Managing & Supporting People Temporarily Working from Home

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide Maynooth University leaders with a guide to managing and supporting their teams remotely. This guide aims to provide practical advice on managing and communicating with your team while they are temporarily working remotely/from home.

2. How Can Leaders Support Employees Working From Home?

It is important to understand factors that make working from home, in the current environment, challenging. Some of these factors include the following:

- Lack of face-to-face supervision
- Lack of access to information
- Unclear communication with work
- Social isolation
- Distractions at home
- Stress
- Caring responsibilities

There are simple solutions to address some of the challenges mentioned above, such as:

Establishing structured regular check-ins

- Give remote people as much access to you as possible. Remember that when working on campus, people meet you in the office, can speak to you on a coffee break or pop into your office with a question. When remote people don't have that same access, it can feel distant and communication can suffer as a result. It is important to respond to queries as quickly as possible and schedule regular contact time.
- Create clarity and structure

Agree forms of communication

- Decide which form of communication is suitable for which purpose
- Decide with individuals what is the best form of communication for them and when they are free for video calls
- Decide with the team when is best to meet as a group and how this will happen
- What are appropriate response times

- Decide frequency of contact and times. You may be working in the evenings but other colleagues might not. Ensure there are boundaries around work hours
- Decide on contact etiquette e.g. text before calling to see if person is available, planned scheduled meetings with agendas circulated in advance, stick to times set for meetings, not too many meetings, not too few meetings, camera on or off for calls,
- Increased importance of *Clarity*
- Role of intentionally *Listening*
- Establish good *Communication Norms*
- Effective use of *Tools*
- Updates on deliverables
- Feedback from team on how everything is working for them
- Remember what works for you, isn't necessarily what works for everyone on the team

Utilise technology

- The use of online tools, such as Microsoft Teams, enables you to facilitate and promote continued employee engagement. Microsoft Teams as part of Office365 provides the capability for data storage, online meetings via Teams Calendar and individual voice/video calls and messaging via Teams Chat. Click here for more information regarding Microsoft Teams.
- Regular video calls are a much more effective vehicle for establishing rapport and creating empathy compared to the use of e-mail or voice calls. They also offer an opportunity for interaction and collaboration.

Set clear expectations

- Ideally, this should happen during the first online check-in meeting. All employees should share the same set of expectations for how the team communicates and will operate remotely
- Decisions on how students, colleagues outside the team and external vendors or bodies will be communicated with and supported
- Agree hours they are working, as they may have caring responsibilities and flexibility will be required

Provide opportunities for remote social interaction

- Scheduling structured time for non-work items can help to reduce feelings of isolation and promotes a sense of belonging

- Discuss the challenges and opportunities of working remotely
- Examine how you can engage more and build collaboration
- Peer Mentoring and Support

Offer encouragement and emotional support

- It is important to ask an employee how they are doing, listen to any anxieties or concerns and empathise with them. It is important to acknowledge anxiety and stress that people might be feeling and provide affirmation of confidence in your team. With this support, employees are more likely to take up a challenge with a sense of purpose and focus.
- Model and support positive work life balance
- Give and show appreciation
- Show vulnerability
- Display and encourage adaptability and flexibility
- Provide space for relationship building
- Cultivate compassion and empathy as organisational practice (for self and others)
- Ensure you are aware of the wellbeing supports on offer for employees. There is a separate guide available on wellbeing while temporarily working remotely. The University has an employee assistance programme *Inspire*, Wellbeing Guides, Seminars and e-learning programmes https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/human-resources/employee-wellbeing

3. While Working Remotely

Employees continue to have a responsibility to take reasonable care, in order to protect their own safety, health and welfare. In addition, employees are expected to continue to comply with standards, behaviours and policies as you would when working on campus. Examples of this include adherence to the following key areas.

Maynooth University Data Protection Guidance

Due to the current restrictions in place, we have published additional guidelines for protecting Maynooth University's data when working remotely. Employees must ensure that all University controlled data is processed securely, and measures should be taken that no unauthorised person can access such information. We ask that you review and comply with

these guidelines. Please take time to check that you have completed and/or refreshed our [Data Protection online course](#) as a priority.

The Data Protection Commission website also provides information on Data Protection while working remotely https://www.dataprotection.ie/en

Maynooth University Health & Safety Guidance

It is the individual employee's responsibility to ensure that they do not place themselves or others at risk whilst working remotely during this time. You will find further [Health & Safety Guidance](#) within the Coronavirus COVID-19 section on the Maynooth University website. Please stay safe and continue to follow all advice from the HSE.

Employee Wellbeing

We continue to provide our employees with a number of services and supports. Please take some time to review the following links should they be required.

- [Inspire Workplace Services](#)
- [Employee Wellbeing at Maynooth University](#)
- [Employee Wellbeing e-learning](#)
- [Employee Wellbeing Seminars](#)

The Health & Safety Authority provide guides on stress management in the workplace https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Workplace_Health/Workplace_Stress/Overview/

They also cover [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on working from home on a temporary basis.

Learning & Development

The learning and development opportunities for employees of Maynooth University include Leadership & Management programmes, Professional Skills programmes related to your role, programmes to support you working in MU and Employee Wellbeing seminars.

The following e-learning seminars focus on working remotely and might prove particularly useful during this challenging time.

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/human-resources/learning-and-development/learning-and-development-services/e-learning

Centre for Teaching & Learning

Our Centre for Teaching and Learning have created a [Moodle page](#) called 'Remote Teaching - Employee Guidance Page': Here you will find a guidance document for

employees on the many practicalities associated with remote teaching. It is also a place where you can share good practice, upload guidance and tutorials. It will also provide a bank of resources for employees interested in developing a more blended approach to their own teaching practice.

Working as a Team

Being part of a team, whether on campus or working remotely, is a collaborative and collegial experience. Employees should ensure that they continue to perform their roles as expected and be available for calls and virtual team meetings as required. Any important updates should be communicated with your colleagues in a timely manner. Employees should try to maintain a good daily working routine and communicate any challenges or issues that impact upon your work. We ask that, as always, you remain mindful of the Maynooth University Values, which are:

- Scholarly rigour
- Academic freedom
- Integrity & ethical Behaviour
- Collegiality, transparency and trust
- Equality, inclusiveness and social justice
- Operational excellence, organisational flexibility and responsiveness
- Dignity, respect and care for the individual

Further Information

For further information, please continue to check our website and e-mail updates that are issued to all employees.

For daily updates on COVID-19, visit www.gov.ie/health-covid-19.

Other useful sources of information are
https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html

Coping at Home https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/606da7-coping-at-home-during-covid-19/

HSA Frequently Asked Questions

Maynooth University Wellbeing Guide to Temporarily Working From Home