

Work Planning FAQ

Governance and Planning

Who is involved in the discussions of returning to on-site?

- We ask that employees work with their managers, and that managers work with their unit heads and division leads to develop draft on-site plans for staff from now through mid-May. Considerations for on-site work will focus on optimizing safety, providing effective services and meeting goals, purposeful (high-collaboration) on-site work, contributions to the vibrancy of the workplace, and flexibility.

What is the stance on non-student-facing staff who want to work remotely indefinitely? Will that decision be made by each unit head and/or VC?

- Planning for returns to on-site work will be overseen by the unit head/Dean/Vice Provost, then reviewed and approved by the EVC/Provost or respective Vice Chancellor. Work plans will be informed through conversations with employees.

For Academic Affairs, who is the unit/division lead? Is that department chair, Dean, Provost?

- For the schools, it will be the Dean/Vice Provost, rolled up through EVC/Provost.

Will division leads be required to provide a decision by a specific date?

- Managers will be responsible for communicating with employees about their individual approved workplan by June 1, 2021.

When is campus return happening?

- Beginning July 1, staff will start returning to in-person work, with details informed by work plans submitted and discussed in May 2021, with finalization of plans by June 1, 2021.

What defines a business need to return in person? How will equitable telework opportunities be managed? What staffing levels are required vs. allowed to be physically on campus?

- On-site planning and execution require we:
 - Ensure campus service needs are met
 - Create and generate vibrancy for our entire campus community
 - Provide on-site plans and environments that engage, support, and work for our UC Merced family

Managers/supervisors/division leaders are to take these into account when developing plans. A key element to a fair and equitable process is managers and employees thinking of creative and innovative methods of service delivery. This requires collaboration between the manager and employee with an emphasis on open and transparent dialogue.

Hybrid work, planning, technology

Can we have hybrid work schedules that employ the technology we've used extensively during the pandemic? Would it make sense to have a Zoom meeting from DCC with a colleague on campus while that can be done remotely for both individuals?

- Definitely. We ask managers to work with employees on hybrid work schedules that meet service needs and the expectations of all parties. We encourage flexibility, evaluation of effectiveness, and course adjustment as needed.

Will managers receive best-practices guidance for managing employees working remotely or on hybrid schedules?

- Yes, we will continue to provide tools and resources for managers to effectively manage a hybrid workforce.

I love being remote. Why change it? Can telecommuting be accommodated when it is the desired form of work?

- Continued telecommuting must prove to be mutually beneficial to the employee and the institution. The expectation is to prioritize the effective delivery of business needs and services. If the employee can continue to effectively perform their work remotely, it is at the discretion of the manager, in consultation with the department head/Dean/Vice Provost and EVC/Provost or Vice Chancellor, to authorize full-time telecommuting.

Will on-site work allow better collaboration?

- Each division has the discretion to establish a plan that prioritizes the business and service delivery needs of the operation. Plans need to be consistent with the [Thought Guide](#), which covers the need to create plans that promote a vibrant and engaging on-site environment. It is important to keep in mind that with additional remote service delivery, we will need to be intentional about ensuring our remote workers do not become marginalized when hybrid modalities are in use.

How do we facilitate mixed team presence (meetings, collaboration, etc.)?

- As managers draft their on-site plans, it is critical to consider space and logistical challenges such as ensuring the appropriate technology is in place to allow for the effective participation and engagement of a hybrid workforce. Human Resources will continue to develop resources that assist managers with the effective management of a hybrid workforce. Additionally, please refer to OIT's [Educational Continuity for Remote Work](#) for additional strategies and digital tools for working remotely.

What concerns/requirements are there for supervision of on-site employees (on-site vs. remote)?

- The expectation for remote/on-site supervision depends on the nature of the work and operations. Some manager roles are most effective on-site while others may thrive in a hybrid environment. However, if a majority of your frontline staff is non-exempt and expected to be

on-site to effectively perform their duties, it is presumed that on-site supervision is required to direct, support, and evaluate service delivery.

Leadership, governance, communication

Does my team/unit/department need drop-in coverage?

- The need for drop-in hours should be informed by the nature of the work, operations, and delivering a high-quality customer experience. If your business or service has a steady flow of in-person drop-ins, your on-site plan needs to account for this demand.

What about advanced notice or other scheduling concerns/legal requirements?

- For non-represented staff, Personnel Policy for Staff Members (PPSM) does not require advance notice of schedule changes. However, best practice is to provide advance notice, e.g., 30 days, where feasible. This allows employees the time needed to make personal adjustments.

There may be union notice requirements in some situations, so supervisors should contact the Employee & Labor Relations Unit at laborrelations@ucmerced.edu when proposing changes for employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement to determine whether notice is necessary.

How will the ADA medical accommodation process work for high-risk workers? What if I need to continue telework for health reasons?

- Requests for employee personal health related accommodations will be assessed through our [Accommodations process](#) and [PPSM- 81 Reasonable Accommodations](#) policy or collective bargaining agreement. Medical documentation and the Interactive Process (IP) will help the supervisor and designated benefits analyst to determine any reasonable accommodations for specific situations.

Recognition, engagement, retention, celebration

This past year-plus has been hard. When it is safe to do so, can we have a celebration as a community? I'm not advocating for one anytime soon, but I would like to meet new colleagues and greet new students outside of Zoom meetings.

- Great idea! Rebuilding our sense of on-site community is important to contributing to re-establishing campus vibrancy for our staff and the students' campus experience.

What are the key practices and behaviors to proactively assess during the process of returning to on-site work? I'm thinking of the inherent connection with campus climate and equity.

- A key element to a fair and equitable process requires managers and employees to think of creative and innovative methods of delivering services. It requires collaboration between the manager and employee with an emphasis on open and transparent dialogue.

Do you foresee challenges in retaining top talent if employees who want to be remote permanently can't be accommodated?

- Yes, we anticipate retention challenges. However, the [Thought Guide](#) is designed to show divisions and schools how to provide workforce autonomy and flexibility in a manner that allows for innovation and creativity in the effective delivery of services. This will include offering opportunity for continued telecommute or hybrid work arrangements, if possible given the type of work performed by the employee and other factors outlined in the [Thought Guide](#).

Environmental Health and Safety

Where can I get face coverings, sanitizer, or other sanitation materials?

Vending machines that contain 4-ounce containers of hand dispenser have been placed in key locations across campus. People can get a dispenser from the blue Fastenal machines once every two weeks with a swipe of their CatCard. There is no charge for the dispenser.

The vending machines are in five locations:

- The Pavilion
- Lantern Café
- Yablokoff-Wallace Dining Center
- Science and Engineering Building 2 (SE2)
- Administration Building (3H)