

Peabody College  
Alternative Work Policy – College-Funded Staff  
Approved July 15, 2021  
Effective August 16, 2021

Purpose

Peabody College confirms its commitment to assisting employees in developing a work-life balance by supporting the use of alternative work arrangements when reasonable and practical and where operational needs and job responsibilities will not be adversely affected. Peabody affirms its purpose as an in-person learning environment and is committed to serving its students and other constituents in the best way possible, which often means with face-to-face interactions.

Peabody College permits the use of an alternative work arrangement when such arrangements are pre-approved, assist in meeting full operational needs and/or job requirements, and continue to maintain and contribute to a high level of service for the College and university constituents.

Eligibility

Any regular, college-funded, (not external grant funded) full-time staff employee (non-exempt and exempt) may submit a request for an alternative work arrangement to their supervisor. To be considered for an alternative work arrangement, an employee should be meeting workplace expectations and not currently be under any disciplinary action. In general, an employee who applies for an alternative work arrangement should have a record of demonstrating strong communication skills, and an ability to perform work independently, and accomplish tasks as assigned in a timely manner.

Based on job/position responsibilities, not all positions are eligible for an alternative work arrangement.

Policy and Procedures

This policy is for all college paid staff members. Work expectations for externally funded positions are at the discretion of the principal investigator and funder requirements.

Requests for alternative work arrangements must be made in writing using the Peabody Alternative Work Arrangement Request Form. A sequential series of approvals is required from the supervisor and the department chair/program director.

When a staff member, their supervisor, and the department chair/program director all agree that the proposed flexible work arrangement is appropriate, the request form will be forwarded to the dean for approval. All proposals from a work unit/department should be submitted at the same time or in batches at reasonable intervals (in order to avoid many one-off requests coming at random times) for the fall semester by July 15, for the spring semester by December 1, and for summer by April 15<sup>1</sup>. Terms and schedules of alternative work arrangements may be altered based on the needs of the unit or department as workflow changes, at the discretion of the department chair and/or supervisor, and if alternative work arrangements of other employees change or if employees leave or join the unit.

As an in-person learning environment, Peabody has determined that to best serve Peabody constituents, on-site staff presence with sufficient coverage and face-to-face interactions are required

during the standard work week of Monday through Friday. Supervisors, program directors, and/or department chairs will need to establish what best suits the needs of their units to maintain proper coverage and service; however, in-person coverage during normal working hours is required.

Alternative work arrangements are not an entitlement, nor are they classified as a university benefit. Alternative work arrangements do not change the at-will nature of employment with the University and can be altered or terminated by the School or University at any time. Supervisors and department chairs may restrict or adjust alternative work arrangements as workflow or other conditions require. Within any of the alternative work arrangements, non-exempt employees as defined in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) are still subject to all requirements of the FLSA, and the department must provide appropriate supervision to the employee, including verification of hours worked and work performed, in order to properly attest time cards submitted. Employees who are exempt under the FLSA are expected to work the number of hours required to fulfill their occupational responsibilities.

There are two types of alternative work arrangements: Flex Time and Telecommuting.

### **Flex Time**

Flex time allows an eligible, college-funded, full-time exempt or non-exempt staff member to work hours that may differ from others in the unit or College. The staff member should work with their supervisor and department chair to determine what the workday starting and ending times will be to ensure sufficient coverage and interactions for the work unit or team. Flex time requires that an employee work the core hours identified by the department. For non-exempt employees, it must include a bona fide meal period for any day in which they are scheduled to work six (6) hours or more. Any non-exempt employee's flexible work schedule should not exceed 40 hours for any work week (without prior approval), and any time worked over 40 hours within a week is paid at the overtime rate whether preapproved or not (consistent with the VU Hours of Work policy).

### **Telecommuting**

Telecommuting allows an eligible exempt or non-exempt employee to work from an alternative work location, such as their home, **for up to two and one half days** of the regular work week, or a total of up to 20 hours) maximum in a week. Telecommuting can also be used for portions of days when the employee will also work on campus (e.g., work from home 8:00-10:00, travel to campus, work on campus the remainder of the workday). Travel time between the alternative location and campus, in either direction, will not be counted as part of the workday, and travel between the alternative location and campus is not reimbursable. Telecommuting is not a substitute for child/elder care, and an employee must document that necessary care remains in place while they are working remotely.

Telecommuting may be appropriate for some employees in some positions when the job requirements, employee, and supervisory structures are best suited to such an arrangement. Job performance must not be negatively impacted by working in a remote location. The telecommuting employee must be able to complete all aspects of their job from a remote location with equal or greater efficiency and effectiveness as when working on campus. Except in exceptional circumstances (which must be approved by the dean), the employee must work either Monday or Friday on campus in order to fairly distribute the work of the unit and ensure activities and services can be fully provided on all days of the week. The employee also must be willing to adjust their telecommuting schedule as needed, for example, being present on campus at the office/department, when necessary, to attend meetings,

training sessions, cover for an absent employee, or similar events or occurrences. All requirements, procedures, and expectations for technology use must be discussed and agreed upon in advance of a telecommuting arrangement and must be consistent with VUIT guidance on telecommuting. This includes potential use of transportable laptops, file access, storage, and sharing. The cost of internet services or other required technologies, supplies, and equipment that are not supplied by VU for remote work are the employee's responsibility.

## **STEPS FOR REQUESTING AN ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENT**

An **employee** who desires an alternative work arrangement should:

1. Speak with their supervisor /and or department chair about expectations, schedules, and responsibilities.
2. Complete the Alternative Work Arrangement Request Form and submit it to their supervisor.

A **supervisor/program director** should:

1. Consider the request in consort with other requests in the work unit to be sure there will be in-person coverage during normal business hours and that requests are handled equitably.
2. If approved, forward the approved request to the department chair for consideration.

A **department chair** should:

1. Consider the request in consort with other requests in the work unit and department to be sure there will be in-person coverage during normal business hours and requests are handled equitably.
2. If approved, forward the approved request to the dean.
3. Make necessary space allocations within the department, which may include hoteling or shared space for those working remotely.

The dean will have final approval of all arrangements.

If approved, the alternative work arrangement will begin with a 90-day trial period and can be discontinued at any time during or after that period at the discretion of the employee's supervisor if the arrangement does not meet the operational needs of the department/program and/or the employee does not comply with the arrangement or meet performance expectations. The employee will be given a one week notice that the arrangement is being discontinued. An employee can discontinue the agreement and return to full-time, on-campus work at any time, with a minimum one-week notice.

At the conclusion of the trial period, the employee and their supervisor will evaluate the arrangement and determine whether it should be continued, modified, or terminated.

All alternative work arrangements will be reviewed quarterly by the dean's office with input from the department chair/program director.

This policy can be discontinued at any time at the discretion of the dean and/or university leadership.

Peabody College adheres to Vanderbilt's established employment policies including the Remote and Hybrid Work Policy for Staff. In cases where College guidelines differ from university policy, it is expected that the more restrictive policy take precedence.

<sup>1</sup>For fall 2021 the submission date is August 2 with alternative work beginning not before August 16.