# COVID-19 Work Guidelines

The purpose of the following guidelines is to promote OUE staff and faculty wellbeing while maintaining continuous focus on students as our top priority.

The Office of Undergraduate Education leverages flexibilities provided by the Georgia Tech [Flexwork Arrangements Policy](https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/employment/flexwork-arrangements) and further guidance of GTHR to support a positive and productive workplace that optimizes a high level of service to our students and other stakeholders in the context of our residentially-focused undergraduate experience.

This document does not supersede established Georgia Tech policies regarding [hours of work](https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/employment/hours-work), [time away from work](https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/employment/time-away-work), or related policies and may be changed or modified as experience or new Institutional guidelines provide. For the purposes of this document “staff” refers to OUE professional staff or faculty regardless of full-time or part-time status or other classifications. These guidelines do not apply to student employees.

# OUE Guiding Principles:

OUE’s workplace culture is guided by the following principles:

**We pursue excellence in our services and programs – with students as our top priority.** OUE work agreements and schedules prioritize serving our undergraduate student population, which is primarily residential. Georgia Tech students value their in-person college experience that leverages our beautiful, high-tech campus. Flexible work agreements should have a net-neutral or net-positive effect on student and stakeholder satisfaction, service delivery and unit operations, staff performance, team dynamics, and overall student outcomes.

# We leverage flexibility to achieve our best work.

We acknowledge that our work can successfully be achieved with flexibility.

# We foster a culture of inclusiveness and well-being.

We strive to build a healthy and vibrant workplace and are focuses on the well- being of our community.

# We will be equitable.

When a staff member and unit leadership agree on adjusted work schedules and/or mode of work, the impact on the team and the unit collectively must be fully considered. Expectations should be clear, and the evaluation of performance must remain objective, transparent, and consistent. It is important to note that “equity” does not necessarily mean “equal.”

# We optimize our resources.

We utilize time, budget, and other resources for maximum impact. Flexible work agreements should expand our service delivery, maximize our physical space, and enhance our overall collaboration.

# We prioritize the health and safety of our staff and the students we serve.

We acknowledge that the pandemic is not over and that OUE operations will support staff and student well-being within the Institute’s guidelines and policies.

# We value collaboration and connection.

We strive to be a workplace that values people, relationships, and community. Our diverse community benefits when people come together and connect. We believe that this connection and collaboration can be supported both virtually as well as in-person.

# OUE Flexible Work Guidelines

The following guidelines will inform our planning for OUE operations. These guidelines may be changed or modified as new guidance is received from the Institute or as conditions evolve.

* OUE Staff will continue to have access to flexible working arrangements in alignment with [GTHR policies](https://hr.gatech.edu/understanding-flexwork-arrangements). Within OUE, staff will have the option of up to 16 hours per week or 40% of a typical work week performed remotely if desired. This option will apply to both new hires (pending initial on-site training requirement and other supervisor onboarding planning) and existing staff and, with limited exceptions, will not be dependent upon staff performance evaluations. Staff who choose not to work remotely will not be obligated to work from home.
* Units should explore flexible scheduling to better meet student and staff needs, though they are not required to. Such scheduling could include split schedules (e.g., a staff member may work 7-11am and 2-6pm); delayed start (e.g., a staff member may work 10am-7pm); early start times (e.g., 7am-4pm); reduced 30 min lunch hours, etc. Unit leadership should consider the staff member’s ability to serve students most effectively and to complete their job responsibilities as well as the staff member’s well-being in making these decisions. These decisions are made at the unit leadership level and do not require approval of OVPUE. This will apply to both new and existing staff and will, with limited exceptions, not be dependent upon staff performance evaluations.
* Working at Tech Arrangements should be completed online and submitted through the main [Working @ Tech Arrangement](https://hr.gatech.edu/working-tech-arrangement) website. Arrangements will be reviewed on an annual basis with updates as needed by August 1 for the coming year (Fall semester). These agreements should be discussed semesterly between managers and direct reports and agreed to by the unit leadership (if that is not the manager). Any changes to these agreements must be properly documented throughout the year as needed. Employees new to OUE are expected to submit their arrangement at the start of their employment as part of their onboarding process. All employees who are following a flex-work schedule must have this paperwork on file**.**
* Units should develop central processes to ensure work schedules are clearly understood and communicated to unit staff. Operations plans should be submitted to OVPUE through the Assistant Director of Administrative Operations.
* OUE staff, regardless of working arrangements, are expected to maintain current knowledge and training on Georgia Tech virtual communication tools including approved tools for email, video conferencing, file sharing, chat, and other communications tools. Staff should use only approved technologies while at work and follow all data and information security policies. If staff are unfamiliar with certain technologies on campus, mangers should direct them to OVPUE or to [campus resources](https://linkedinlearning.gatech.edu/) for learning opportunities.

# Additional Considerations & Exceptions

While the guidelines above will apply for most staff members across OUE, additional exceptions may be appropriate under certain circumstances. Exceptions to these guidelines should be discussed by the unit leadership and then reviewed with OVPUE (via the Assistant Director of Administrative Operations) for approval. Equity considerations across similar roles within OUE may need to be discussed.

* OUE leadership will establish common “core” business hours, particularly for all units who have a direct student-facing role. This will not necessarily mean that all programs/services should take place only within these hours but rather when offices should be open for assistance via phone, walk-in, etc.
* For employees who have dotted or dual reporting, additional procedures may be established by the secondary reporting unit. These should still be documented and approved within OUE’s process.
* Due to the nature of their role, staff in certain roles may work with their unit leadership to decide if additional remote work may be appropriate. Staff would first be asked to present a plan to their manager and/or director outlining their request for remote work and describing how remote work would result in the same or improved ability to complete their assigned

tasks. Following support and approval by the unit director, the director would then send the outlined proposal to the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education for approval. Requests should be sent to OVPUE via the Assistant Director of Administrative Operations. Staff who do not work at least three days/24 hours per week may not have a permanently assigned office. They may be assigned “hoteling” space or shared office spaces. Proposed solutions for appropriate workspace arrangements should be included in the request to OVPUE.

* For employees new to OUE who begin their position on or after January 1, 2022, unit leadership *may* require additional time in the office for onboarding and orientation activities. Flex work arrangements for new hires should be clearly communicated to the individual during the hiring process. After the successful completion of the onboarding period, which should generally not exceed six months from the start date of employment, employees should fall under a consistent model for the unit.
* Unit leadership may need to modify flexible work schedules as it relates to their operations. This may involve allowing for increases in flexible arrangements during times with limited on-campus student presence, including semester and holiday breaks, or to meet staff needs under special circumstances. Reasonable campus operations must be maintained at these times to support any on-campus operations needs as offices will remain open. Conversely, at peak times during the semester unit leadership may reduce remote working options as needed to meet student needs on campus. If business needs require a staff member to come to campus during a designated remote day, the staff member does not have the ability to “bank” or save remote days for future use. As these times are often (though not always) predictable, Directors should, as much as possible, communicate these times to staff with reasonable notice.
* While OUE aims for equity of working experiences whether staff are remote or on-campus, there will be times that staff events will be held either all virtually or all in-person. Staff should be made aware of these dates and expectations as soon as possible to allow for planning. These community-building activities may include OUE Town Hall events, unit planning activities, retreats, or other events.

# Considerations for Flexible Working Arrangements

The following are additional criteria that should be considered in relation to these guidelines.

**Assessing Student Need and Quality of Services and Programs:** It is imperative as we make adaptations and navigate the future of work that we assess and evaluate if we are meeting students’ needs and providing effective and high-quality programs, regardless of delivery method. As such, it will be important for units to track remote and in-person appointments to better understand and document student demand.

**Team Communication:** All units should develop internal processes for communicating schedules and schedule changes throughout the unit. Units should establish procedures for calendar sharing (or set up common calendars) to manage out-of-office or related procedures. For some units, it may be necessary or beneficial to coordinate procedures and schedules with those sharing building space, resources, or staff. All staff should be comfortable using Institute tools for electronic communications including emails, chat, file-sharing, etc.

**Creating Effective Meetings:** All OUE committee work will be offered in hybrid or remote formats to meet the needs of in-person and remote staff. We believe these formats will promote attendance, support creative use of technologies, and foster more inclusive committee work. Unit leadership may decide that it is important to have a day per week or as needed where all staff are on-campus to help with coordination of staff meetings. Unit leadership may also consider setting times of day where all staff are available either online or on-campus to help with ease of scheduling across staggered hours. These decisions on scheduling are to be determined by unit leadership.

**Unit and Division Culture:** Navigating a flexible working environment does not come without its challenges to unit culture. Units may decide that it is important for all staff to report to campus on a particular day if they feel this would be beneficial for staff relationships. Unit leadership may also consider community-building activities that can take place in-person either on- or off-site throughout the year. OUE will also provide a mixture of in-person, remote, and hybrid opportunities for professional development and community building, and administrators will create opportunities for feedback to support staff in all working environments.

**Hotel/Co-Working Spaces:** With flexible working arrangements including telework and flexible scheduling, units should consider the need for hoteling or co-working spaces. Unit leadership should consider what additional technology needs may be necessary for these spaces. There may be options to work in a shared workstation in OVPUE if there are no options available within the staff member’s home unit. Use of this space will be scheduled though the OVPUE Administrative Professional.

# Considerations Regarding Working Arrangements and Covid-19

OUE acknowledges that, while conditions appear to be improving, the pandemic is not over, and many staff have reasonable questions and concerns about returning to the office. While we hope the “Future of Work” guidelines laid out in this document will be applicable well beyond 2021, we also understand that there are additional considerations that need to be examined due to Covid-19.

**Signage:** Signage for unit operations should follow [guidance](https://comm.gatech.edu/moving-tech-forward/identity) put forth by Institute Communications. Any questions or concerns regarding signage should be directed to the OUE Communications Manager for clarification.

**Covid-Related Guidance:** Georgia Tech’s COVID policies, procedures, and guidance for staff, faculty, and students are available at the “[Stamps Health Services](https://health.gatech.edu/tech-moving-forward)” website, and this site should be consulted as needed. It is important to note that at this time staff cannot require others to wear a mask or inquire about a student’s or staff member’s vaccination status.

**Cleaning Supplies:** OUE units should continue to place orders as needed for any cleaning supplies including masks and hand sanitizers using the [Institute process.](https://www.ehs.gatech.edu/covid-19/request) Other supplies not provided by GT will be considered by request.

# Acknowledgement: OUE Future of Work Working Group Membership

OUE would like to acknowledge and thank the committee that assisted in developing these guidelines.

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* Jamie White-Jones, Administrative Professional Senior, Serve-Learn-Sustain, Co-Chair
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* Criss Miller, Sr. Program Manager, Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
* Stephanie Reikes, Math Learning Specialist, Tutoring & Academic Support\*
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*(\*no longer with OUE)*

# GT Resources/References

GT Special Events: <https://specialevents.gatech.edu/>

GT Working at Tech Arrangement: <https://hr.gatech.edu/working-tech-arrangement>

Stamps Health Services <https://health.gatech.edu/tech-moving-forward>

GT Parking & Transportation: <https://pts.gatech.edu/permits-payment>

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