How to safely work from home

Federation University is committed to ensuring our staff have a safe, healthy and happy work environment.

During this rapidly evolving situation, we are encouraging staff who can work effectively remotely to do so. Please discuss arrangements with your manager prior to commencing and follow the University process for remote working by completing a request to work remotely.

Here you'll find information and tips on how to set up your home work space, good habits to ensure you're working from home effectively and, where necessary, the types of leave available.

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Working from home

Equipment you'll need

Find out what devices you'll need to work effectively at home, including computer requirements and peripherals.

Using your University laptop

- Use your **Federation laptop** to work from home if you have one, be sure to take your charger as well.

- You can also use essential corporate applications and software on your phone or tablet. Email, calendar and Office 365 products are available for Federation staff, for both iOS and Android devices. Instructions for installing these can be found in the ITS knowledge base.

- Consider taking your desktop computer home. If you don't already have a computer at home, and provided your manager has approved your request to work remotely, it may be possible for you to take your office computer home to use.

Please contact your manager for approval before removing any equipment from the University, and log your request via the Service Portal > Request > Hardware > Request to work remotely.

Using your personal computer, tablet or mobile phone

If you don't have a Federation laptop, or if you choose to use your personal device, you can connect to some corporate systems, including using file shares (e.g. L drive **), MS Teams, and all central University web resources by using Federation's Virtual Private Network (Windows/macOS), and mapping a shared drive (Windows/macOS).

Peripherals

- Depending on the noise level at your home, using a **headset** may be helpful when on a call or in a meeting.

- A **webcam**, if you don't have one built-in to your computer or laptop. Any external webcam will work. If you have an external webcam connected to your computer at work, consider bringing it home to use when needed.

- A **microphone**, if you don't have one built-in to your computer, laptop, headphone or webcam.

- A separate **mouse** to reduce strain on your wrist.

If you don't already have these peripherals at home, provided your supervisor approves it, it may be possible for you to take your office equipment home to use.

Please contact your manager before removing any equipment from the University, or log your request via the Service Portal > Request > Hardware > Request to work remotely.

If you are using your own device, ensure you have up-to-date and reliable anti-virus software installed. You can install a free version of Sophos Home.

Home internet connection needs

Your home internet connectivity is essential for effectively working at home.

Checking your connection (internet) speed

You can use Speedtest to test your connection speed.

Connection requirements - internet speed

- For email, text chats, or connecting to corporate systems, any connection speed above 1 Mb/s both upload and download should be adequate.

- For viewing and downloading videos, you will want at least 5 Mb/s download speed, and preferably over 10Mb/s download speed.

- For video calls, including screen sharing, you will want at least 5Mb/s download and upload speed, and preferably over 10Mb/s download and upload. Remember to disable your video connection if you're finding audio or video is slow or dropping out.

Maximising the effectiveness of your internet connection (data usage)

Tips to make the best use of your connection include

- Join meetings with audio-only, or disable your video connection when sharing your screen or viewing someone else's shared screen.

- Use text chats in Microsoft Teams.

- If you have a large data quota on your 4G telephone, try tethering your computer to your phone for video calls. Be aware that this can use a lot of data - in some cases, 20Mb/minute, or over 1Gb per hour, so **do not do this if you have a limited quota**.

- Try to coordinate with others in your house - avoid multiple video calls at the same time, and also avoid video streaming while also making a video call. Some streaming services like Netflix, Stan and AppleTV+ allow you to download to your phone or tablet, but not to the TV, and this may be an option to consider if you need to have a video call while others in your house want to watch video.

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Accessing Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Teams, etc.) on your personal device

University staff can download and install Microsoft Office at no cost on up to five personal devices. You can also access Office 365 via the web, or install it on your Windows and/or macOS devices.

Should you have any questions or require assistance contact the ITS Service Desk directly on 1800 333 864 or online at https://servicedesk.federation.edu.au.

ITS have increased the number of Service Desk staff to ensure you will receive prompt assistance.

Health and safety at home

Here you'll find information and tips on how to set up your home work space.

Ergonomics

To avoid injury, set up your work space so that it's ergonomic. Please view the guideline on setting up your workstation to avoid injury (pdf, 228kb) and ergonomic self-assessment checklist (pdf, 596kb).

Don't work from the couch or you will regret it by day three.

Workspace

It's important to have a space that minimises distractions and promotes ease of work. If you have space, try to make it a separate room from your normal living space. A separate office is ideal, but even if you don't, just allocate a space you can leave at the end of the day.

Set up some desk space similar to your office space at work, aiming to replicate your real work space will also help you achieve that work mindset. Plus you may want a neutral background behind you for that work video call.

Make sure you have a:

- supportive chair (preferably an ergonomic chair)
- desk or table surface with sufficient space for computer work
- footrest where needed

Try to **ensure you can focus**. Noise, televisions, or even pets can cause you to lose focus. Set ground rules with other people in your home or who share your space for when you work. If you have children who come home from school while you're still working, try to plan out your day and theirs. They need clear rules about what they can and cannot do during the time you are working.

Lighting

Poor lighting can reduce your energy, produce eyestrain and headaches, and ultimately impair your ability to work effectively.

If you don't have a lot of **natural light** at home, then artificial lights are important when considering workspace illumination.

An adjustable or articulated **desk lamp** can put light exactly where you need it and support a variety of tasks.

Tripping and slipping hazards

Check the floor is **free of potential tripping hazards**. Wipe up any spills immediately to avoid potential slips.

Electrical leads and power boards

Check that electrical leads and power boards are **in good condition**. Do not use any electrical leads that are frayed or have exposed wires.

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Hand and respiratory hygiene practices

7 steps to protect yourself and others from COVID-19

Incident reporting

In the event of an accident occurring during working hours, please report using the normal hazard reporting process.

Good habits to ensure you're working from home effectively

Working from home can present unique challenges. Develop habits to ensure you're as effective outside of the office as you are inside it.

Familiarise yourself with the tools

Working from home means you need to need to understand the tools available, and the best way to use them. Microsoft Teams can be invaluable when working from home.

Don't hesitate to ask for what you need

If you don't already have a desktop or laptop computer you can use, please speak with your manager about loaning equipment (see Working from Home).

Manage expectations and stay connected

Have a discussion with your manager about what tasks can be done from home, what the priorities are, and discuss tasks will get done. Keeping in mind, confidential documents should not be taken off campus. Required documents should be scanned or saved to a shared drive wherever possible.

Do what you can, discuss when you can't.

Set your hours

Just like working from an office, setting your hours helps maintain momentum, and helps your colleagues know when they can find you. Working from home can cause your personal life and work life to be blurred, and defining the times you're working will help maintain the separation.

Be aware of home demands interfering with your work. Don't procrastinate work tasks by first doing some housework. Set yourself a target to complete a work task and when you've finished it then spend ten minutes doing the tidying.

Equally, don't let work take over your home life - just because work is always there doesn't mean you have to be. Finish about the time you normally would.

Walk away from your desk. Engage with your family and friends. A period of psychological recovery from work is vital to make sure you feel rested and productive for working from home tomorrow.

Structure your day

Make sure you have a structure for your day. If you regularly attend lots of meetings, that structure may be presented for you, but if you're largely self-directed, absence of structure can lead to an absence of focus.

Consider the tasks you need to get done, and plan them out in blocks of time for your day.

Have a plan

You'll likely still have as much work to do, so plan for a full work day and prioritise your tasks as usual. Make sure you know what is expected of you. Discuss your work tasks with your supervisor as you normally would, it's important both you and they are clear about your daily work tasks and due dates.

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If part of a team, then make sure you know what each member is working on and when their work is due, and follow this up by calls and emails. As always, tell your supervisor of any problems you experience with completing your work.

And remember it's preferable to discuss any problems via a phone or video call, rather than multiple emails, to better clarify the issues involved.

Schedule breaks

Don't forget to schedule breaks, and give yourself adequate time during the day to walk away from the computer screen and phone.

Dress for work

That means no pyjamas or tracksuits. Sorry, but no. Once you start down that road, it's all downhill. You don't have to wear the full jacket and tie or heels, however you're going to work, even if it is in the next room. This will put you in your normal work mindset. It will also help if you're suddenly included in a work meeting via Teams.
There is evidence to show that symbolic dressing for specific contexts or events helps your psychology line up with the job at hand.

Don't isolate yourself

Interaction with other people is essential for both your work productivity and your health. Arrange times to catch up with your colleagues using the collaboration tools the University provides, even just for quick chat.

It's also important to look after your psychological health, during what could become long periods of isolation. You may feel a bit overwhelmed by a directive to work from home, and also anxious about the broader coronavirus situation.

There are a number of free apps that may help you reduce any anxiety you are feeling. Download https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app and https://apps.apple.com/us/app/calm/id571800810

Social contact is very important. If you're used to having lunch or coffee with colleagues, plan a quick social phone or video call to each other at lunchtime or after you have finished a few hours of work. It's really important to stay connected with your colleagues as usual and to make sure all feel supported.

Get some fresh air. If you can, have a daily walk to your local shop, or at least get outside in your garden or balcony. Hang out some washing, walk the dog, water a plant, pick some fresh veggies, just take a break from your desk and move around.

Call family, friends and colleagues to see how they're doing. Stay socially connected.

These are challenging times so please remember that you can access our free and confidential EAP counselling service by phoning 1300 OUR EAP (1300 687 327) or 03 8681 2444. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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What types of leave may be available?

Staff cohort	Leave type	Reasons you may wish to access this leave	Period of time

Continuing/ Fixed-term
 	
TAFE teachers
	Personal leave/ Carer's leave	• You may access up to 10 working days of your personal leave with the approval of your Dean or Director, to assist with home learning
		
		• normal rules to access your personal leave still apply, and include:
		  – children are unwell
		  – staff member unwell and unable to undertake normal duties
		  – care of immediate family (including elderly parents) as primary carer
			Up to 10 working days (pro-rata for part-time staff) of your personal leave balance is available with the approval of your Dean or Director until Stage 3 and 4 restrictions are lifted
			
			Academic and General staff, please refer to Clause 50 in the Enterprise Agreement 2019–2021
			
			TAFE teachers, please refer to Clause 36 of the TAFE Teaching Staff Agreement 2019

	Pupil/student-free day (Academic and General staff)	An employee may be granted up to three days paid leave in any calendar year to care for their child due to an officially designated student or pupil free day	Documented evidence will be required from the relevant primary or secondary school and must be provided with the lodgement of the leave request from the employee. This leave must not be used to substitute for childcare or dependent care arrangements, including care requirements on gazetted public holidays or during normal school holiday periods.
	Annual leave	As normal	As per normal process, requested through Employee Self-Service (ESS)
	Long service leave	Accessible for a minimum of one working day	The University has waived the required notice period associated with long service leave applications in line with Stage 3 and 4 isolation requirements As per normal process via Employee Leave Form (docx, 104kb)
	Isolation leave - medical	Isolation after being medically diagnosed with COVID-19	For the duration of required isolation, as advised by medical practitioner Requested through Employee Self-Service (ESS) – *see next page*

How do I apply for isolation leave?

Continuing/Fixed-term staff and TAFE teachers

A staff member can access **isolation leave** should they be diagnosed by a **medical** practitioner and required to remain in isolation. This leave will be granted on full pay for the required period and no deduction will be made from personal leave credits.

How to apply

When submitting a leave request in ESS, select the leave type 'Isolation leave - medical'