

GUIDE TO MANAGING EMPLOYEES: ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENT



UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
HUMAN RESOURCES

PURPOSE & **OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of this guide is to help leaders effectively manage employees with an alternative work arrangement. This guide will assist managers in consistently managing employees regardless of their alternative work arrangement status.

In this guide, we will discuss the basics of how to manage employees in a alternative work environment, the importance of creating expectations, best practices for communication, and managing expectations for your team. We will also address how to handle the progressive discipline process when necessary.

Lastly, we have included a series of Frequently Asked Questions to help address specific situations and challenges that leaders may experience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Basics for Managing an Alternative Work Arrangement... | 3-4 |
| Creating Expectations..... | 5 |
| Communicating Expectations..... | 6 |
| When an Employee Fails to Meet Expectations..... | 7 |
| Frequently Asked Questions..... | 8-9 |

BASICS FOR

MANAGING AN ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENT



COMMUNICATION IS KEY!

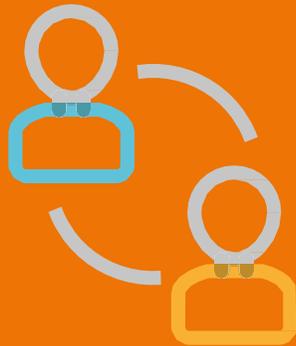
Communication is key to influencing others, creating powerful teams, and relationships to achieve successful outcomes. To help ensure successful outcomes:

- Plan for more conference calls
- Keep the lines of communication open
- Utilize emails or video calls to state your expectations

STRUCTURED DAILY CHECK-INS

Increasing communication during an alternative work arrangement is highly recommended. Daily check-ins provide employees with an opportunity to communicate with their leaders and ask questions they may have. Check-ins can be:

- Team based or one-on-one (based on the nature of the work)
- By phone or video call (video is highly recommended to maximize communication and engagement)



SET RULES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Ensure employees know how to engage with you and each other:

- Set expectations for team communication
 - Include frequency, method, and timing
 - Example: " We will use videoconferencing for daily check-ins, but use IM when something is urgent."
- Explain how your team can best contact you during the workday
- Include expectations for communication among team members to ensure that they are sharing information

TRUST YOUR TEAM

Trust your employees to act independently, responsibly, and professionally. Micromanaging will make your team feel like you don't trust them, which can have negative effects on employee engagement, morale, and performance. Agree on specific, measurable goals that should be completed every week and remember to focus on productivity (see Productivity Mindset, pg 3).



ALWAYS OFFER ENCOURAGEMENT & SUPPORT

ACKNOWLEDGE

Acknowledge questions employees may have. Ask for clarification to elicit important information that you might not otherwise hear.



LISTEN

Listen to employees. Restate employee response(s) back to them to demonstrate that you hear and understand them.



SUPPORT

Encourage collaboration and follow through. Discuss how employees can provide each other support to complete team tasks and provide feedback as needed.



PRODUCTIVITY MINDSET

It is imperative that you help employees maintain a productivity mindset. Continue to hold employees accountable and manage productivity by creating expectations and maintaining open lines of communications.

- ◆ Have commitment to your division's strategic plan.
- ◆ Focus on goals and results.
- ◆ Manage productivity by creating expectations and maintaining open lines of communication to ensure expectations are being met.
- ◆ Hold employees accountable to what you expect.



CREATING EXPECTATIONS

Why is it important to set expectations for your team?

It is not possible for an employee to succeed if you are not clear about your expectations. How can you measure your employee's performance unless clear goals have been established? Managing employees with an alternative work arrangement can make this process more difficult because you can't see what they are doing daily. However, managers have the ability to ensure success for employees by being specific when determining what they need from their employees both individually and as a team.

When creating expectations, managers should be sure to include:



TASKS & PROJECTS

Provide details and relevant information on the task or project to be completed.



RESPONSE TIMES

Set deadlines. "As soon as possible" is subjective so be specific about when you need the assignment completed.



WORKING HOURS

Employees have specific working hours that are approved. It is important to have discussions regarding commitment to those hours and how to request occasional exceptions.



WORKING LOCATION

The alternate work location must be in Texas and reasonably close to campus so if needed, the employee can be present physically.



COMMUNICATION

Make it clear how often you expect employees to communicate with you. Be specific about how they should communicate and how quickly you expect them to return phone calls and emails.



BALANCE

Evaluate tasks and priorities. Make adjustments when necessary and be willing to listen to employee feedback to make modifications when applicable.



COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS

Employees need to have clear, effective communication regarding the detail of what is expected. There are several ways to ensure employees know what you need and expect from them.

1. **"Live" face-time opportunities:** (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, etc.) These platforms give employees the opportunity to communicate with managers face-to-face and ask questions and obtain clarity, if needed.

2. **Phone:** Phone calls also give employees the opportunity to actually hear what is being said and have a dialogue with managers to ask questions or obtain clarity, if needed.

3. **Email:** When communicating expectations through email, it should always be followed up by an opportunity for the manager and employee to have a verbal conversation for clarity.

4. **Letter of Expectations:** Managers should consider using the [Letter of Expectations](#) document to gain the employee's agreement to the expectations that have been set and hold the employee accountable.



WHEN AN EMPLOYEE FAILS TO MEET EXPECTATIONS

Managers are expected to continue to hold employees accountable for meeting expectations. When an employee fails to meet expectations, leaders are encouraged to follow the steps below, as per university policy [MAPP 02.04.03](#)

IDENTIFY EMPLOYMENT STATUS

(Probationary vs. Non-Probationary Employee)

Exempt Employees (monthly): 12 month probationary period

Non-Exempt Employees (hourly): 6 month probationary period

**At any time during a probationary period, an employee may be dismissed with or without cause, without application of the discipline and dismissal procedures, except that any such dismissal may not be based on illegal discrimination or retaliation*

** Employees are subject to only informal disciplinary actions during the probationary period. Employees who have completed the probationary period are subject to both informal and formal actions.*

INFORMAL ACTIONS

An informal action is a conference between the employee and their supervisor and is documented with the [Informal Employee Conference Record](#) document.

Informal actions may also include:

- ◆ Coaching and feedback given via email or one-on-one meetings
- ◆ Re-training
- ◆ Job shadowing with team members
- ◆ Re-establish expectations of the job expectations

FORMAL ACTIONS

All formal actions are documented with [Formal Employee Conference Record](#) approved by Human Resources before being administered to the employee.

Formal actions include the following steps:

- ◆ Written Reprimand
- ◆ Final Written Reprimand/Suspension
- ◆ Termination

**Typically, all steps will be followed sequentially. However, depending on the severity of situation, some steps may be escalated when necessary.*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I manage my staff effectively during an alternative workplace arrangement?

The key is to set clear expectations for productivity and communicate often with employees. It is important to have consistent check-ins, demonstrate trust in your team, and avoid micromanaging. It is also recommended to encourage team support and collaboration.

Are employees required to take a lunch break during an alternative work arrangement?

The policies related to lunch breaks are still applicable. As per policy, [MAPP 02.04.02](#) Hours of Work, each full-time employee is provided a meal break near the middle of the work day. The time for meal breaks may be scheduled by management in the department with appropriate regard for workload. The meal period should not exceed 60 minutes. However, meal breaks of different lengths may be approved where departmental work schedules require it and daily schedules are adjusted accordingly. Employees are not paid for meal breaks.

Can I contact my employees outside the work hours with or without an alternative work arrangement?

Managers are encouraged to be mindful of their employees' work-life balance and regular work schedules. Contacting employees outside of normal work hours may be compensable time, specifically for non-exempt (hourly) employees, under the Federal Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Prior to contacting employees, it is best to determine if it is truly necessary on a case by case basis and recommended not to make it a standard practice without assessing the need.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can I follow up on performance challenges with my employees?

Supervisors are encouraged to have communications with the employee regarding the challenges and collaborate with the employee on how to overcome such challenges. This may include establishing short-term goals and setting up follow up dates to ensure the staff member has met the expectations of those goals.

I have previously been managing performance issues with my employee. What can I do if the employee has an alternative work arrangement?

You are encouraged to manage employees by following the progressive discipline protocols and refer to [MAPP 02.04.03](#) Discipline and Dismissal of Staff Employees which outlines the disciplinary process. You may also consider discontinuing the employee's participation in the alternative work arrangement if appropriate. Please discuss and collaborate with your HR Business Partner to determine what is applicable.

Do I need to document all my conversations with my staff?

While it is not required to document all conversations, it may assist you with managing expectations and performance, including deadlines, projects assigned, etc. If you are discussing performance or discipline issues, it is advisable to document your conversations. A follow up email to the employee including details of the conversation is advised.

For additional resources and information, please visit our website at

<https://www.uh.edu/human-resources/hr-business-partners/>.

For assistance or questions regarding an alternative work arrangement, contact the HRBP team.



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