



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba



Hybrid Working Guidance



HYBRID WORKING GUIDANCE

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Coronavirus pandemic brought significant and rapid changes in the way we work and how we work together. As we emerge from this period, we have taken time to reflect together as an organisation on what this has meant for us as individuals, as an organisation and which aspects we would like to carry forward into the future. This guidance document sets our approach to introducing a hybrid working model, with a mix of home and office working.

AIM

Our approach to hybrid working aims to create a culture and working environment that enables us to meet the needs of both the organisation as a whole and of people within SFC in a flexible, inclusive and equitable way by:

- Enhancing employee engagement.
- Improving productivity.
- Providing a better work-life balance and supporting the wellbeing of our people.
- Encouraging collaboration and creativity.
- Reducing our travel and carbon footprint.
- Sustaining an inclusive working environment and a sense of community.
- Attracting and retaining talent.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our guiding principles are:

- **Operational requirements are met** - at the heart of our approach is the continued commitment to delivering our mission and operational objectives.
- **Flexibility is maintained** - our aim is to sustain a flexible approach to business and individual needs.
- **Decisions are managed at a local level** – informally in agreement with the line manager and taking account of the needs of the work and team members.
- **A positive culture is nurtured** – our approach to hybrid working is a vital part of sustaining a welcoming and inclusive culture based on trust.

STATUS OF THIS GUIDANCE

This guidance sets out our approach to hybrid working as we move beyond the earlier phases of (initially) enforced and (latterly) informal home-based working which came about in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. It does not represent a change in terms and conditions, nor does it supersede any of SFC's existing policies and procedures, present or future.

PRINCIPLE 1: OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS ARE MET

MAINTAIN PRODUCTIVITY

We will continue to measure performance and productivity through outputs and behaviours rather than through inputs and presenteeism.

Our performance management and development process reflects this ethos, requiring [SMART](#) objective setting and a performance review based on the 'what' and the 'how' which in time will include a competencies and behaviours framework that supports our hybrid working approach.

PROVIDE THE TOOLS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Connectivity and support: we are working to ensure that our digital capabilities will enable us to work seamlessly at home and in the office.

IT support is provided through our support desk (helpdesk@sfc.ac.uk). In the first instance you should continue to log all IT issues with the IT helpdesk whether you are in the office or at another location. IT support staff will be present in the office from Tuesday to Thursday. Support can also be provided on Mondays and Fridays where necessary.

We have introduced Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). You will require your MFA device, phone or token alongside your laptop when coming into the office. You will need your MFA device for login purposes.

Equipment: We will continue to provide all equipment reasonably required for you to work from home, including:

- Monitor.
- Standard office chair.
- Mouse.
- Keyboard.
- Associated peripheral items.

Any specialised equipment to support required adjustment or through DSE assessments.

If you require a piece of equipment, you should contact helpdesk@sfc.ac.uk (for ICT equipment) or facilities@sfc.ac.uk (for office equipment).

All equipment will remain SFC's property. Where equipment is provided you must take reasonable care of it and return it to us when you leave SFC.

You must comply with all relevant information security policies, including the [Acceptable Use Policy](#) for the use of ICT systems and equipment, when working at home as well as in the office. You are responsible for ensuring the security of all equipment, documents and information and must take all necessary steps to keep private and confidential material secure at all times. In particular, you must:

- Lock your computer whenever it is left unattended.
- Maintain a clear desk policy, safely storing confidential papers (where hard copy is essential) when not in use and disposing of any confidential papers in the office using SFC's confidential waste bins.
- Comply with SFC's Data Protection Policy.
- Report any data security breach immediately using the Data Security Incident Procedure.

Office Space: Our office space will support and foster collaboration, team meetings, good working relationships and informal social interaction. Our office space will also provide spaces for individual working. In the short term some interim changes to the current office space will be made to accommodate our immediate requirements. Longer-term plans will also be developed.

Hybrid Meetings: In addition to face-to-face time with colleagues, we recognise that hybrid meetings will continue to be a regular and common form of interaction.

Adopting a "digital first" approach for meetings and other team discussions can help deliver an inclusive culture. We expect everyone to observe good meeting etiquette in terms of being prepared, how you treat others and your focus during the engagement. If you define these expectations at the outset your virtual meeting will be more productive and inclusive. You may find this information about [online meeting etiquette for attendees](#) and this advice on [making hybrid meeting work](#) helpful.

As a general rule for now, we suggest that the best way to make sure everyone is included in a hybrid, digital first engagement is for all attendees to join through their individual laptop with their own camera (just as you would do at home) and conduct the meeting as though you are all participating in a virtual meeting. If you are in a room together with others you may want to use VC facilities and mute your own volume, but it can still be helpful to those who are not in the room if you are logged in to the meeting with your camera on. Over time we will adapt our approach based on feedback, emerging good practice and new technologies.

PRINCIPLE 2: FLEXIBILITY IS MAINTAINED

We will create a flexible and inclusive environment, which is (a) purpose-driven and (b) supports health and wellbeing.

PURPOSE-DRIVEN

Decisions on how, where and when work can be delivered will be taken by those best placed to take them; **between individuals and their managers based on an understanding of business requirements.**

Decisions around the how, where and when should be considered alongside **discussions at team level** about how teams will work best together and in consideration of individual work patterns.

Some roles are likely to require more time to be spent in the office on a more structured basis. This will depend on your individual role, the needs of your team and the focus of your activity. We will still aim to offer people in these roles appropriate elements of flexibility and hybrid working.

We expect to use our office space in the future to create opportunities to support and foster collaboration, team meetings, good working relationships and informal social interaction. To achieve this, you should expect to come into the office at times to carry out certain tasks or participate in activities that will achieve these outcomes. We have listed below illustrative examples of the types of activities that might be undertaken in person:

- Your weekly or monthly team meeting could be an opportunity for everyone to come into the office on the same day and spend time together in the meeting itself and to work alongside each other for part of the day.
- Someone new is joining the team and it would support their induction to the organisation and help them to get to know their colleagues.
- Your role or a particular project might be more efficiently or effectively carried out if you are co-located with other colleagues.
- You might plan to come together for a group session, to shape or co-create a particular piece of work or to or share learning.
- You could have your annual performance review and development planning process meetings with your line manager in person.
- You might choose to have your monthly 1:1 with your line manager
- You are working closely with a colleague on a task where you agree that face to face would be more efficient.
- Certain training sessions or group events due to the nature of the course or subject, might benefit from having some or all of the team in a room together for a better learning experience.
- You are learning something new or starting a new project and sitting beside someone or shadowing them at meetings and being able to ask questions throughout the day would be beneficial.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Health & Safety: You must take care of your own health and safety while working from home or remotely and should comply with our Health and Safety Policy and other guidance. You must report any work-related accidents at home immediately to HumanResources@sfc.ac.uk.

You will be asked to complete a homeworking assessment once a year. If you require any office equipment, desk, chair, any other equipment as a result of your home working assessment, the facilities team will contact you on receipt of your completed risk assessment or you can email facilities@sfc.ac.uk.

Wellbeing: Hybrid working provides greater flexibility to maintain a healthy work life balance. Your wellbeing is also supported in a number of other ways, including the use of flexible working, flexitime and special leave, the decision to informally remove core working hours and the move to a 35-hour working week.

You will find information on our [homeworking resource hub](#) to help you look after your own wellbeing. This includes details of how you can access our free [Employee Assistance Service](#) (phone 0800 032 9849) which is open 24/7, 365 days a year.

You can also access Occupational Health Services via referral from HR.

Care of dependents: When working remotely you must have suitable arrangements in place if you have dependents or people who rely on you for their care to allow you to focus on your role during working hours. SFC is a Carer Positive employer. You will find more about our family friendly policies in our employee handbook. Guidance for carers can be found on our [MySFC homeworking resource hub](#).

PRINCIPLE 3: DECISIONS ARE MANAGED AT A LOCAL LEVEL

PLACE OF WORK

There will be no contractual change to your work location. Our approach to hybrid working means you can work at home or any other suitable location in the UK that has secure Wifi access.

Working from a base outside the UK is only permitted in very exceptional circumstances and for a brief period as there are a number of issues around health and safety, tax and employment law that may impact on both the employee and the employer. If this need arises your line manager should consult HR in the first instance. We would expect the use of leave (including annual leave, flexi leave and special leave) to be considered first. Please note that your SFC laptop may not work outside the UK.

There will be no change to the current expenses policy. Travel to and from the office will not be reimbursed.

MONITORING

There will be no formal or central monitoring of days in the office. However, we expect you and your line manager to keep a record of your agreed working pattern and to review them regularly.

As a guide we would expect that a minimum of three days in the office per month would achieve the benefits of our hybrid approach. This figure should be treated as a general rule of thumb and informal benchmark.

For example, based on work commitments or personal circumstances you may find that you only attend the office once in one particular calendar month you have limited team or individual requirements to be in the office. However, you know that in the following month you will be spending up to 5 or 6 days in the office.

You may also be required to, or choose to, attend the office for more than three days per month.

WORKING PATTERNS

Our hybrid working policy does not change specific work patterns. These are still governed by your individual contract and SFC policies, such as flexitime. Normal working hours can be undertaken between 7.30am and 7pm Monday to Friday. There is a contractual requirement to take a 30 minute rest/meal break where six, or more, hours are worked per day.

Since March 2020, there has been no requirement to work the fixed core hours as detailed in the flexitime policy, and we will continue with this more flexible arrangement in the interim period. This will be reviewed with Unite within 12 months of implementation of this approach.

SFC's flexible working requests policy enables anyone to make a request to vary their contracted work pattern (whether on a temporary or permanent basis).

FLEXI TIME

There will be no changes to the current Flexi Time Policy ([Flexi-time April 2014.doc](#)).

We are working to reintroduce the self-serve system that enables you to record your time worked and request flexi adjustments. In the meantime you should continue to log adjustments to your contracted hours (i.e. if you have worked more or less time than contracted, or to request an adjustment for another reason such as a medical appointment) by emailing your line manager copied to HumanResources@sfc.ac.uk, and HR will update your flexi record when approved. HR can also provide you with your flexi balance on request. You can apply for flexi leave through Cascade without contacting HR.

REQUESTS FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

1. If you wish to make a contractual change to your working hours, for example to compress your hours into fewer days or to work a different pattern, you can still do so by making a request via the Flexible Working Requests Policy.

PRINCIPLE 4: A POSITIVE CULTURE IS NURTURED

Our aim is to create a culture and working environment that allows us to meet the needs of both the organisation as a whole and the people within SFC in a flexible, inclusive and equitable way. The basis on which we will build this approach to hybrid working will be one of trust between employees and the organisation.

For us as an employer, this means:

Ensuring our line managers are briefed and work **in line with the principles** of the policy and implement it fairly and equitably.

Ensuring communication strategies are in place to maintain productive working relationships with their teams.

For you that means:

Understanding and working **in line with the principles** of the policy.

Working together with your line manager, team members and colleagues to maintain productive working relationships.

Consistency of approach: We expect everyone to follow the same principles to secure a consistency of approach across the organisation. This does not mean that it is necessary to take the same approach for every individual or team. Some roles may require more time to be spent in the office on a more structured basis. This is role and activity dependent. We will still work to offer these individuals as much flexibility as is reasonable and a form of hybrid working as far as possible.

We will manage this consistency of approach through regular reviews at directorate, team and individual level, to ensure that everyone is working effectively within the principles set out above. Teams will be expected to share their approach, practices and learnings with each other.

Communication: Having clear established communication plans and channels will be essential to support and maintain a successful hybrid working approach. We will develop an organisation-wide plan that will share updates on key deliverables; organisation and people priorities; and cross-directorate working. Each directorate will also develop an appropriate communication plan that meets the needs of the directorate. We will all have a collective responsibility to communicate effectively and to share what works well. The Communication Plans will be in place by 31 December 2022.

Review and Feedback: We will monitor and review our approach. We will use informal and formal measures to keep this policy under review. This will include, but will not be limited

to, feedback from line managers, people surveys and agreed productivity metrics. Where appropriate the policy may change over time based on feedback. Any changes will be clearly communicated and consulted on with Unite and employees.

This guidance document does not supersede any of the following policies, and you should take this opportunity to remind yourself of your obligations in relation to:

- GDPR
- FMA
- Cyber security policy
- Acceptable use
- ICT monitoring
- Remote working
- Data protection policy