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Human Resources Communique

HR Guidelines: Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) and Working from Home (WFH

Purpose

The world as we know it has changed and as a result our world of work has been turned upside down. Work is no longer a place we go to but what we do. The following guidelines are part of a communication series developed by Human Resources on coping and managing our world of work during this period and beyond.

VUT has put in place processes and initiatives to ensure employee safety, operational continuity, enablement of employee engagement through work and embed a digital and technology driven work culture.

This serve as a protocol to manage human resource practices resulting from but not limited to, the covid-19 response and the decision by the University to contain the spread of the disease.

The document provides an Institutional Framework for all managers including executive Directors and Deans, Heads of Department (HoDs), directors and Line Managers to manage the operations and staff of the University as it relates to (but not limited to) the COVID-19 in line with the statutory obligations that both employers and staff members have in terms of health and safety in the workplace.

Governing Prescripts

These protocols are informed by the Disaster Management Act, 2002,
The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993,
The Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997,
Labour Relations Act, 1995 as amended,
Applicable VUT HR policies

The protocols should be read in conjunction with the e-communication regarding the Administrator's message on Convid-19, or any other official communication requiring staff to work off campus.

Scope

The protocol covers all Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) and shall be deemed to include Working From Home, Compressed Working Week, Defined Working Hours. In addition, the protocol covers Leave Management under working off campus conditions.

All reference to FWA is inclusive of all work arrangements outside the full working hours as defined in the conditions of service.

Objective

The objectives of this protocol is to:

- Provide guidelines on how to manage employees and their work outputs under a Flexible Work Arrangement
- Contain the spread of the disease or manage the event to protect both employers and staff members in terms of health and safety in the workplace
- Ensure continuity of operations in respect of essential, urgent and priority matters. **Applicability**

The arrangements are applicable to all employees of the Vaal University of Technology. Cleaners and garden service workers are considered essential employees who should make arrangement with their line managers about their physical presence at work but have to make sure that the workplace is clean at all the time. Typical essential services are those in Finance, HR, IT, Residences, Operations & Logistics, Registrar and Science Park.

Depending on circumstances and wherever possible, not all employees performing essential services may be required to come into the office at the same time. Line Managers are responsible for defining what are deemed essential roles in their departments and in order to ensure continued compliance with numbers on campus, strict scheduling must be developed observed and managed by all managers and adhered to by all employees to contain numbers on site per department.

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)

Guiding Principles

- FWA shall include all WFH arrangements refer to all flexible work arrangements for employees return to work on rotation, defined number of days a week, defined number of hours per day, shifts, compressed week and any form of work arrangements that are out of the normal full-day work.
- FWA will be implemented for all applicable roles during the lockdown period or off campus working period, irrespective of level.
- FWA will be approved by the line manager
- Applicable roles are for example those roles that can be performed remotely without impacting on the work results and business relationships
- Management will identify work that can be performed remotely and define the schedules to manage individual and team outputs
- Employees working from home must be available on their email and cell phone during the official working hours
- Determination of flexible work arrangement will be in line with the applicable external regulations (e.g. Covid19 rules and regulations) as set out by the departments of Health, Higher Education and Training and general government guidelines where applicable relating to employee's return to work.
- Line Managers are responsible for monitoring and managing performance of all employees onsite and on flexible work arrangements.

Line manager's responsibilities, amongst others is to:

- Define and clarify expectations on work outputs, performance standards and timelines for the required work
- Monitor the WFH arrangements to ensure the agreed work outcomes are consistently being delivered.
- Ensure work instructions and delegations remain intact as if an employee is in the office.
- Schedule communication meetings, including methods of disseminating information to employees.
- Provide the necessary tools to enable working from home
- Give due consideration to staff who need to take care of children and/or dependents in their households as appropriate (e.g. those who normally look after them are not able to do so or are closed (e.g.: schools crèches etc.)
- Immediately inform HR of any sick leave request by or absence due to ill health of any employee so that HR can make the necessary follow-ups and trigger necessary protocols (e.g. Covid-19 protocols (viz. monitoring, reporting and managing progress etc.)

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- **Performance Management**
  - Clearly articulate objectives and work outputs and standards during the WFH period and other FWA conditions
  - Determine performance monitoring systems that fit their particular environment and circumstances. These may include but not limited to, daily check-ins, weekly updates or meetings.
  - Monitor and review employee performance on a regular basis
  - Provide feedback on performance and achievement of objectives
  - Provide necessary guidance and support where employees are not meeting the set performance standards

Employee responsibilities

- Adhere to all the University's policies and procedures.
- Take reasonable precaution necessary to secure the University's equipment, information and maintain confidentiality at all times
- Employee must provide a reliable contact number and current physical address to their line manager. This is to ensure that the University can make contact in relation to their health and safety, but also to ensure that the normal work instructions can be conveyed and feedback received timeously.
- In the event that an employee missed a call from his/her line manager, it is their responsibility to make contact, even if it means sending a "*please call me"* message in case of limited resources
- Check in with their line managers as determined by the line manager in line with the performance monitoring mechanism in place
- Emails and messages must be attended to within an agreed upon timeframe between the employee and line manager.
- If a staff member needs to take leave the normal leave application processes apply.
- Immediately inform their line manager and HR of any sick leave request or absence due to ill health so that HR can make the necessary follow-ups and trigger appropriate protocols (e.g. Covid-19 protocols (viz. monitoring, reporting and managing progress etc.)

Performance Management

- Employees must ensure continuation of the same professionalism in terms of job responsibilities, work output, customer orientation and to me meet the performance standards set by the manager and the organisation.
- All employees must comply to all instructions from their managers whilst working from home and/or under flexible work arrangements
- Request feedback from line manager on outputs required and performance as agreed to.

Protocols relating to Leave management

- Covid-19: Employees must inform their line manager and Human Resources if they are experiencing any symptoms related to Covid-19.
- All staff are to ensure that their absence is reported to Human Resources so that the necessary leave can be deducted in accordance with this protocol.
- Annual leave must be applied for via ITS and approved by the Line Manager. Approval needs to be granted by the Line Manager.
- In all instances staff are required to notify their HoD, Director and/or Line Manager timeously and in accordance with the relevant Leave Policy if they are going to be absent from work.
- Failure to do so means the staff member is absent without approval which, depending on the circumstances, could result in disciplinary action.

Sick Leave

In cases where a staff member cannot perform his/her duties and opted to opted to work remotely due to the nature of the job and/or is too ill to work, sick leave will apply.

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Unless there is evidence otherwise, the employer retains the right to insist that staff members attend work and failure to do so could result in disciplinary action.

Covid-19: If a staff member has exhausted all their sick leave as a result of Covid-19 illness, then special sick leave can be applied for.

Covid-19: Where there is no reasonable risk, but the staff member would like to self-quarantine, annual leave or unpaid leave must be utilised and will be subject to operational requirements and whether the length of time off being requested is reasonable.

Covid-19: The line manager must instruct a staff member to take time off work for the following COVID-19 reasons:

- Where there is reasonable risk that the staff member requires quarantine, either at their request or the employer's.
- A staff member has tested positive for COVID-19.
- A staff member has been quarantined in a high-risk country and / or area. A staff member has been in close proximity/contact with a person who has come from a country/countries and/or area in South Africa where there are high levels of confirmed COVID-19 cases.

When a staff member has been absent as a result of COVID-19 return to work

- Staff members who return to work after an absence from work because they had contracted COVID-19 are required to produce a medical certificate declaring them fit to return to work.
- Staff members returning to work after a 2 weeks of self and mandatory quarantine will be required to produce a Doctor's certificate declaring the employee fit to return to work.
- Staff members will comply with the prevailing rules and protocol implemented in the University to prevent, contain, manage and monitor the potential spread of Covid-19 virus.
- False reporting of quarantine will be regarded as an act of dishonesty for which the necessary disciplinary action will be taken.

In line with the national health and prevention strategies, all employees are required to practice the KEEP principle on daily basis:

- **Keep – yourself at home if you are sick**
- **Keep – washing your hands for 20 seconds**
- **Keep – your physical distance from others**
- **Keep – away if you cough or sneeze and cough and sneeze into your elbow**

Management will review the guideline as and when Government protocols and regulations are communicated and keep the VUT community informed.

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