Staffing Decision Guidance
A Decision-Making Guide for Returning Work to Campus

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Prepared by: Human Resources Subcommittee for Reopening Campus
Where We Stand
The novel coronavirus outbreak continues to have significant impacts on the world. At Michigan State University, we have taken steps to mitigate the risks to our employees and our campus community through increased safety measures, increased cleaning and sanitation protocols, and adjusting our operations taking into consideration the guidance of the university administration and federal, state and local officials and public health agencies.

Note, Michigan law currently prohibits employees from in-person work unless it is not feasible to work from home. This means that employees cannot work in-person just because it is more convenient or efficient. This legal requirement controls everything in this document to the extent there are any contradictions.

At MSU, we care about people. Our employees' safety is the top priority and will always be at the forefront of decision-making, especially in response to this public health crisis. We are committed to the safety and support of our colleagues, students and partners. We will continue to support their safety in all that we do.

Values and Principles
Our work is guided by the values, informed by many of you, and which was identified by the initial work done by the COVID-19 Reopening Campus Task Force. We will focus on the well-being of all the communities we serve, meeting mental and physical health needs and supporting diverse communities so they have access to what they need to be successful. Ultimately, the safety of our campus community always will be at the forefront of our decision-making.

Key Resource
Units will need to make decisions about which administrative and academic duties and functions cannot continue to be done remotely but are deemed necessary to return to campus. A framework has been created to help guide this decision-making process. Units must create their own Return-to-Work Procedures and Protocols using the Return-to-Work Procedures and Protocols framework, which outlines what steps need to be taken before bringing employees back to campus. Key parts of the framework include required training, expectations for personal protective equipment and physical distancing, cleaning and sanitation guidance and reporting requirements for those who experience COVID-19 symptoms or have a confirmed diagnosis.

We recommend that you utilize and apply this framework and the guiding principles outlined below as you move forward with organizational plans to return work to campus. Your staffing plans can then be immersed into your overall return-to-work plan.
Please note that this document is intended to be used as a resource and guide for your decision-making process. We understand that each employee situation may be different and may produce a different outcome. This resource should be used as a tool to ensure that you are following a fair and equitable process in making staffing decisions.

*As referenced throughout the document, the term employee refers to the following: executive managers, faculty administrators, faculty, academic staff, support staff, temporary/on-call employees, graduate assistant employees and student employees.
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Begin with a Unit-level Approach
To start the process of determining what work needs to be performed on campus, first clearly identify and understand the work of the unit. Collaborate with your supervisors and/or HR representative(s) to review organizational structures and position descriptions. These documents will lend great information on how the department is structured, what work is performed and who currently performs that work.

Steps to take:
1. Review employment contracts, position descriptions and other methods of capturing work that is performed in the department.
2. Categorize the work that is performed in a manner that makes most sense for your operation (e.g., Academic unit: teaching, research, administration, etc. Service unit: landscaping, custodial, administration, etc.).
3. For each category assess the nature of the work performed and the key responsibilities.
4. Identify what work is necessary to be conducted in person or on campus and why.
   a. Is all work related to that function necessary to be done on-site?  
      Example: in identifying research experimentation being necessary to be completed on-site, it is also noted that research analysis and reporting is not necessary to be done on-site.
   b. Is there an alternative way of completing work that is traditionally identified as work that is necessary to be done on campus?  
      Example: traditionally thinking about a departmental office assistant as needing to be on-site to interact with faculty, staff, students and visitors – the unit establishes new procedures to move some or all of that work remote utilizing video chat, email, phone, and other modalities of communication. (Hint: you are already likely operating in this manner).
5. For work that is difficult to classify, use the assessment questions below to consider the impact to the unit of conducting work remotely.

Assessment Questions
What is the overall impact on the unit of the work being completed from a remote location?

- What is the nature of the impact (what could happen)?
- What is the probability of impact (how likely is it)?
- What is the severity of impact (how serious is a potential risk)?
- What is the scope of the impact (who, or how broad, would the impact be)?

After completing the assessment, if it is determined that the overall impact of the work being completed remotely would be neutral or positive, the work should be completed remotely.
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Next Assess Individual Employee Roles/Assignments
At this point you have identified the work of the unit and determined how that work is to be completed effectively and efficiently while prioritizing campus safety. Now it is time to apply assessments to individual employee roles and assignments.

Steps to take:
1. Review individual position descriptions to identify current work assignments and how that work was assessed (necessary to be done on-site vs. remote).
2. Connect with employees to discuss their role and work assignments as well as the assessment of where that work should be completed.
3. Complete staffing decisions, with employee collaboration and input, and document work schedules and locations. This may include reassigning job duties to match the needs of the unit with the current capacities of individual employees.

Use the chart on the following page to assist you with conversations and decisions regarding individual employee roles and assignments. Note that if an employee requests an accommodation, there are two new temporary accommodations procedures which should be followed:

- Temporary Accommodations and Flexible Work Arrangement Request Process
- Process for Addressing Faculty COVID-19 Related Teaching Adjustment Requests for Fall Semester 2020

Situations involving individual circumstances not covered by other University procedures must be considered thoughtfully, with dignity and respect for the individual.

Supervisor preference or comfort in oversight, alone, is not a sufficient reason to require an employee to return to working on-site. Please note the following requirement:

As set forth above, Michigan law currently prohibits performing in-person work activities where the work activities can feasibly be completed remotely. Units are obligated to demonstrate the infeasibility of remote work. Units should maintain a record at the unit level indicating:

- Which positions/classifications report for in-person work and why they must be physically present in the workplace;
- Reasons that this work cannot be performed remotely; this must include enough specificity to show this analysis has been performed.

The MSU Return to Work Framework sets forth this policy and should be adopted by units as well.
### Decision-making Guidance Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
<th>Remedy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All of the work assigned to the employee can be completed remotely.</td>
<td>Employee is able to effectively and efficiently work remotely.</td>
<td>Employee works remotely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employee is not able to efficiently work remotely; (internet, ergonomics, distractions, etc.) and requests on-site work.</td>
<td>Current Michigan law prohibits this person from performing in-person work. Please speak with your supervisor for any questions or issues regarding remote work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Majority of the work assigned to the employee can be completed remotely.</td>
<td>Employee is able to effectively and efficiently work remotely.</td>
<td>Employee works remotely; work that must be completed on-site should be scheduled for safe on-site completion or reassigned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employee is not able to efficiently work remotely; (internet, ergonomics, distractions, etc.) and requests on-site work.</td>
<td>Michigan law prohibits this person from performing in-person work. Please speak with your supervisor for any questions or issues regarding remote work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Some of the work assigned to the employee can be completed remotely and some needs to be completed on-site.</td>
<td>Employee is able to work remotely and on-site.</td>
<td>Supervisor works with employee to schedule work accordingly to be completed partially remote &amp; partially on-site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employee is able to work remotely but not on-site.</td>
<td>Employee works remotely; explore option to reassign on-site work and obtain additional remote work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employee is not able to work remotely but is able to work on-site.</td>
<td>Employee works on-site if the work must physically be performed on-site; explore option to reassign remote work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Majority of the work assigned to the employee needs to be completed on-site.</td>
<td>Employee is able to work on-site.</td>
<td>Employee works on-site; duties that can be completed remotely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employee is not able to work on-site.</td>
<td>▪ Explore temporary accommodations. <a href="#">Flexible work arrangements</a> &lt;br&gt; <a href="#">Faculty teaching adjustment</a> &lt;br&gt; ▪ Explore <a href="#">leave options &amp; FFCR Act</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. All of the work assigned to the employee needs to be completed on-site.</td>
<td>Employee is able to work on-site.</td>
<td>Employee works on-site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employee is not able to work on-site.</td>
<td>▪ Explore temporary accommodations. <a href="#">Flexible work arrangements</a> &lt;br&gt; <a href="#">Faculty teaching adjustment</a> &lt;br&gt; ▪ Explore <a href="#">leave options &amp; FFCR Act</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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**Expectations**

- As much as possible, and while meeting unit objectives and mission, employees who perform work that is able to be completed remotely will continue to perform that work remotely. This will help to reduce density on campus and promote health and safety across our community.

- All administrators, supervisors and employees will be inclusive, collaborative and respectful in working through these difficult decisions.

- An employee whose work assignment will shift from remote to on-site should be informed in writing as far in advance as possible. Ideally this notification period will be a minimum of 2 weeks with a preferred 4-week notice period.

- An employee whose work assignment will continue to be remote should be notified as soon as possible.

- Decisions made about employee work locations have no bearing on the value or appreciation of the job or person and are strictly based on the nature of work. We are all valued, and we are all in this together.

**Additional Considerations**

Units should seek to utilize the considerations listed below to achieve density reduction in campus spaces and buildings:

**Staggered Work Schedules**

A work schedule that has employees reporting to work at different times and/or in shifts.

**Flexible Work Schedules**

A work schedule in which an employee alters the start and/or end time of their workday while maintaining the same number of scheduled hours for the workday and/or work week. When scheduling employees, supervisors need to be cognizant of FLSA and MSU union overtime rules. For additional flexible work resources please visit the MSU Work Life Office website.

**Alternating Work Schedules**

A work schedule that alternates days or weeks that employees report on-site. When not reporting on-site, employees will work remotely. This option helps to reduce the number of employees on-site at a given time.

**Hybrid Work Schedules**

A work schedule in which the employee completes part of their work on-site and part of their work at a remote location while maintaining the same number of scheduled work hours for the week.

**Office Assignment Shifts**

As decisions are made regarding remote work, office space may become available. Units should consider shifting employees who are required to return to campus and who routinely work in a shared/open work environment to newly available private offices or unused conference rooms.
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Additional Support
For additional information or specific questions regarding the document feel free to contact:

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References:

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Roberts B. (2018) Key questions and processes for making decisions on employee requests for flexibility, leave or similar considerations. MSU WorkLife Office https://worklife.msu.edu/news/key-questions-and-process-making-decisions-employee-requests-flexibility-leave-or-similar
