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Office instruction

Arrangements for telecommuting

1. Telecommuting is a working arrangement whereby the staff member carries out his or her normal assigned duties at a remote location via personal computer (PC) and Internet connection rather than in the traditional office.
2. Telecommuting must be seen in the broad context of the work-life agenda of the Secretary-General's reform of human resource management in the United Nations. Telecommuting is subject to the following Guiding Principles for flexible working arrangements:
 - (a) The policies being introduced are intended to facilitate flexible working arrangements, but do not create an entitlement to such arrangements;
 - (b) The introduction and operation of flexible working arrangements should not represent additional costs to the Organization;
 - (c) Continuation of flexible working arrangements is subject to confirmation by management that the productivity level of staff is consistent with the level established under the traditional structures. In the context of flexible working arrangements, the staff member's presence in the workplace during a specific period of time becomes less important, but not an irrelevant factor. Work planning between the supervisor and the staff member becomes critical and specific, realistic output targets must be established.

Applicability

3. Telecommuting is being introduced in the United Nations Office at Vienna and the Office on Drugs and Crime on a pilot basis and will shall initially be limited to staff serving in work units where workload standards and productivity benchmarks have been established.
4. Telecommuting is an option available on a voluntary basis to staff members who meet the requirements set out in paragraphs 6 and 7 below.
5. Requests to telecommute are subject to approval by the staff member's immediate supervisor and by the programme manager (usually the Director of the Division).

Requirements

6. A staff member who wishes to telecommute must fulfil the following requirements:
 - (a) Furnish and maintain his or her remote workplace in a safe manner;

(b) Ensure that adequate measures are in place to ensure system security (e.g. virus protection and a local firewall);

(c) Establish and keep specific telecommuting working hours and make these known to his or her supervisor and immediate colleagues;

(d) Maintain the workload and productivity standards for his or her occupational group;

(e) If partially telecommuting (see para. 9), provide his or her own telecommuting equipment, which meets the minimum specifications established by the Information Technology Section, as may be updated from time to time.

7. Within the general framework described in the present office instruction, the particular terms and conditions for a period of telecommuting are to be agreed upon by the staff member and his or her supervisor and reflected in a written “telecommuting compact”. A model compact can be obtained from the Human Resources Management Section.

Work arrangements

8. During the pilot phase, telecommuting shall be limited to a single alternate dedicated work site at the duty station, that is, the staff member’s local residence.

9. A staff member who is authorized to telecommute may elect to work entirely from the alternate site or to telecommute a specific number of days per week. In the case of the latter, the days worked from the alternate site must be regularly scheduled and are subject to the approval of the staff member’s supervisor.

10. Staff who opt to telecommute shall normally be required to maintain such arrangements for a minimum period of three months.

Financial arrangements

11. A staff member who elects to work entirely from the alternate site may request the Information Technology Section to furnish the standard desktop PC issued to staff working in offices. The cost of that equipment shall be borne by the Organization (including workstation support costs). The staff member shall bear the cost of any additional equipment required at the alternate site.

12. A staff member who elects part-time telecommuting shall bear the full cost of equipping the alternate site.

13. The staff member shall bear all costs for maintenance, repair and upgrading of his or her own equipment.

14. The Organization shall bear the cost for maintenance, repair and upgrading of equipment provided by the Information Technology Section; the cost of travel of staff of the Section between the Vienna International Centre and the remote site (including travel time) shall, however, be recovered from the staff member. Alternatively, the staff member may bring the equipment to the Information Technology Section for maintenance, the latter being the norm unless a site visit is required for technical reasons.

15. The staff member shall be fully responsible for any loss or damage caused to his or her own equipment. Responsibility for loss or damage to any equipment provided by the Information Technology Section shall be assessed according to the same standards as applied in the Vienna International Centre.

16. The staff member is responsible for returning equipment provided by the Information Technology Section to the Organization immediately upon completion

of the period for which telecommuting has been authorized. Failure to do so shall result in recovery of the cost of the equipment from the staff member.

17. The staff member shall be responsible for any loss or damage caused to the Organization's information technology systems and data as a result of negligence in maintaining the requisite level of system security at the alternate site.

18. The staff member shall be fully responsible for all charges levied by telecommunications companies and/or Internet providers.

Procedures

19. A staff member who wishes to be considered for telecommuting shall, as a first step, complete the "telecommuting assessment form", which can be obtained from the Human Resources Management Section.

20. By a memorandum sent through his or her immediate supervisor and programme manager, the staff member then submits the completed form to the Chief of the Human Resources Management Section, requesting consideration for the telecommuting option and specifying the proposed telecommuting schedule. The assessment form shall be reviewed by the Chief of the Information Technology Section, in consultation with the staff member's supervisor. The staff member shall be informed in writing of the outcome of the assessment.

21. If the staff member decides to accept the telecommuting option, he or she must inform the Chief of the Human Resources Management Section in writing and attach a completed "telecommuting compact" form. Upon receipt of that form, the Information Technology Section shall be requested to make the necessary arrangements to ensure connectivity to the United Nations Office at Vienna and Office on Drugs and Crime systems from the remote location.

22. Staff who accept the telecommuting option shall be expected to continue such arrangements for a minimum of three months. Requests to discontinue or to modify the telecommuting arrangements must be submitted in writing to the Chief of the Human Resources Management Section.

23. Telecommuting arrangements may be modified by management at any time taking into account the exigencies of the service, provided that adequate notice is provided to the staff member in question.

Miscellaneous

24. Occasional instances of working at home that do not require connectivity to United Nations Office at Vienna/Office on Drugs and Crime information technology systems are not considered telecommuting and are not subject to the provisions of the present office instruction.

25. The arrangements for telecommuting during the pilot phase will be evaluated in two years' time.

Effective date

26. The present office instruction will enter into effect on 1 November 2002.
