AGILE WORKING – OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE

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1. Introduction

At the University of Suffolk (UoS) we want to support our staff to do their best work, have a good work life balance and work flexibly whilst staying connected to colleagues, students, and the wider university community. We know that for most staff, where how and when you work has changed because of the pandemic. Your expectations about what work looks like may have also changed.

The purpose of this operational guidance is to set out a framework for those whose job roles lend them towards working in an 'agile' manner. It should also be recognised that not all roles will be able to be agile because of the nature of the work, the level of supervision required in the role or the need to be present and accessible to other colleagues and/or students for most of the time. Staff who fall into this category are defined as campus workers.

Dovetailed with our approach to agile working are the longer term UoS Estates and Digital strategies. The Estates strategy aims to ensure we have the right workspaces, configured in the best possible ways to ensure our staff are the best performing that they can be – which in turn will impact on our overall student experience. It is a commitment of the UoS to keep the positive parts of working flexibly whilst looking at how we can support our staff to stay connected and work in their best way. The emerging Digital strategy will focus on the utilisation of skills and technology to support and embed technological change within UoS. All staff should be committed to keeping their digital skills up to date and engage with the support available to them to do so.

It should be recognised that agile working is not just homeworking. Because of the very nature of our 'reason for being' – namely to deliver a high quality, robust package of higher education to the students of UoS, there will always be a requirement for our staff to maintain some level of "on campus" presence. However, the

degrees of this, the timing, and the way in which this occurs are what may look different in an agile / hybrid model of working.

We expect our staff to champion, and role model our values and operating principles, regardless of role. We recognise the opportunities to embed and enhance these values in a truly authentic way through the ways in which we work – which includes in an agile / hybrid way, for those staff who are able. Our core values and operating principles are:

Transformational: We believe in the power of education to deliver positive change for the individuals and communities we work with.

Inclusive: We are a community built on respect, fairness, and compassion. We debate our differences sensitively and celebrate the strength and creativity that a diverse community gives us.

Creative: We dare to challenge established beliefs, generate new ideas and strive to change the communities we serve. We are innovative in finding new ways and solutions to advance the boundaries of knowledge and address real-life issues.

 Empowering: We inspire our students and staff to be the best they can be and support them to realise their potential and goals.

Collaborative: We thrive through inclusive, trusting, and supportive relationships building a sense of community and mutual responsibility, helping us to achieve our shared goals.

Professionalism and service: We strive to deliver the highest standards of service and scholarship, both internally between academics and professional services colleagues, and externally between all University staff and members of our wider community.

We encourage staff to seek opportunities to demonstrate these values and principles in all that they do.

Whilst we expect that the majority of staff whose roles are suitable for agile working will wish to work in this way, there will be no enforced requirement for individuals to work from home or alternative locations (outside of situations in which there is a government directive on this i.e., pandemic/ lockdown situation). Therefore, if an individual has concerns about working in an agile way these should be highlighted to the line manager without delay so that arrangements can be put in place for a more regular presence on campus, for that individual.

All agile workers are required to be UK based during contracted working time (holidays excluded).

This guidance does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

2. Terminology & Nomenclature

It is considered that the most universally acceptable terminology to describe the way in which the majority of our staff will be required to work is '**agile**'.

"Agile working incorporates dimensions of time and place flexibility, but also involves doing work differently focusing on performance and outcomes. In fact, agile is more than working in a different way, it is being and behaving differently. It is transformational."[1] Agile working is also described as the "ability to work in the place and at the time most appropriate for the task in hand. Agile working is about providing a working environment and way of working that allows choice and flexibility. It allows the individuals within organisations to work wherever and whenever best suits the outcomes (the products, service, or tasks) they have to deliver."[2]

Interspersed with the use of the term 'agile' is the term '**hybrid**' – which means a mixture or fusion – in this scenario, relating to ways, times, and location of working.

It must be recognised that due to the diverse nature of our university and the activities that our staff undertake, in developing a guidance framework for our staff to work in, there will be a need for varying degrees or 'shades' of agility. As our methods of operation are determined by the work we do, the overall requirements of the School / Directorate / team and the customers that are served through the work that is done must drive the level of agility of our staff and therefore the notion of best time, place, and space in which to undertake work. As a result, some Schools / Directorates or teams may require of individuals an on-campus presence for a notional minimum time per week; others may be able to be less prescriptive.

Agile working is not to be confused with solely '**homeworking**'. If an individual wishes to request a permanent or temporary change to the hours, days, times, or location that they regularly work – this would fall under the requirements of the Flexible working policy.

3. Agile and Campus workers

4.1 Campus Worker (C)

- The team or individual whose work predominantly involves face to face interaction with students, staff, and others

- The nature of the job means all or almost all, of the job could not be done unless on Campus

4.2 Agile Worker (A)

- Teams or individuals know what is needed to achieve the goals and can work from a location which best suits each activity

- Attends campus for team activities, face to face teaching etc or as required to 'connect' with key col- leagues, stakeholders, and line manager

- Where direct social interaction is more effective (to internal or external 'customers'), the individual is required to meet, to train or interact with others in person – on or off campus

- Some of the work involves using equipment, technology, or other resources

- Some of the work is better suited to a location where they won't be interrupted or distracted

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1 www.agile.org.uk/what-is-agile-working/

2 www.bakerstuart.com/what-is-agile-working

It is important that each role can be assessed and categorised as campus or agile (C or A).

The categorisation above should be considered against the duties of the role and the way in which teams and individuals will most effectively carry out the duties of their role. As the nomenclature indicates, agile workers must maintain a regular enough presence on campus to ensure they remain:

- Connected to colleagues, recognising the importance of face-to-face contact

- Connected to the university – the campus being the heart of the university it is crucial that staff and students do not lose the semblance of our 'being' due to a lack of attendance at or connection to our campus.

- Accessible in a way which suits all invested parties

Managers should discuss role categorisation with their staff. As individual job descriptions are updated, the role categorisation should be added to the job description. In addition, all departmental structure charts should also show the categorisation of roles as being either campus or agile.

4. Key Principles of Agile

5.1 Working People

Principles

The following People-rated principles will determine the success of an agile approach to the work that we do:

- Agile working is based on trust. We trust our staff to choose the best times, places, and technology to match the work they do, their personal preferences and to balance this with their own needs, the needs of their team and the needs of their internal and external 'customers' and stakeholder.

- Work is an activity and not a destination.

- Agile working is open to everyone who has a suitable role (as denoted through agile worker status) regardless of how long they have worked for UoS. This also includes contractors and temporary agency workers who are working for us.

- Physical presence does not equal great performance. Staff performance will be evaluated on the im- pact that is felt and the outcomes that are delivered.

- UoS commits to ensuring that staff have the right technology and equipment to work in this way.

- Agile working should not impact the level or quality of service to customers / stakeholders or col- leagues.

- UoS policies and procedures apply in every location that staff work from

- Community and connection are part of who we are and our 'reason for being' at UoS and we also know that they are important for staff wellbeing. We will continue to provide safe office spaces for staff to collaborate and connect with each other.

- We know that there might be times when being on campus is crucial, such as when new staff first start working at UoS; when individuals have started a new role or to work collaboratively with colleagues or

partners. At times such as this staff will be required to attend campus regularly – as agreed with the line manager.

5. Working Hours and Keeping in Touch Principles

We want to empower staff to flex the times they work so they can balance their home life around the needs of their role. We trust staff to manage their own time and ensure they work the hours they are contracted to do. However, there are some important aspects to this which form part of the principles of agile working:

- Staff should expect to make themselves available to others during reasonable working hours when they are needed by their team, their manager or other internal / external customers or stakeholders.

- Staff may be asked to be available at certain times to meet the needs of the business, to physically be in the office / on campus to collaborate or attend training.

- Flexing working times should not result in extra work for other members of the team or compromise the objectives of the team.

- If staff choose to work late (outside of core or usual office hours of 8am-6pm), they should be courteous and respectful to their colleagues. It should be recognised that support service hours remain as 9- 5pm. Colleagues are not expected to respond during unsociable hours or outside of their own agreed working patterns. To reinforce this, the following wording is recommended to be added underneath the email 'signature':

    If I am sending emails outside of usual / core hours I may be working flexibly. Please be assured that I do not expect a response outside of your own working hours.

- Staff will not be entitled to any overpayments or overtime if they choose to work unsociable hours or more hours than they are contracted to do (unless specifically agreed with their line manager – and in response to a critical business need).

- Staff will not be entitled to claim any home to campus expenses (unless specifically agreed as part of relocation terms)

- Agile working is not suited as a way of managing Emergency Leave or for long term childcare if it has a significant impact on the ability to carry out day-to-day roles.

- Staff must take appropriate rest breaks throughout the working day. This is really important for good physical and mental wellbeing. Time away from screens, taking in fresh air and eating away from the workstation are all good habits to make and follow. Specifically:

- Within each 6-hour block of working time a break of 20 minutes should be taken (within the 6- hour block, not at the end of it)

- Staff who work a day that is longer than 6 hours must factor in at least a 30-minute (total) break. Staff can determine the length of their lunch / rest breaks (within reason) as these falls outside of contracted working hours. For example, these could take the form of a 30 – 60-minute lunch break or two shorter breaks of 15-30 minutes each. Staff are entitled to take a lunch break and should build in time to ensure that they do.

- At least 11 hours complete rest should occur between working days

- Staff are encouraged to ensure they build time into their day for physical activity – which in turn may maintain or improve both physical and mental wellbeing. The UoS is committed to ensuring positive health and wellbeing of our staff and students – as outlined in our emerging Wellbeing Strategy and evidenced through our [Health and Wellbeing toolkit](#) – which all staff are encouraged to use regardless of their agile or campus worker denotation.

- Staff have the right to 'switch off' from work at the end of the working day. It is important therefore that line managers encourage and support this. If there is evidence that there is an inability for individuals to do so adequately – and their physical or mental health suffers as a result - this may be a valid reason to necessitate more structured practices; with defined start and end times, and potentially more time spent working on campus (where the laptop can be securely stored overnight etc to prevent excessive working). Also linked to this are management actions and behaviours – which must also not overtly or implicitly encourage excessive working hours and prevent adequate rest for staff.

- Staff should agree a notional or usual working pattern – and ensure there is an understanding around the flexibilities within this – noting the requirement to keep calendars updated; and discuss if any specific or ad hoc flexibility is required

- Staff should ensure their work calendar is always kept up to date and is made open to their line man- ager and immediate team or key stakeholders. This will enable managers and colleagues to know when staff can be contacted, when they are free and when they are scheduled to work. This is espe- cially important if individuals choose not to work set hours, which start and finish at the same time each day (i.e., as you adopt the flexibilities of agile/hybrid working). Staff should consider utilising the availability function within MS Teams to show when you are available for communication / calls or when you are working on focussed tasks.

6. Estates Principles

Over time, our estate and offices will be reconfigured in line with the principles below.

7. Layout

– Open plan offices throughout
– Light and airy spaces – we will use low or medium height furniture to allow light through the space and any partitioned areas or storage rooms should be at the periphery of the floor wherever possible
– Fewer desks and more collaborative areas
– Adjustable furniture (e.g., ergonomic chairs, several height adjustable desks)
– Fewer individual offices
– Plenty of ad-hoc meeting spaces, to include booths and benches where possible
– Lockers for all staff – no pedestals (under desk drawers)
– Furniture to accommodate confidential phone calls, e.g., phone booths

- Quiet working zones
- Centralised areas, e.g., printing, library where necessary
- Kitchenettes with soft seating areas
- Meeting spaces with appropriate technology to hold meetings with colleagues in other locations

9. Storage

The University currently has a considerable amount of storage on site, reducing it will support and enable agile working practices as well as increase the amount of space available.

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Equality Impact Assessment	This document has been assessed for equality impact on the protected groups, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Amendment History

Version	Date	Reviewer Name(s)	Summary of changes
1.1	November 2024	POD Team	Update of template

Existing storage and files will be categorised as follows: Personal Storage, Team Storage, Occasional and Retrievable Storage.

9.1 Personal Storage
Everybody is entitled to their own personal locker. This is to be used for personal items (no work storage or files) enabling that person to come into the office, take their trays/items from the locker and work at a desk or working area.

9.2 Team Storage
Team storage consists of 'live' files or items that require regular access, these are items that must therefore be kept in the office.

9.3 Occasional Items
Several teams may have items that require storing but are only occasionally accessed. Examples may include event storage, mail out and marketing materials, signage and supplies that are used occasionally.

These items will be factored to our plans and stored near the office in cabinets or a room.

9.4 Retrievable Storage
Legally held documents or items that do not need to be kept on site will be relocated away from the office space to the archive facility and retrieved as necessary.

10. Etiquette Principles

We operate a clear desk policy throughout

- Both Agile and Campus workers should ensure that desks and working areas are left clear and avail- able for others to use when they are away from the office

- No personal items (i.e., photographs, plants etc) to be left on or at any workspaces

- No printed material (confidential or otherwise) should be left on or at any workspace or shared area

- Our office spaces will be open plan meaning consideration for others is essential

- 'Quiet zones' should be respected, and general office noise should be at a level which is acceptable to all

- No hot food should be eaten at desks – to minimise disruption to others caused by the smell of food, and to minimise health and safety risks (spillage, burns, risk to equipment, encouraging eating away from the workspace)

11. Digital & IT Principles

-   The use and utilisation of digital skills and technology will be important for all staff to ensure we all make effective use of our time regardless of where we are working. All staff will be required to keep themselves abreast of the technology available to them to support their roles and engage with online

learning packages available. Regular lunch and learn sessions will be set up for staff around using the Microsoft 365 software suite.

- Staff will be required to use the corporate laptops assigned to them when on campus and working at home or in other locations. Any desktop devices will be reutilised in student areas to ensure a zero- waste approach.

- A standard desk set up with either one large or two smaller screens and a docking station will be provided in all staff areas along with a 'one-cable' plug in to enable staff to work effectively.

- The use of headsets (which will be allocated to staff as needed) and an awareness of how and where online / hybrid meetings are attended will be important to ensure all staff are aware of our environment and colleagues around us.

- Meeting and teaching areas will need to be used differently where hybrid meetings are being con- ducted, and these spaces are being reviewed to ensure they have appropriate technology to support effective meetings and teaching.

- Desk telephones will not be available, as they are no longer required now all staff are using MS Teams telephony.

- All staff are encouraged to 'think before you print'. The University is working towards a paper free environment, and the effective use of technology means printing should only be needed by exception.

- Staff should ensure their work calendar is always kept up to date and is made open to their line man- ager and immediate team or key stakeholders. Staff should consider utilising the availability function within MS Teams to show when you are available for communication / calls or when you are working on focussed tasks.

12. Situations in which Agile working may be withdrawn

- Where an individual is not meeting acceptable performance standards.

- Where an individual is failing to meet the obligations set out in this document

- Where there has been an identifiable operational impact of agile working arrangements including (but not limited to) a reduced student experience or poor team working.

- Where the individual's role changes such that agile working is no longer suitable.

13. Agile / Campus working obligations / responsibilities

13.1 You / Staff should:

- Ensure that any requests to complete a Homeworking (or any other) risk assessment is undertaken without delay. Risk assessments are intended for your safety and wellbeing and failure to complete any required risk assessment without good cause may be a reason for the revoking of agile worker status.

- Be honest about your ability to work – recording sickness honestly and appropriately and ensuring rest is taken to recuperate and highlighting where non-work issues may be impacting your ability to fulfil contractual requirements.

- Respond positively to management requests to evidence any necessity to self-isolate, due to COVID- 19 protocols (noting that from 16/08/2021 it is anticipated that fully vaccinated adults and unvaccinated individuals who are under 18 will no longer be required to self-isolate under government guidelines)

- Actively participate in regular team meetings / huddles, 1:1 meetings and annual appraisal discussions; in a face-to-face setting if deemed necessary by your line manager.

- Display trust-worthy behaviours and approach – including openness and honesty around working pat- terns and accessibility.

- Ensure any confidential conversations are conducted in a suitably private environment whether at home or in the office, and any confidential printed materials are not printed unnecessarily and are disposed of in confidential shredding bins.

- Communicate any concerns about agile working to your manager without delay -including where an agile working approach may not be suitable for you – including for reasons relating to an unsafe or unsuitable home environment. In such cases, there will be no obligation for any portion of working time to be from home. The role undertaken will still be denoted as 'agile' but alternative arrangements will be made for a permanent presence on campus (government guidance permitting)

- Book your own desk / workspace when you need / want to work on campus. A desk booking system will be provided on the staff intranet for this.

- Adhere to usual data protection and GDPR principles when working at any site – campus, home, or other premises. All information should be secured, screens should remain locked when away from the workstation, and no information should be left accessible to others.

- Dress appropriately for the audience that you will have, when appearing on MS Teams/video conferencing. No pyjamas, smoking or vaping on camera.

13.2 Managers should:

- Encourage and role model output-based management rather than presenteeism. A supportive performance management approach will be needed especially where teams remain predominantly remote

- Consider and communicate to staff / teams if there is an operational requirement for a minimum level of weekly presence on campus

- Undertake regular team meetings / huddles, 1:1 meetings and enhanced quarterly 1:1 meetings which encompass H&WB discussions and objective review discussions – to ensure appropriate support for staff, awareness of issues and to ensure focus on required outputs.

- Role model behaviours, flexibilities, and approach – i.e., if line managers are still present in the office 8am-8pm every day, staff will not feel comfortable to work as flexibly as the principles in this policy intend – the offer needs to be authentic and be role modelled from the top

- Trust staff to work appropriately within the parameters of this policy/guidance (unless there is a valid reason not to) – in which case action should be taken under the relevant policy or procedure (i.e., Disciplinary / Capability)

- Discourage presenteeism

- Seek prompt advice on People-rated issues which arise – whether they relate to agile or campus workers

- Respond promptly and sympathetically to disclosures from staff around potentially unsafe or unsuitable home working environment and plan for permanent working arrangements on campus

- Facilitate / encourage meaningful 'time to learn' for staff via protected monthly time (max 1 day per month) to undertake mandatory training; on the job training (as required); shadowing; job specific research etc

- Encourage 'No meeting Fridays' – enabling time to reflect on the week past and the week ahead; clear and complete admin / other tasks which may lead to 'closure' of one week – enabling staff to enjoy their weekend and arrive fresh and ready for the new week ahead

13.3 IT / Digital team / services should:

- Advocate and educate staff on the technology options which will make agile working more successful – i.e., use of MS Project / Planner / Teams etc and enable access to training materials (where required)
- Ensure all IT and telephony is fit for the purpose of agile and campus working and that the technology lifecycle is kept under regular review (in line with available funding)

13.4   Estate's team / services should:

- Ensure the proper use of office space, reconfiguring where necessary to allow appropriate book- able desk spaces which meet the requirements of individuals
- Ensure all staff have access to a personal locker to store personal items
- Communicate storage protocols
- Communicate campus and agile 'etiquette' standards to be adhered to across the UoS

13.5 People and Organisational Development team should:

- Support pro-active People management approaches to facilitate successful agile

working practices and to effectively support campus workers
- Promptly respond to requests for advice or guidance relating to the principles within this guidance or any matters arising because of it
- Scope any specific training or development required to support the successful roll-out of this policy

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