



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

Policies and Procedures

Title: **Working from Home Guidelines during Covid Closure period – COVID-19**
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1. Introduction

Following An Taoiseach's announcement of 12th March with regard to COVID-19 restrictions, all NUI Galway campuses closed. This has been a critical time to combat the spread of COVID-19.

We appreciate that the announcement poses great challenges for our University community as we maintain our communications and our activities remotely. We thank you for your support and fortitude in this fast changing situation.

The University closure has resulted in considerable changes and challenges in how we continue to do our work while being asked to stay at home. The President has acknowledged that working from home in the current period and dealing with the concerns of COVID-19 are challenging for everyone. Working from home arrangements have been put in place by the University to facilitate the continued functioning of the University at this time. It also reduces the risk of the spread of the virus.

The University is committed to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of all staff.

This document is to provide guidelines to help staff and managers at this exceptional time.

2. Working Hours

These are exceptional times and many of our staff are experiencing increased responsibilities in particular balancing work and other commitments including childcare and caring commitments. It is therefore important, more than ever, for Heads of School/Unit/Line Managers to show flexibility, discretion and compassion when dealing with staff in this regard.

Staff are encouraged to take **regular rest breaks** as many will have more screen time than if they were working in the office environment. Breaks are important so please ensure that you get up and move about for a few minutes.

3. Health & Wellbeing

Looking after your health and wellbeing at this time is very important. We have a number of supports that may assist you and can be accessed through the link:

http://www.nuigalway.ie/human-resources/employee_wellbeing/

Additional support on balancing working life and personal time is available on

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/together/>

If you are experiencing difficulties, Occupational Health support is available through Medmark and the **Employee Assistance Service** remains available through our provider Inspire Workplaces. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAS) provides free and confidential professional counselling and information services designed to support employees and their immediate family members to resolve personal or work related concerns. Further details are available on

http://www.nuigalway.ie/human-resources/employee_wellbeing/employeeassistanceservice/

4. Keeping in contact while apart

Whilst the Government advice is to observe social distancing at this time with the public and limiting contact with those outside of your family unit, it is now important that Head of Schools/Unit/Line managers maintain regular contact and communication with updates on progress with their staff. Technology that is widely available which can be used to keep in contact includes MS Teams, phone, Skype or Zoom, where appropriate.

5. Data Protection & Security

Whilst working from home, it is important that all staff continue to comply with GDPR legislation as they would if they were still working in their offices on campus. The following links to documents provide guidance for staff and managers in detail:

<https://www.nuigalway.ie/data-protection/>

<https://www.nuigalway.ie/media/oifiganrunai/GDPR-ICT-Best-Practice.pdf>

<https://www.nuigalway.ie/alert/stafffaqs/accessingcampusitlibraryservices/>

In addition, both ISS and the Data Protection Officer are available to address any queries you may have in this area.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Line Managers/Heads of School

- Ensure that you have up-to-date contact details for your team to enable ongoing communication as required.
- Maintain regular contact with your team, not just for work. It is important to check in with your team to see how they are coping. Support staff to access equipment from the office if that would support them work from home.
- Agree work to be carried out while staff are working from home. It is important to clarify expectations and outcomes having consideration to the fact that some staff may also have other commitments to childcare and other family related reasons.
- Ensure that staff are complying with data protection and taking regular breaks in line with the Organisation of Working Time Act.
- Similar to working in the office, continue to have regular planned team meetings and one to one meetings with staff.
- Ensure that staff are aware that the normal reporting requirements remain in place along with the University policies and procedures, including annual leave and the responsibility to reporting absences either COVID-19 or non COVID-19 related.
- Provide regular updates from senior management on the progression of the situation during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Ensure that staff are aware of the FAQs for Employees <https://www.nuigalway.ie/alert/stafffaqs/>

Employee Responsibilities

- Maintain regular contact with your line manager regarding work and any challenges or issues that you may be experiencing.
- Agree work to be carried out or deliverables with your line manager while you are working from home.
- Provide support to colleagues and line manager.
- Inform your line manager and HR if you have been medically diagnosed with COVID-19 in line with the [Staff FAQs](#)
- Ensure that you comply with the Data Protection guidelines and ISS advice for working from home.
- Be aware that University Policies and Procedures remain in place at this time, along with normal reporting requirements.
- Remember it is your responsibility to ensure that you do not place yourself or others at risk whilst working at home.