

UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS

PRINCIPLE-BASED WORK ARRANGEMENTS FOR UNIVERSITY STAFF IN THE NEW NORMAL

These policy guidelines apply to all University staff, including administrative officials, teaching and non-teaching academic staff, research staff, and support staff. The University recognizes the unique contexts and needs of each department or unit of the institution thereby making it a challenge to render rule-based or prescriptive policies for work arrangements. This document provides the guiding principles for heads of departments and units to determine appropriate work arrangements for their staff as we navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. In all instances, University staff are expected to abide by the highest work standards, ensure efficiency and effectiveness of operations and services, and ultimately contribute to the goals of their units and the institution.

- I. The University reserves the right to implement the work arrangement appropriate to the nature of operations of a department or unit and/or nature of work of each University staff.
 1. If remote work/ work-from-home arrangement is implemented, the following shall be ensured:
 - a. Availability of appropriate technological devices and stable internet connection in order to effectively work remotely. University staff without these provisions at home will need to work onsite.
 - b. University staff should strictly follow the remote/work-from-home guidelines issued by monitoring offices.
 2. If onsite work will be implemented, the following shall be ensured:
 - a. Strict implementation of the DOLE and DTI Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19 (Appendix A);
 - b. University staff working onsite shall comply with the allowed proportion based on quarantine regulations to observe physical distancing in their work areas.
 - c. Cyclical cohorting shall be observed, whenever possible in order to facilitate contact tracing in the presence of COVID-19 infection.
- II. **The University reserves the right to determine work, research, or teaching load assignment of its University staff to efficiently deliver its services.**
 1. Unit heads are responsible for determining work, research, or teaching load assignment based on the staff's expertise and job description, including whether such assignment need to be completed onsite or may be done remotely.

2. The department heads or their delegated authority shall determine the daily **tasks, deliverables and deadlines of the University staff. The administrator concerned shall ensure that these are properly communicated to the University staff.**
3. Unit heads must consider that the bigger the proportion of University staff working remotely, and the greater the number of days they do so, may increase their chances of missing out on “social interaction and connection needed for collaboration, serendipitous idea generation, innovation, and social cohesiveness.”¹ Regular check-in meetings may help maintain connections.
4. Teaching/Research staff shall:
 - a. Be assigned to teach courses within his/her field of competence, without prejudice to assignment of a course for which he/she has had adequate training or preparation, consistent with existing regulatory or external quality assurance policies, when available.
 - b. Not refuse a load, schedule, or work delivery mode, unless for justifiable reason. After all reasonable accommodations to requests for work arrangement have been granted, refusal of work or load by tenured academic staff, shall be construed as a waiver of his/her 21-unit entitlement.
 - c. Be assigned to conduct research within the field of expertise consistent with the University policies and guidelines on research.
5. At no point should accommodating staff's request on work arrangements compromise University services.

III. The University and its stakeholders shall implement layered mitigation strategies to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19.

1. Workplaces shall be retrofitted in accordance with the requirements of government regulating authorities.
2. For units whose nature of work and deliverables require a number of onsite staff that exceeds the capacity of their existing facilities, there may be a need to expand the workspace or identify a satellite office to relocate some onsite staff, in coordination with the Office of the Vice-Rector for Finance and the Facilities Management Office.
3. University staff are enjoined to optimize University resources (e.g. utilities) when they occupy retrofitted facilities.
4. University staff shall observe all health protocols and standards when working onsite, including those specific to their work areas.

¹ Alexander A, De Smet A, and Mysore M. Reimagining the post-pandemic workforce. *McKinsey & Company*. July 7, 2020. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/reimagining-the-postpandemic-workforce#>. Accessed July 8, 2021.

5. University staff are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated against COVID-19 through their respective LGUs, the LGU of Manila, the University's vaccination program, or any other sources that may be available to them in order to add another layer of protection against the virus.

IV. Consistent with the principle of dialogue and flexibility, the University shall acknowledge the presence of health and other pandemic-related concerns among its staff, without compromising the services delivered to stakeholders.

1. Unit heads shall conduct regular check-in meetings with academic staff to determine their health status and other concerns that may affect their capacity to effectively perform their responsibilities.
2. For health concerns:
 - a. University staff shall accomplish the health declaration form in ThoMedSS on a daily basis in order to monitor symptoms and/or exposures to COVID-19. They are also encouraged to avail of online consultation for other health concerns.
 - b. The University shall cover the cost of COVID-19 testing for all employees, upon the recommendation of the Health Service.
 - c. University staff who gets ill, and is unable to work, shall file for sick leave.
 - d. Mandatory quarantine due to COVID-19 symptoms or exposures shall be filed as sick leave unless the staff is able to continue working remotely, following monitoring procedures.
3. Absences due to vaccination schedules shall be filed as leave following the guidelines issued by the Office of the Vice Rector, Office of the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and the Human Resource Department.
4. For other pandemic-related concerns:
 - a. University staff shall communicate to their unit heads if they have pandemic-related concerns that may prevent them from effectively performing their work/teaching assignment. Short-term flexibilities may be rendered for as long as these do not compromise services.
 - b. Failure to comply with tasks and deliverables, or to render the teaching load assignment (in the case of academic staff) will need to be filed as a leave of absence (days only), otherwise may be considered as absence without leave (AWOL).

V. The University shall monitor the attendance and productivity of its University staff to ensure operational efficiency and effectiveness.

1. Online presence, whether in group chats, virtual offices, or in UST Cloud Campus, may be used for attendance monitoring, together with the accomplishment of assigned tasks and deliverables.
2. Daily analytics in UST Cloud Campus, or actual visits to the course sites of teaching academic staff, may be used as basis for attendance checking.
3. Productivity may be defined by outcomes and results, but virtual presence, whether synchronous or asynchronous, is important in ensuring connections, maintaining trust, and keeping each other up-to-date on what each member of the office is working on. Research output in the form of publications, paper presentations, external grants and academic partnerships provide an effective and efficient utilization of research load assignment.
4. Clarity of expectations, tasks and deliverables, regular reporting of accomplishments, and communication of challenges and difficulties are expected of all parties.
5. University staff who fails to deliver the expected outcomes in a timely manner, or be present in onsite or remote work, may be marked absent.
6. Attendance should always be monitored whether the staff is working on-site or off-site.
 - a. Academic units are required to submit monthly attendance reports. In situations when there are no tardiness or absences to report, the academic unit shall communicate the same to the Office of the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs for proper documentation.
 - b. Attendance of support staff members should be monitored pursuant to the guidelines issued by the HRD.

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