



Policy on

Hybrid Working

New College Durham is committed to safeguarding & promoting the welfare of vulnerable groups and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

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| Policy Title | Hybrid Working |
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| Document Owner | Director of Human Resources & Corporate Services |
| Owning Directorate | Corporate Services |
| Owning Department | Human Resources |

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|---|-----------------------|
| Directorates and Departments affected by this Policy | All staff |
| Policy Effective From | September 2022 |
| Next Review Date | September 2027 |

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New College Durham

Hybrid Working Policy

(Equality and Diversity Assessment)

We will consider any request for this Policy to be made available in an alternative format.

We review our Policies regularly to update them and to ensure that they are accessible and fair to all. All Policies are subject to Equality Impact Assessments. Equality Impact Assessments are carried out to see whether the Policy has, or is likely to have, a different impact on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or human rights.

We are always keen to hear from anyone who wants to contribute to these Impact Assessments and we welcome suggestions for improving the accessibility or fairness of the Policy.

To make suggestions or to seek further information please contact:

Human Resources Department
human.resources@newdur.ac.uk
Tel: 0191 375 4025/4024

Equality Impact Assessment: July 2022

New College Durham

Hybrid Working Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The College recognises the need for effective policies, which play a key part in supporting an appropriate work life balance for all staff. The College has introduced a range of policies to achieve a work life balance and this hybrid working policy aims to further support this commitment further.

1.2 The College recognises the benefits of such an approach which can impact positively on:

- Recruitment and retention;
- Staff wellbeing;
- The College's Green Agenda and wider environment.

1.3 Hybrid working is defined as a model that allows staff at times to work from a different location (ie. a combination of working at home (or other suitable remote location) and on college site). It is expected that there is a seamless transition between the two locations so that work performance is not affected.

1.4 This policy sets out how the College will deal with the arrangements and requests for hybrid working and the parameters within which hybrid working will be allowed. Where approval is given for staff to work under a hybrid arrangement, the requirements of this policy must be adhered to.

1.5 Hybrid working by its very nature differs between individual and roles, it effectively matches as close as possible the expectation of the employee to that of the employer. There is no automatic right for an application for hybrid working to be accepted but the College will look to accommodate some flexibility in working patterns whenever possible.

2. Hybrid Working Arrangements

2.1 Hybrid working is optional. There is no requirement for any member of staff to request hybrid working. Staff may choose to continue working on-site to undertake their full contractual hours if that is their preference, and the College will support staff accordingly who make this determination.

2.2 In applying this policy to our working practices, it is important to clarify the distinction between 'hybrid' and 'flexible' working. 'Hybrid' allows for some flexibility about 'where' the work is undertaken and is more responsive to the specific activities of a particular role or service. Whereas flexible working (as per the college policy) is defined as an arrangement subject to agreement and contractually amends a staff member's hours or working pattern. For further information on flexible working please refer to the Flexible Working Policy on the HR intranet page.

2.3 Whilst hybrid working supports work-life balance, staff will not have a fixed pattern of 'working from home' days and may need to flex to meet operational needs. Staff therefore need to ensure that domestic arrangements, e.g., childcare, are in place that enable them to attend site on any given day as required.

2.4 Face-to-face interaction with students that is currently undertaken on-site will continue. It is not envisaged at this juncture that teaching will be undertaken under a hybrid model, although this may be reviewed as the College's Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) strategy evolves.

2.5 Staff who wish to pursue hybrid working arrangements should discuss this with their Head of School / Department to explore potential opportunities. The College will be fair and equitable when

making hybrid working arrangements and will seek to balance business needs with individuals' requests for hybrid working arrangements. Hybrid working may differ between teams across the college and indeed with individuals within each team.

- 2.6** In establishing this scheme, the College has set out within this document the key considerations in any application, however to reinforce key elements it should be noted
- a) activities which require face to face interaction with students will be onsite;
 - b) It is expected that no member of staff will undertake more than 40% of their contractual hours off-site in any given week;
 - c) A request for hybrid working cannot have a detrimental impact on the student experience or fellow colleagues which will be for the Head of School / Department to make such an assessment.
 - d) The hybrid arrangements are non-contractual and may be varied by the college at short notice, e.g. to cover sickness, or to respond to increase in work demands at key points of the year e.g. September;
 - e) Any arrangement for hybrid working is discretionary and the college will have the right to terminate a hybrid working arrangement, for example due to a change in business needs, performance concerns or if a staff member's role changes such that hybrid working is no longer suitable;
 - f) Any phased return to work (normally undertaken in response to returning from long term sickness) will suspend the hybrid working arrangements until a full reintegration into work has been achieved.
- 2.7** Heads of School / Department will be responsible for deciding on the suitability of hybrid working arrangements for roles within their area of responsibility. These decisions will be informed by the responsibilities and service requirements/provisions of the particular area, the potential impact on staff and the impact on the student experience.

2.8 There are some roles within the college where hybrid working is simply not appropriate. This would include (but is not limited to):

- Security Officers
- Cleaning Operatives
- Customer Services Assistants / Receptionists
- Maintenance Staff

Where flexibility is required to support personal circumstances, it may be more appropriate to liaise with the HR department to understand what options are available on a more sustained basis (i.e. utilisation of other College policies e.g. Flexible Working).

2.9 A hybrid working arrangement is unlikely to be agreed where performance concerns have been formally raised against an employee.

2.10 A member of staff can terminate their hybrid working arrangement by detailing this in writing to their Head of School / Department. If the termination of the arrangement is due to concerns/issues that the member of staff may have, it is important that this is raised at the earliest opportunity and the manager provided with an opportunity to respond.

2.11 Any arrangement for hybrid working will need to be approved by the member of staffs Head of School / Department in advance of any such work taking place under a hybrid model.

3. Contractual Position

3.1 Any agreement for hybrid working arrangements does not constitute a contractual change. An employee's place of work will remain as stated in their contracts of employment.

3.2 No arrangements under this policy will vary any contract of employment.

- 3.3** Contractual obligations, including duties and responsibilities remain, as well as adherence to all College policies and procedures.

4. Application for Hybrid Working – Process

- 4.1** A member of staff must submit a Hybrid Working request form (see Annex A), to their Head of School / Department, confirming that they wish to opt into this policy to undertake hybrid working arrangements.
- 4.2** This request will normally be considered within 10 working days, and either accepted or rejected, according to the College's business and operational requirements. Where a request is rejected full reasons for the rejection will be provided to the member of staff in writing, explaining the decision. Where further information is required to consider the application in full the Head of School/Department should agree a reasonable timescale for the information to be provided and agree a timescale for when the request will be considered, and a decision given.
- 4.3** **Where a member of staff changes roles/departments within the College, and they wish to continue any hybrid working agreed in their previous post they will need to submit a new Hybrid Working request for approval. Hybrid Working is not suitable for all roles and any Hybrid working arrangement needs to be accommodated within any already agreed requests for flexible/hybrid working within a team/department. The new request will not draw on precedent from the previous role/department and a fresh application will need to be submitted to determine whether hybrid working can be accommodated within the new role/department.**
- 4.4** To assist the application process, it is recommended that the member of staff would beforehand discuss their proposal with their Head of School / Department to identify any potential issues, which can then be addressed. A hybrid working arrangement may be agreed on a trial basis to determine the effectiveness of the arrangement. Where a trial period is determined, a timescale for this period will be given with an agreed review date. Such a trial period would normally be no longer than one academic term but

may be extended due to long-term absence (sickness/annual leave)

- 4.5** Where a request for hybrid working is refused, written correspondence will be provided detailing the reasons for the refusal.
- 4.6 A copy of the completed application form (including decision) must be provided to the HR department where a copy will be retained on the employee's personal file.**
- 4.7** Where concerns are raised as to the reasons for the refusal this should be directed to a senior member of the HR team who will arrange to meet with both parties within 10 working days of the submission and consider the available evidence. Confirmation of the outcome of this process will be provided in writing within 10 working days of the meeting taking place. The decision will be binding on both parties.
- 4.8 Hybrid working cannot be undertaken without the agreed approval of your Head of School/Department, in accordance with this policy. No member of staff can take it upon themselves to decide to work off-site under a hybrid model.**

5. Arrangements whilst undertaking hybrid working

5.1 Working Hours

- 5.1.1** Where hybrid working has been agreed, employees who undertake hybrid working are subject to the same rules, procedures and expected standard of conduct and performance as other all employees.
- 5.1.2** Staff must ensure that they are not working excessive hours and are cognisant of their own wellbeing. Staff should ensure that they take regular breaks away from the screen and ensure that they are not sitting for too long.
- 5.1.3** Heads of School / Department must be clear as to their expectations of employees when they are engaged in hybrid

working, such as agreed roles, responsibilities and tasks, availability for meetings and ensuring that staff are not working excessive hours.

- 5.1.4** Staff and heads should be aware of the increased temptation to work longer hours and the difficulties in being able to switch off when undertaking hybrid working. Both staff and Heads of School/Department need to be cognisant of the College's Right to Disconnect Policy.

5.2 Sickness

- 5.2.1** When undertaking hybrid working, staff should not work if they are unwell. Staff that are unable to work but were due to undertake hybrid working need to report their absence in accordance with the College's Sickness Absence Procedure.

5.3 Safeguarding

- 5.3.1** The same principles surrounding safeguarding apply whether staff are on-site or undertaking hybrid working. It is particularly important to consider boundaries when interacting with students when using electronic means of communication and ensure adherence to the College's Staff Code of Conduct, and relevant Safeguarding Policies.

6. Equipment

- 6.1** Hybrid working will only be approved if the required equipment is available (or can be loaned from the IT department) to enable the work to be undertaken effectively. If equipment is not available on a particular day, then the staff member will be required to undertake their work on-site. The availability of equipment needs to be factored when agreeing plans for hybrid working.
- 6.2** The College is not responsible for the loss or damage of personal equipment used when undertaking hybrid working – an employee is advised to ensure that appropriate personal/home insurance is in place to cover any damage that may be caused to personal equipment.

- 6.3** If during the course of the hybrid working arrangement issues with equipment prevent the employee from carrying out their duties (such as an unreliable internet connection), the College reserves the right to terminate the hybrid working arrangements with immediate effect.

7. Financial Assistance

- 7.1** The College cannot provide any financial assistance for any member of staff wishing to undertake hybrid working.
- 7.2** Staff may be able to claim tax relief for any household expenses incurred as a result of working from home, providing the expenses are solely work related. Staff will need to refer to the government website for information on tax relief from working from home.
- 7.3** The costs (and time) for the staff member travelling from a home to work base and work to home will be met by the staff member and cannot be claimed for via college expenses.

8. Data Security and Confidentiality

- 8.1** When undertaking hybrid working staff members must ensure that all College equipment and information is stored safely and securely. Staff should ensure that private and confidential information is kept secure at all times.
- 8.2** Whilst undertaking hybrid working staff must still ensure compliance with the College's Acceptable Use and Information Security Policies.
- 8.3** Paper copies of information should be kept to a minimum and the disposal of such information be done in accordance with relevant College policies on data security.
- 8.4** If a member of staff discovers or suspects that there has been an incident when undertaking hybrid working that may lead to personal data being compromised or data has been stolen, they must make their Head of School/Department aware immediately who will refer the matter to the Information Records team (dataprotection.dataprotection@newdur.ac.uk).

- 8.5** Staff should take reasonable steps to protect their own security and privacy when undertaking hybrid working, such as using the blurring filter on their camera to obscure the home environment from view.

9. Health & Safety

- 9.1** When undertaking hybrid working you have the same health and safety obligations/requirements as all other staff. You must take reasonable care of your own health and safety and not compromise the health and safety of others by your actions.
- 9.2** You will be required to complete a hybrid working risk assessment (see Annex B) by the Health and Safety Department prior to the undertaking of hybrid working. A copy of the completed form will need to be submitted to the Health and Safety department. The information will be reviewed and where any concerns exist a member of the Health and Safety department will contact you to discuss further. A copy of the completed form and any correspondence related to the application will be retained on the employees personal file.
- 9.3** Staff should, in all instances, familiarise themselves with the correct computer set up prior to undertaking hybrid working (information is available on the intranet). It is the responsibility of the member of staff to have an appropriate home/remote set-up (with guidance provided by H&S colleagues where necessary). Where an appropriate remote/home workstation set-up is not viable then hybrid working will not be approved and the staff member will need to continue to work on-site. Where circumstances change to allow an appropriate workstation set-up then this position can be reviewed.
- 9.4** You must ensure that your working pattern is reasonable and is not in any way detrimental to your health and wellbeing. Should you have concerns regarding your work demands then this needs to be raised with your Head of School/Department and/or the HR department at the earliest opportunity. If you start to develop any issues where you believe undertaking hybrid working is having a detrimental effect on your health you should notify health and safety immediately so an assessment can be undertaken.

- 9.5 Any accidents that occur whilst undertaking hybrid working, during working hours must be reported to the Health and Safety department as soon as reasonably possible. There, may be a requirement for a member of the H&S department to visit your remote location, but such arrangements and the reasons for the visit will be discussed with you in advance of any visit taking place.
- 9.6 Staff must ensure that they fulfil the same contractual working hours whilst undertaking hybrid working as they would have on-site. Where flexibility has been granted in terms of when these hours can be undertaken, this will have been agreed in advance and as part of the consideration of the initial request.

10. Policy Review

- 10.1 The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and reviewed annually and reviewed every five years in light of experience and best practice. This mechanism recognises that changes to employment legislation may prompt a review of the policy before the five years stipulated.
- 10.2 In considering the effectiveness of this policy, consultation will be undertaken with Trade Unions, Staff and Managers to assist in the review process.

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Implementation Date | September 2022 |
| First Review Date (due) | September 2027 |

Application for Hybrid Working Arrangements

Prior to making an application for hybrid working arrangements it is imperative that you have read and are familiar with the terms set out in the Hybrid Working Policy. Should clarification on any element of this process be required please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Human Resources Department. Similarly, you may wish to contact your Trade Union representative for advice.

Section A – Personal Details

| | |
|--|--|
| Name | |
| Payroll Number | |
| Post to which this request pertains | |
| Head of School / Department | |

Section B – Reason for Request

Please set out the reason for wishing to undertake hybrid working and provide any information pertinent to your request

Section C – Declaration and Signature

I have read and understood the terms detailed within the Hybrid Working Policy. I know that I cannot undertake any hybrid work unless explicit approval has been given to me to do so. I understand that if accepted that Hybrid working is not a contractual right and these arrangements may be varied/cancelled at short-notice. I can confirm that should my application be approved I will undertake my role in accordance with the arrangements agreed with my Head of School/Department (or line manager where reporting relationship is above this level of management).

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Section D – Managers Decision

Name:

Date Application Received:

Note: *Applications will normally be considered within 10 working days of receipt of the request. If further information is required, then a reasonable timescale should be agreed for when the application will be considered, and a decision made.*

Decision:

- **Accept**

- **Reject (please stipulate reason for rejection below)**

- **Agreed on a Trial Basis (if so until when)**

If hybrid working has been rejected please detail clearly the reason for the rejection and confirm that this decision has been communicated to the member of staff concerned.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

A copy of the completed application form needs to be emailed to the staff member as confirmation of the decision. A copy must also be emailed to HR and a copy will be retained on the employee's personal file.

Annex B

Display Screen Equipment –Hybrid Working Assessment

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Name: | |
| Employee Number: | |
| Department: | |
| Desktop or Laptop: | |
| Date Completed: | |

| Risk Evaluation | |
|--|--|
| 1. Workspace | |
| Are you working from an adequate space within your home? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 2. ICT Connectivity | |
| Do you have full access to all ICT connectivity that you would have in your office? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Do you have a requirement for any additional software programme to allow extended working from home? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 3. Display Screen | |
| Is your display screen clear and positioned so there is no glare from a window or light? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Risk Evaluation

4. Workstation

Do you have a desk or table to work from?

Yes No

Do you have a chair to sit on at your desk or table? Is your lower back supported?

Yes No

Can you easily reach everything that you need without twisting and straining your upper body?

Yes No

Do you have a separate keyboard and mouse?

Yes No

If yes can you raise your monitor/screen to eye level (either via a stand or by using solid household items such as a book?)

Yes No

5. Stress and Welfare

Do you sit with a good posture and not hunched over the desk?

Yes No

Do you have short breaks (2 mins) away from your screen each hour, to avoid stiff or sore muscles?

Yes No

6. Any other concerns please comment