

# 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.

At MSU, we care about people. The safety of our employees 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.

## Guide: Determining What Work Returns Onsite

### ***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 onsite?  
**Example:** in identifying research experimentation being necessary to be completed onsite, it is also noted that research analysis and reporting is not necessary to be done onsite.
  - 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 onsite 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**.

## Guide: Determining What Work Returns Onsite

### ***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 onsite 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.***

## Guide: Determining What Work Returns Onsite

### Decision-making Guidance Chart

Scenario	Considerations	Remedy
1. All of the work assigned to the employee can be completed remotely.	Employee is able to effectively and efficiently work remotely.	Employee works remotely.
	Employee is not able to effectively and/or efficiently work remotely; (internet, ergonomics, distractions, etc.) and requests onsite work.	Allow employee to work onsite <b>only</b> after reviewing and ensuring campus safety and necessary onsite work will not be adversely impacted.
2. Majority of the work assigned to the employee can be completed remotely.	Employee is able to effectively and efficiently work remotely.	Employee works remotely; work that must be completed onsite should be scheduled for safe onsite completion or reassigned.
	Employee is not able to effectively and/or efficiently work remotely; (internet, ergonomics, distractions, etc.) and requests onsite work.	Allow employee to work onsite <b>only</b> after reviewing and ensuring campus safety and necessary onsite work will not be adversely impacted.
3. Some of the work assigned to the employee can be completed remotely and some needs to be completed onsite.	Employee is able to work remotely and onsite.	Supervisor works with employee to schedule work accordingly to be completed partially remote & partially onsite.
	Employee is able to work remotely but not onsite.	Employee works remotely; explore option to reassign onsite work and obtain additional remote work.
	Employee is not able to work remotely but is able to work onsite.	Employee works onsite; explore option to reassign remote work and obtain additional onsite work.
4. Majority of the work assigned to the employee needs to be completed onsite.	Employee is able to work onsite.	Employee works onsite; duties that can be completed remotely should be completed remotely.
	Employee is not able to work onsite.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explore temporary accommodations. <a href="#">Flexible work arrangements</a> <a href="#">Faculty teaching adjustment</a></li> <li>▪ Explore <a href="#">leave options</a> &amp; <a href="#">FFCR Act</a>.</li> </ul>
5. All of the work assigned to the employee needs to be completed onsite.	Employee is able to work onsite.	Employee works onsite.
	Employee is not able to work onsite.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explore temporary accommodations. <a href="#">Flexible work arrangements</a> <a href="#">Faculty teaching adjustment</a></li> <li>▪ Explore <a href="#">leave options</a> &amp; <a href="#">FFCR Act</a>.</li> </ul>

## Guide: Determining What Work Returns Onsite

### ***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 onsite. When not reporting onsite, employees will work remotely. This option helps to reduce the number of employees onsite at a given time.

#### Hybrid Work Schedules

A work schedule in which the employee completes part of their work onsite 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.

## Guide: Determining What Work Returns Onsite

### **Additional Support**

For additional information or specific questions regarding the document feel free to contact:

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