE assessments

Operational support

Data and security compliance

IT security training

Protect my computer,

Recommended AV equipment

Digital skills website

IT collaborate web pages

IT help site

Guidance on hybrid committee meetings

Managing hot-desks using MS Bookings

Insurance

University miscellaneous expenses guide

HMRC guide to tax relief on work expenses

University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Green Impact

Working at our best

Organisational Development Adviser

New Managers' Toolkit guides

Managing a Dispersed Team

Creating and Inclusive Workplace

Managing Inclusively

Equality and Diversity

NWW Equality Impact Assessment

Listening skills

Having difficult conversations

People Managers' MS Teams group

Workshop to develop skills managing dispersed teams

The Leadership Framework

Courses and learning resources

Focus toolkit (problem solving and continuous improvement)

People and Organisational Development