

Guiding principles to support work-life balance

In the context of COVID-19 and public health measures implemented by host countries, many UN personnel across the world continue to work remotely, and this may continue for a prolonged period. Many colleagues are balancing work with increased private responsibilities like caring for children or the elderly at home. Others are facing additional stress due to concerns for their health and their loved ones, from whom they may have been separated for months. In light of these conditions, it is essential that all managers continue to exercise maximum flexibility to support their colleagues' well-being, mental health and work-life balance.

The core working hours requirement has been lifted for duty stations with alternate working arrangements in place - to provide maximum flexibility for work schedules and to accommodate individual needs. To further support personnel in balancing their personal and professional lives, managers are invited to consider the following guiding principles:

- Avoid scheduling meetings outside of official office hours;
- Avoid scheduling meetings during lunch hours;
- Avoid scheduling meetings on the afternoon of the last day of the working week;
- Avoid sending work-related communications requiring immediate action (unless extremely urgent) during the weekends;
- Favourably consider requests by team members to avail of options in the Organization's policy on flexible working arrangements, including compressed work schedule (see sections 3.2 and 3.3 of ST/SGB/2019/3). This option, which may be combined with alternative working arrangements or telecommuting, allows taking a half-day off every week or a full day off every other week, provided the overall weekly hours are completed on the other working days.

These guiding principles are meant to give UN personnel the opportunity to disconnect and take care of themselves and their loved ones at a time when the boundaries between professional and private time can be difficult to enforce.

Notwithstanding the above, managers and their team members may jointly agree to schedule meetings as suits them best, for example to accommodate constraints at home or colleagues in different time zones.

Staff should ensure that telecommuting days and any other FWA option, as applicable are entered into Umoja. Staff should select the new "Telecommuting-COVID-19" type from the drop-down menu for recording their telecommuting on a weekly basis for the days worked.