



**COVID-19
Remote Work Guidelines**

Remote Work Guidelines

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USC offers Remote Work (RW), in certain circumstances, to balance the operational needs of the University with the personal needs of its faculty, staff, or student workers. These guidelines have been established to support staff and supervisors to work safely, efficiently, and effectively in a remote environment. While remote work in a non-pandemic environment is optional, the expectation in the COVID-19 environment is that faculty, staff, or student workers will continue to work remotely unless the work cannot be completed off-site. All faculty, staff, or student workers who continue to work remotely are expected to abide by the Remote Work Guidelines outlined below to support a positive and successful remote work experience.

While faculty are not required to have a Remote Work Letter of Agreement, and the terms “employee” and “supervisor” are not apt for faculty relations, to keep these guidelines as simple as possible, “supervisor” refers to anyone who has direct reports, including deans of faculty and department chairs. “Employee” refers to faculty, staff, and student workers.

Remote Work Letter of Agreement

All **staff and student workers** working from home are expected to complete the RW approval process, including executing a USC-issued **Remote Work Letter of Agreement (RWA)**. The agreement states the terms and conditions for the RW arrangement to create transparent expectations for employees and supervisors alike, alleviate confusion, and provide role structure in a remote environment. The desired outcome is to help ensure a positive, successful, and safe working environment for all involved. Generally, for faculty, no request will be necessary to work at home. However, faculty should ensure their department chair or dean is aware that they are working remotely.

Executing the Remote Work Letter of Agreement

The RWA can be accessed on the [Employee Gateway](#).

- Under normal operating circumstances, employees who would like to request to work remotely must initiate the RWA process at least **30 days before starting remote work**.
- Agreements using the USC RWA will be valid for three months to one year. RWA agreements are always at the discretion of the department, so it is possible that employees may be asked to return to work on-site before the agreement expires.
- **However, during COVID-19:**
 - Employees currently working remotely without an RWA (either from their department or school) should submit the University’s agreement to their supervisor by **February 14, 2021** for their approval. Please reach out to HR Partners if you have concerns about this timing.

- **If a home department RWA was previously in place prior to COVID-19, the department specific agreement will be valid through December 31, 2020, after which the agreement will need to transition to the new University RWA.** Under the assumption that we will still be working from home after January due to COVID-19, these employees should submit the new signed USC RWA by **February 14, 2021**.
- The anticipated RWA end date will be at the discretion of the school, division, and department (or unit) based on the approval of LA County (e.g., “this document will terminate by August 31, 2021 or earlier if you are required to return to campus, based on LA County’s guidance and the department or unit needs”).
- After approving the RWA, supervisors will need to send it to the HR Partner for review. HR Partners are expected to sign the RWA and upload the agreement to the employee’s Workday file by the time the RWA is **scheduled to begin** (except as it relates to the current COVID-19 circumstances).

Services/Equipment Expenses

Technology Stipend

During the period when employees work remotely, USC will provide a monthly stipend to cover a percentage of the cell phone, internet, and other technology expenses that may be generated by working from home.

- Full-time employee receives \$53 per month
- Part-time employee receives \$26.50 per month

Note that employees who receive a monthly mobile allowance or who have a University-issued cell phone with a working data/hot spot will generally not be eligible for the stipend.

Employees who believe that the stipend does not cover the reasonable costs they actually incur must maintain accurate records of such charges and submit them via the approved channels as per the University’s [Reimbursements policy](#).

Other Equipment Expenses

Cost for associated expenses (e.g., installing computers, phone lines, recurring fees, repair, and/or support) must be pre-approved by the employee’s supervisor and must be in accordance with the school, department, unit, and University’s [Reimbursements policy](#).

Responsibilities

For the remote work to succeed for everyone, responsibilities should be clearly understood by all parties:

Employee Responsibilities

- Consider their own needs, work conditions, and the type of RWA that would meet their needs.
- Inform their supervisor in a timely manner of the need for an RWA (non-COVID-19). Staff and student workers should surface RWA challenges and make suggestions to address potential obstacles, remaining open to feedback and changes to a RW request in all circumstances.
- Conduct a home office inventory and review the [Remote Work Safety Checklist](#). Any corrections required by that inspection are solely the employee's responsibility.
 - If there are ergonomic concerns, the employee should consider conducting an [ergonomic self-evaluation](#). If additional evaluation is needed, employees can schedule a virtual evaluation with Occupational Health. At this time, USC Environmental Health and Safety is covering the cost of the occupational health evaluation.
- Be aware that tax implications related to off-site work are their own responsibility. Employees are advised to consult a tax professional. Additionally, employees should be aware that undertaking a remote work arrangement does not automatically make the commute to a USC location an approved "business trip."
- Adhere to all University policies, including but not limited to [compliance](#) and privacy policies such as HIPAA, FERPA, etc.
- Comply with University [Information Technology Services guidelines](#) and minimize the likelihood of USC equipment, records, or materials being used for non-USC business purposes.
- Minimize the risk of accidental access, use, modification, destruction, or disclosure of USC information, or unauthorized access, use, modification, or destruction of USC property.
- Communicate with their supervisor to ensure they are meeting expectations and satisfactorily performing work assignments.
- Continue to fulfill all job responsibilities and conditions of employment, and adhere to USC policies, procedures, and guidelines, including maintaining a regular workload.
- For non-exempt employees, accurately document time worked, including overtime where appropriate, and requested days off in the appropriate system of record (e.g., Workday).
- Commit to adhering to any health and safety trainings and/or symptom screenings as required by USC prior to returning to campus for any reason.
- Visit the "[Staff Toolkit](#)" to assist with collaboration, communication, and participation with the online working environment.

Please note that failure to fulfill these responsibilities may result in the cancellation of the RWA or potential disciplinary action.

Supervisor Responsibilities for Staff and Student Workers

- Operational needs should be evaluated prior to approving RWAs.
 - In a COVID-19 environment, a justification will be required to the supervisor and HR Partner with specific rationale as to why an RWA cannot be accommodated for the employee.
- Clearly communicate defined tasks and expectations, measure performance through clearly defined metrics and behavior, and provide regular feedback on work performance.
- Visit the "[Staff Toolkit](#)" to assist with collaboration, communication, and participation with the online working environment.
- Review RWA efficacy on a regular basis by evaluating the individual's performance, responsibilities, and work style, while remaining focused on the benefits derived by supporting RW.
- Ensure employees receive the appropriate technology reimbursements and equipment needed to safely and effectively perform their duties (in collaboration with the appropriate HR Partner and Senior Business Officer).
- Direct employees to ensure compliance with all relevant University policies and security guidelines.
- Provide annual performance reviews and apply salary increases fairly, regardless of their work location, in accordance with the University's policies and procedures.

Remote Work for Out-Of-State Employees

If an employee proposes a RWA outside of California, the supervisor and the employee should consult with the following entities to consider issues that may arise:

- **Payroll Services:**
 - **Continuing USC employees** who normally work in California during Fall 2020 but are now "**temporarily remote**" in another state due to COVID-19 disruption will continue to be paid California wages for the purpose of state tax withholding and remittance, as if they were still located in the state and therefore do not need to fill out another RWA.
 - **Continuing USC employees** who indicate they have **permanently relocated to another state** will be paid wages based on the state in which they reside and work, as per law. They will need to update Workday and fill out another RWA.
 - **New employees** who have not worked in the state of California in 2020 must be paid as out-of-state employees for the purpose of state tax withholding and remittance, based on the state in which they are residing and working.
 - International students who cannot travel to USC for the upcoming semester are generally unable to be employed as student workers or to support research or teaching assistantships if the student is located

outside the U.S.

- Employees with specific tax questions or concerns surrounding their personal tax situation should contact a tax advisor or tax attorney.
- Please note that USC is not authorized to do business in every state; thus, any RWA arrangement involving out-of-state employment may be delayed or denied. Please refer to the current list of [USC registered states](#) or contact payroll. Contact University Payroll Services at payroll@usc.edu should you have further questions or concerns. Out-of-state work arrangements require an additional approval from both the Office of General Counsel and central Payroll Services.
- **HR Partner and University HR:** Any employee whose primary worksite is located outside the state of California is subject to all employment-related laws of the state in which they work.
- **Benefits:** Some employees' benefit plans may be affected (some medical plans are limited to California providers, etc.).

Contacts

Please direct any questions regarding these guidelines to the HR Service Center at uschr@usc.edu or (213) 821-8100.

*Please note: Given the changing COVID-19 landscape, these guidelines may be revised as new information becomes available.

Reviewed by:

Office of Human Resources
Office of the Provost
Office of the General Counsel
ADA 504 Coordinator