

# DYNAMIC WORKING POLICY



This document sets out the University's policy governing dynamic working.

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<b>Consultation Process</b>	Joint Union Consultative Committee
<b>Date of Approval and Committee and/or Executive Officer</b>	Joint Union Consultative Committee

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# 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This procedure has been agreed by the Joint Unions Consultative Committee in consultation with the University.

This Policy applies to all university staff.

In this Policy:

- "Dynamic working" means a range of ways of working including on campus, from other locations and a mixture of these locations and in ways which are most appropriate to the task

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Create a dynamic working approach is designed to be mutually beneficial to the individual and the University.
- Provide a framework for enabling work to be carried out in the most appropriate location, whether on campus, off campus or a mixture of locations.
- Provide staff and managers with guidance on dynamic working which meets the rapidly changing needs of stakeholders e.g. to provide online teaching, campus services and flexible support to students and staff.
- Balance the needs of staff to have work arrangements which fit with other aspects of their life within the boundaries of their contractual working hours e.g. caring responsibilities, environmental concerns, work/life balance, disability, religious observance (see also the University's separate policies covering parental and associated leave).
- Reflecting the diversity of work and work location, including colleagues who work across international borders, to recognise and plan around global issues impacting international mobility of stakeholders, students and staff.

## 1.1 What is dynamic working?

Dynamic working is working in a flexible and agile way so that people can carry out work in the most effective way and in the space and location most suited to the task. A dynamic working approach is mutually beneficial to the individual and the University.

Dynamic working as an approach will involve more of a change of approach to some individuals than others. Academic staff have broadly worked in this way for many years. Applying dynamic working across the University opens up more flexibility for other staff groups.

In line with the principle that work should be carried out where and how it is most effectively done, there will continue to be tasks and responsibilities for which on-campus presence continues to be the way the majority of the work is done. College and Department management will consider activities before determining which duties and/or roles need to be delivered on-campus versus those where there is flexibility in the location or method of delivery. The University will continue to expect staff to be present on campus to interact with students, colleagues and others as needed. However, the ability to work in a more flexible way than has historically been the case may benefit students and stakeholders as well as staff themselves.

## 1.2 What are the benefits of dynamic working?

Most staff are able to work offsite to some extent, including those responsible for delivering teaching and student support to meet the changing needs of students. The benefits to our key beneficiaries of working in this way are:

- Ability to provide flexible delivery to match demand from a diverse and international student population.

- Working in cross-departmental groups to address issues which span teams, and helping to break down silo working.
- Making the most efficient use of space and facilities by matching the activity to its use and focusing University's resources and spend accordingly e.g. on building digital capability.
- Supporting staff wellbeing by enabling the maintenance of a better balance between work and other life priorities.

### 1.3 What is the University's position on dynamic working?

The University aims to become an increasingly responsive, efficient and effective organisation which continually improves the quality of services provided to its beneficiaries i.e. i) students; ii) business and the professions; and iii) the region and society. The benefits to its staff will ensure Aston remains an attractive employer with innovative and empowering work practices.

The University recognises the following factors which make the case for adopting dynamic working at Aston:

- **Staff need:** as an employer, Aston is committed to the wellbeing of its people. Dynamic working offers the benefits of greater flexibility in how work is delivered for the vast majority of staff. This is a significant positive factor in attracting new staff to work for us.
- **Beneficiary need:** Aston is facing greater competition and increasing expectations in particular for prospective students and the University must continue to embed a high performance culture and make better use of systems and facilities.
- **Cost and efficiency:** the typical office environment at Aston is currently relatively expensive and under-utilised.
- **Technology:** greater adoption of modern software and devices will enable individuals and teams to communicate and collaborate more effectively and efficiently without being independent of proximity or location.
- **Sustainability:** reducing the number of employees who travel to a fixed point of work every day will contribute towards reducing Aston's carbon footprint.

There are some roles and tasks for which on-campus presence is essential. For instance: induction of new students; induction of new staff; some student tutorial sessions; some teaching and learning delivery; delivery of laboratory and workshop teaching, supervision and assessment with students; research work in laboratories and workshops where the work requires the use of specialist equipment and/or safety measures; welfare meetings for either staff or students; security patrolling; provision of nursery childcare; catering provision to staff and students. In these cases and others, while the majority of the role may continue to be carried out from a set location, there may be aspects of the role which could be carried out in a more flexible way.

Where roles involve accessing and processing confidential and sensitive data, the place in which this work is carried out must still ensure compliance with the University's GDPR requirements. Managers should ensure that staff have the appropriate work environment such as privacy screens, access to confidential meeting and private work spaces, storage facilities, training and awareness. Staff themselves should ensure that whether working on or off campus, this confidential information cannot be seen in public spaces either on a screen or via written/printed documents. The use of wifi access points off-campus must be in line with the University's IT systems, in particular the requirement not to use unsecured network access to exchange sensitive data e.g. in most public cafes.

## 2. OPERATING DYNAMIC WORKING:

### 2.1 Personas

In order to understand the context for particular roles, all University roles will be defined as one of three personas. Personas will typically be set for roles or groups of roles by a manager. The determination of the relevant persona and the extent of the flexibility available will be agreed via discussion between a manager and individuals. The discussion will cover the types of activity which they would expect to be carried out on campus (and off). The three personas:

#### a) Flexible/Hybrid worker

This persona is expected to cover the majority of University roles. This is a job profile which requires flexibility in where and how the duties are carried out including on campus in a variety of locations. The way that work is carried out is dependent on the activity e.g. creative ideas discussed among a group will be most effectively carried out within a space enabled to do so. Focused planning time or writing of documentation, policies etc. are activities for which dedicated time away from campus distractions is well suited.

The vast majority of professional services, teaching roles and research roles will fall into this category since there will be some activities which require physical presence e.g. delivery of lectures and tutorials, carrying out workshop or laboratory based research, collaborative team or project meetings. The role will usually also require an element of travel and offsite working e.g. write up of research, writing guidance or policy documents, travel to conferences/seminars or meetings with other organisations, marking, assessment, planning. Individuals will need to be available to attend on campus for work or meetings and so are expected to be fully contactable during contractual hours and willing and available to do so.

There may be some individuals who work fully or wholly on campus for reasons that are not linked to the work itself e.g. due to lack of space to work at home, interruptions from family members, the mental health benefits of social interaction with work colleagues etc. A dynamic working approach allows for this as it should be mutually beneficial to the individual and the University.

#### b) Offsite/remote worker

A very small number of individuals will be contracted to work fully off-campus. These arrangements are likely to occur where an individual is recruited to deliver exclusively online programmes or to conduct research in other countries, regions or businesses.

#### c) Campus worker

A role based entirely or almost entirely on campus whether from a fixed office or variety of locations on campus. Campus workers are defined by the purpose of the role e.g. to provide a face to face service to students or staff or where the role maintains campus facilities and buildings.

### 2.2 Manager expectations

Dynamic working requires a management style which is adapted to achieving outcomes and outputs in a way which may be partly "out of sight". It requires:

- strong communication of role expectations, priorities and deliverables by a manager to their team at induction and on an ongoing basis. Managers need to ensure that expectations are deliverable within the contracted hours of the employee;
- regular one to one conversations with staff to provide guidance, support and to ensure workload demands are achievable;

- team members understanding the overall University's mission, direction and priorities. These need to be communicated regularly with updates passed on rapidly to managers and their team members;
- managers trusting and empowering team members to deliver their work commitments and raise any issues which might prevent them from doing so;
- provision of training, guidance and relevant resources, particularly IT resources, to their team members on working more dynamically;
- in the short term, ensuring that they maintain regular one to one and team communications e.g. via virtual team meetings, phone calls as well as on-site meetings; and
- the encouragement to use areas of campus for more creative collaboration e.g. by giving permission for team members to join those in other departments to input their knowledge and experience to address a particular challenge.

### 2.3 Staff expectations

The ability to work more flexibly and in a dynamic way relies on members of staff:

- maintaining the self-discipline to deliver the work needed while having the flexibility to handle other life commitments around it as far as possible;
- understanding that there will be a time and specific duties when attendance on campus is required and they must ensure they do attend as needed;
- engaging with and delivering the priorities and outputs agreed as part of MDC and as a result of regular conversations with their manager;
- setting boundaries which mean that they are able to switch off from work without work overtaking rest time;
- communicating with managers and colleagues so that they are available to speak and/or meet with as needed. Ensuring that they are available for regular conversations with their manager. Alerting managers where there are barriers or other needs e.g. health, caring responsibilities, which mean they are unable to carry out their full duties;
- ensuring that working offsite is carried out in a way which continues to uphold the University's policies and procedures, particularly around keeping data confidential and secure; and
- individuals having the appropriate space and work station set-up when they are working off-campus, ensuring arrangements meet health and safety requirements. The University will provide IT equipment to enable staff to work flexibly. Where this is not achievable, work on campus will be required.

Where working will include working overseas, staff must ensure that they discuss this with their manager in advance of making these arrangements. International travel requests must be made by staff to their manager via the portal prior to making international travel arrangements. Working for Aston from another country can create tax and social security liabilities for both the University and the individual as well as visa issues for those who have limited work permissions. Requiring an employee to work from home (rather than simply permitting it) in the UK also has tax implications. Further advice and assessment will be needed in these circumstances. Please seek advice from HR if this applies.

### 2.4 Formal Flexible Working Requests

In some instances, employees may need to agree a set pattern of work in order to plan around other aspects of their life in a more definite way than a general dynamic working approach allows. The University supports and encourages the consideration of formal flexible working applications from staff for reasons beyond those set out in law. This formal application process will be particularly relevant to those in campus based roles but equally could apply to individuals who have regular non-work commitments which would lead to periods of time when they would be unavailable and not contactable for work, even remotely. In these circumstances, a formal request for flexible working should be made via the Flexible Working Application Procedure.



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