



# BLENDED WORKING POLICY

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*This policy is subject to review by SMC and potential change in all aspects in a year's time or earlier if necessary, which means that all provisions are granted on a discretionary basis and do not establish an entitlement to staff.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The School supports a blended approach to working, where possible, which gives employees and managers more options over where and when work is undertaken. When done well,

blended working can enhance both service delivery and the employee experience of work. In addition, the development of a blended working culture mutually supports a more progressive approach to work which focuses on outputs. These will vary according to the nature of the role and, in addition to specific deliverables, will include a strong emphasis on collaboration, teamwork and citizenship.

- 1.2. The nature of academia means that the School's academic staff and researchers have significant flexibility in how they work. In professional services divisions, there are many different types of job roles, including those that are office-based (e.g. administrative staff), non-office-based roles (e.g. catering staff) and teaching roles (Eden Centre, Language Centre). Many staff in professional services roles can benefit from a more blended approach in terms of where and when they work. The School operates a standard 9.30am to 5.30pm and 35 hour working week for most full-time professional services roles (exceptions apply to certain staff groups that need to be onsite at different times in the working day or at weekends, such as general assistants and security staff).
- 1.3. To enable the introduction and continued development of an effective culture of blended working, the School will assess the work environment for staff on an ongoing basis, including a focus on the design of workspaces, as well as ensure that the right technologies are in place to enable staff to work in a more blended manner.
- 1.4. In applying this policy to the School's working practices, it is important to clarify the distinction between 'blended' and 'flexible' working.
  - 1.4.1. 'Blended' working refers to the School's generic approach to enabling a working culture which is more responsive to the specific activities of a particular role and work-life balance of staff as well as taking advantage of more efficient technologies and workspace design. In practice, this will enable many staff to combine working on campus with working remotely for a proportion of their working hours. The specific arrangements will be driven by the requirements of the role and may, therefore, change from week-to-week or at different times of the year, for example. As such, whilst blended working supports work-life balance, staff will not have a regular pattern of 'working from home' days and, therefore, need to ensure that domestic arrangements, e.g., childcare, are in place that enable them to attend campus on any given day as required.
  - 1.4.2. 'Flexible' working is an individual working arrangement that is agreed outside of, or in addition to, the Blended Working Policy. It refers to non-standard ('flexible') working arrangements that are pre-arranged and specifically agreed between individual employees and their managers; these include compressed hours, off-set start/finish times, schedule flexibility, part-time working, term-time only working, and/or job sharing. Where an employee wishes to request a move to a flexible arrangement on an ongoing basis, they should submit a request to their manager under the School's [Flexible Working Policy](#). In line with the policy, flexible working requests will be considered in accordance with the needs of the team and wider area, to ensure that service delivery standards can be maintained. Once a flexible working arrangement is agreed, an individual will not be expected to attend work/campus on non-working days or 'working from home' days.
- 1.5 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Homeworking Policy which provides further, more detailed information about the support and expectations in relation to working from home.

## 2. Policy aims

2.1 This policy aims to:

- Set out the School's position regarding blended working
- Set out the resources that the School will make available to support an effective blended working environment
- Set out what is expected of employees and managers to ensure a fair, equitable and safe blended working culture which optimises our efficiency
- Provide guidance to managers about managing staff in a blended working environment
- Clarify the difference between 'blended' and 'flexible' working, as well as how they overlap.

2.2 The School will commit to achieving these aims, with the overall objective of a more strategically flexible and collaborative working environment which enables a greater sharing of skills, a better work-life balance for staff and improved spaces for collaborative and independent working.

2.3. The approach set out in this policy is designed to promote inclusivity for all staff and, in particular, improve accessibility for staff with disabilities. Changes that are made to the working environment will proactively address accessibility requirements and reasonable adjustments will be made on a case-by-case basis based on staff's individual needs both on campus and when working remotely.

## 3. Policy scope

3.1 The blended working principles set out in this policy apply to professional services staff. Staff based in divisions are likely to be those who are mainly impacted, although professional services staff in academic departments, research centres and institutes may equally benefit from blended working. It is acknowledged that some aspects of blended working may be less suited to some roles than others, e.g. remote working may not apply to those that deliver a face-to-face and frontline service. At the same time, a blended approach may also be possible in some traditionally present services provided that appropriate support is in place.

3.2 Managers will be responsible for deciding on the suitability of blended working in connection with specific roles, the responsibilities of the particular area, potential impacts on staff and student experience interacting with the area and following discussions with staff where appropriate.

## 4. Policy principles

4.1 It is acknowledged that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to implementing blended working. Different areas of the School have different requirements, and a blended approach to working can encompass a wide variety of different practices, depending on the needs of individuals and teams as well as on the requirements of their roles and the work of their area. When

considering how the School's approach to blended working applies to a particular work situation, the following principles should be kept in mind:

- The School recognises that an effective culture of blended working can bring significant benefits to both employees and the School, the most notable of which are set out in the benefits of blended working section below.
- At the same time, blended working should not be understood as an automatic 'right' for each individual. Arrangements made at a local level (whether made as part of a flexible working pattern or agreed on a more ad-hoc basis) should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to suit both the employee and the operational requirements. Similarly, no member of staff is required to undertake blended working if they prefer not to and/or do not have the required remote working environment to do so.
- The School will provide specific equipment (as set out below) to enable staff to undertake their roles effectively and will make reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities. In agreeing to work remotely, staff should ensure that they have the appropriate remote working set-up to enable them to work effectively, e.g. efficient WiFi connection, private/quiet space.
- It is anticipated that, in the majority of cases, the costs of working remotely under blended working will be offset by savings elsewhere, e.g. in the cost and time of commuting to and from campus. The School is therefore not responsible for any associated costs that employees accrue when working remotely, e.g. heating costs, WiFi. Employees should discuss with their line manager if they anticipate or experience significant hardship or cost which is related to working remotely, keeping in mind that staff can request to work on campus full-time.
- To create and sustain an effective blended working culture, performance will be assessed by output. Objectives and development needs should be regularly discussed and agreed in line with the existing CDR arrangements, including objective setting through the CDR process. Such outputs should focus on all areas of an employee's role, including those contained in the Effective Behaviours Framework, e.g. collegiality.
- A blended working culture is dependent on effective communication between staff. Employees should ensure that they remain contactable and accessible during working hours when working remotely in line with agreed expectations with their manager and colleagues and by using the 'availability' status tools in accordance with the Etiquette Guidance for Email and Online Collaboration Tools. The type and regularity of contact may vary depending on the nature of the role and the department, e.g. more immediate contact may be required for roles that involve fast-paced discussions and decision-making or a high level of customer service. To maintain transparency, open and frequent forums and channels of communication, including both formal and informal channels, should be used.
- Blended working should enhance, not hinder, collaboration. Team delivery will continue to be an integral part of the School's success and teams will work together, and support each other, to deliver agreed outcomes. Technology will be used to promote connectivity and sense of belonging.
- The campus will continue to be the primary place of work, but work may be carried out remotely or in different locations on campus. Location will be driven by the needs of the activity being carried out and many employees will be able to choose their times and ways of working

according to the needs of their role and in line with the Core Business in Core Hours Policy. While good practice is to agree working arrangements in advance, there may be exceptional circumstances where managers may require staff to attend campus at short notice. Staff should be available to attend campus when necessary and managers should be aware that there might be some circumstances in which this is more difficult and exercise flexibility accordingly. Members of staff will take ownership for the delivery of their objectives – whether specific deliverables or community activities – both at a team and individual level.

- Whilst blended working may not apply to certain roles and activities, due to the need for regular physical attendance on campus, all staff, regardless of role, will be treated fairly and engaged in a positive team culture and campus experience.
- Blended working must be carried out safely and employees will be enabled to take a more active role in their own health, safety and wellbeing.

## 5. The benefits of blended working

5.1 The benefits of a blended working culture at our School include:

- Developing an innovative and forward-thinking, collaborative, work environment, including the use of more advanced technologies as well as the creation and development of work spaces across the School that enhance cross-departmental and collaborative working (e.g. work hubs).
- Maximising the efficiency of the School's desk space (through hot-desking, remote working and similar initiatives) to reduce office accommodation and associated costs. In addition to shared desk space, the School will provide workspaces appropriate to other types of working, such as quiet spaces, phone booths and 'coffee bar' type spaces.
- There are also potential environmental benefits as carbon emissions from more remote working are balanced by reductions in emissions from travel and from using our campus space more efficiently, contributing to the delivery of our carbon reduction targets.
- More motivated staff who feel trusted to manage their own workloads and have greater control over where they work. This can in turn contribute to an environment of mutual trust and support between managers and employees.
- In part as a result of the expected boost to staff motivation, a corresponding improvement in staff retention as well as a positive impact on wellbeing.
- Being seen as a more attractive employer and widening the School's appeal to different types of employee who may not have considered the School in the past, allowing for greater diversity.
- Improving accessibility for staff with disabilities by reducing the requirement to travel into central London.

## 6. Blended working in practice

- 6.1 Managers and employees should discuss how blended working can apply to their service area and individual roles in accordance with the Blended Working Framework for Service Areas. Managers and employees should discuss options and come to an agreement based on: i) business need and ii) personal preference of staff<sup>1</sup>. Ultimately, it will be a management decision regarding the roles to which blended working will apply and in understanding business needs, it will be important to take into account EDI considerations as well the immediate work needs. Blended working options will necessarily be more limited for those that require a physical presence in a particular location, e.g. roles offering a face-to-face and frontline service or requiring particular campus-based technical software. Similarly, there may be other roles which require on- campus presence at specific times of the year which can be carried out remotely at other times.
- 6.2 The feasibility of a particular blended working arrangement is also dependent on appropriate standards being in place including health and safety, information security and agreed expectations concerning communication and performance.
- 6.3 In setting up blended working arrangements, managers and employees should be particularly mindful of equality considerations and ensuring that they do not unintentionally cause a detriment to certain employees.
- 6.4 The Blended Framework for Service Areas sets out further guidance on what blended working looks like in practice. In particular, it includes arrangements for maintaining collaboration and sense of community, such as regularity of onsite presence, team working arrangements and the use of technology to retain connectivity. This can be found [here](#).
- 6.5 The School will also work to share examples of best practice so that staff can learn from positive experiences of blended working.

## 7. Developing a blended working environment

- 7.1 The School will ensure that sufficient resources are available to support a blended working culture. This includes the following:
- **Unallocated desks:** a practice of 'desk-sharing' will apply where employees do not have their own personal desk but are given access to a desk when needed, from which they can set up their laptop and phone systems. Divisions will have their own 'neighbourhoods' and staff will be able to book desks in advance of coming onto campus through a booking system.
  - **Allocated desks:** a number of roles require an employee to have a particular desk assigned to them, and these employees should have access to an allocated desk. Reasonable adjustments will be made for employees with disabilities and considered, wherever possible, for employees with specific health and safety needs; this may include being allocated a preferred desk in a hot-desking environment.
  - **Collaborative spaces:** desks will be in open plan spaces to promote collaboration and where possible, the partitioning of desks and offices will be kept to a minimum. Staff are also

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that no member of staff will be required to work from home/remotely if they choose not to.

encouraged to use offices as meeting rooms to nurture a more collaborative working environment.

- **Work hubs:** a percentage of the total office space across the School's estate can be used for shared "work hubs" – places on campus with IT connectivity where staff can work. These spaces will be open for anyone to book or use and will give opportunities for staff to interact with colleagues from other areas of the School. The design of some hubs will also support meetings.
- **Meeting rooms:** bookable meeting rooms are available across the School campus to complement the other shared workspaces and meet the operational needs of areas of the School. These should additionally be used for confidential discussions that would not be appropriate in an open plan collaborative space.
- **Storage spaces:** sufficient storage space will be provided to staff to ensure that they have the ability to store materials (both electronic and physical) which they require in order to carry out their role and responsibilities. This will include confidential storage where applicable. In addition, staff will have sufficient storage in which to store away necessary personal items during the working day where they do not have access to a specific desk.
- **Cafés<sup>2</sup>:** the School has several cafés and other spaces on campus that are open to both staff and students. These may be used as informal meeting places by staff where mutually agreed and where a discussion will not include confidential or School-sensitive information.
- **Home/Remote working:** staff will be able to work from home for a proportion of the week in accordance with their work-related activity. For a regular home/remote working arrangement, where an individual needs to agree a specific working pattern, this should be agreed under the [Flexible Working Policy](#).
- **Mobile working:** in addition to home/remote working, a blended working culture encourages staff to spend time on campus but not at a desk. The School will enable these types of working by providing staff with access to touch down centres or community hubs around the campus, i.e., dedicated areas where staff can access a phone and either plug in a laptop or connect it wirelessly to access all software and files as though they were in the office. Staff can also check their work email from anywhere using a mobile phone or other hand-held device; staff will be able to connect to back-office systems via these devices to access files and other information.

## 8. Technology support for blended working

8.1 Appropriate technology will be provided to support staff in undertaking blended working. This will include the following standard set-up for shared desks: screen (including docking station), mouse, keyboard and second screen. A laptop and headset will also be provided for working both on campus and remotely.

8.2 In addition, the following technologies are available to enable staff who are working remotely to interact with their colleagues:

- **Video conferencing:** in addition to telephone calls and emails, School employees have access to Microsoft Teams, which allows up to 250 employees to meet through video conferencing.

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<sup>2</sup> Expenses incurred from meeting in a café are not reimbursable by the School.

Video conferencing is particularly useful for enabling individual staff who work remotely to participate in meetings and to collaborate nationally and internationally without the need to travel, reducing our carbon emissions.

- **Web conferencing:** this is a more recent technology which allows all participants to view the same web-based presentation and discuss it simultaneously via instant messages.
- **Presence:** the ability to see when people are busy, in a meeting, or at their desks using the coloured 'presence' dot on their profiles.
- **Instant chat:** Microsoft Teams also allows for two or more users to exchange messages. Messages appear on the user's computer screen and they allow for the sharing of documents at the same time. Users should be aware that messages sent through the chat function are disclosable in the event of a data subject access request in the same way as other forms of written communication.
- **Data encryption and cyber security:** all staff are responsible for taking appropriate precautions when processing, sharing or accessing data remotely. Comprehensive guidance and support can be found on DTS's Cyber Security webpages, including minimum standards for devices, a user awareness course, how best to store and handle data, protect electronic devices, and identify malicious communications (e.g. phishing attempts). All staff (and students) in LSE are required to use Multi-factor Authentication for access to School systems. If they have not already done so, any member of staff in possession of an LSE laptop or other electronic device should complete and submit an audit form to DTS to ensure that the device is properly encrypted, requires a complex password (or biometrics) for access, and is GDPR-compliant.

8.3 All staff should ensure that they have appropriate broadband width to be able to support the above technology and their home/remote working activities; this will not be supported by LSE.

8.4 Disabled staff should discuss with their manager any technological support that is required as a reasonable adjustment to enable them to work safely and effectively both on campus and remotely. Where appropriate, specialist advice may be sought from Occupational Health. Relevant software and equipment will be provided for remote working as a reasonable adjustment or where there is a health and safety need that cannot reasonably be met through alternative measures.

## 9. Managing in a blended work environment

9.1 Most of the key management skills are the same in a blended working culture as in a more static work environment, and managers should continue to manage workloads, supervise, motivate and manage performance in the usual way. At the same time, it is important that there is a common understanding of what is expected in terms of employee-manager interactions when an employee is working in a blended way. A wide range of different working arrangements are possible, provided that all parties are in mutual agreement about how those arrangements will work in practice.

9.2 In line with the principles of this policy, managers should assess the performance of employees who are able to work in a blended way by output. Depending on the nature of the role, employees can be free to plan their own time when working in a blended way, provided that



they meet agreed performance objectives, are still contactable in line with the expectations agreed with their manager and continue to contribute to the LSE community as a whole.

9.3 In particular, the following points apply to managing in a blended work environment. Many of these apply regardless of where or when work is taking place, although at times managers may need to adjust how they interact with employees, for example if the manager is communicating with an employee less often than if they were physically in the office.

- Manager and employee should agree clear performance objectives within defined time periods. Where possible, it may help to consider the employee's workload in terms of defined pieces of work, e.g. writing a report, collaborating on a project group.
- Managers should provide regular feedback on performance, including positive reinforcement of achievements.
- Expectations should be agreed about how and when an employee can be contacted if they are working in a blended way. A pattern of regular communications should be established which includes one to ones and team meetings, as well as inclusion in any relevant correspondence.
- Employees working in a blended way should participate in performance reviews (including the annual CDR process) as normal to ensure that their development needs are discussed. Similarly, they should have access to learning and development opportunities, and consideration for promotion and other career progression, in the same way as if they were working in the office.
- Managers should review any local blended working arrangements on an ongoing basis to ensure that they continue to function effectively. This includes providing regular feedback to (and receiving feedback from) employees who are working in a blended way. Any resourcing issues (e.g. ICT equipment for staff working remotely or the provision of meeting rooms and hubs for on-campus collaboration) should be raised promptly with the relevant point of contact.

9.4 Managers should also be aware that blended working may result in staff feeling isolated or lonely. Operating blended working within the framework will help to minimise this by ensuring that all staff are involved in meetings (e.g. whether onsite or through videoconferencing) and making sure that communications include some personal or social content as well as strictly work-related matters. Managers should ensure that they maintain regular contact with staff, for example by arranging 'virtual coffee breaks' where the manager and employee agree to be available to speak over the phone at a pre-arranged time. It is also important that employees agree with their line managers whether they should attend regular team meetings in person as well as participate in any performance reviews so that their ongoing development needs are discussed. Social events should be arranged that enable all staff to attend in person where possible.

## 10. Health and Safety

10.1 Everyone has responsibility for ensuring health and safety at work. Staff should make sure that they adjust their workstation and chair to suit their needs, whether they are working from home, remotely, hot-desking or at a preferred desk. Any requirements or concerns about their workspace should be raised with their manager as well as other teams as appropriate (such as through an online

health and safety assessment or with DTS).

10.2 Employees who wish to regularly work remotely/from home as a result of blended working should ensure that they complete the relevant online health and safety assessment based on their remote working environment in order to ensure that this constitutes an appropriate workspace. Employees should adopt the same practices and make relevant adjustments as set out in the assessment, (e.g. workspace set-up, posture, ability to move around) when working remotely to ensure that they have a suitable and comfortable place in which to work. The assessment provides advice on all elements of a safe working environment, signposts to support and offers additional health and safety training.

10.3 Where health and safety concerns are raised – either by employees or through the health and safety assessment – staff will be offered advice on steps that can be taken to improve their remote working arrangements. If this is not possible for an employee, they will be able to work full-time on campus and will be provided with a suitable workspace to do so.

10.4 Disabled staff should discuss with their manager any reasonable adjustments that are required in order to work safely and effectively both on campus and remotely. Where appropriate, specialist advice may be sought from Occupational Health. Relevant furniture will be provided for remote working as a reasonable adjustment or where there is a health and safety need that cannot reasonably be met through alternative measures.

## 11. Wellbeing

11.1 Managers should regularly check in with staff on their wellbeing when they are working in a blended way, in particular to ensure that they are not working excessive hours. In particular, the improved communications made possible by improvements in IT provision should not result in staff feeling obliged to regularly respond to emails outside normal working hours or on weekends (some exceptions may apply to certain senior management positions).

11.2 Staff and managers should be aware of the increased temptation to work longer hours and the difficulties in being able to switch off when working remotely. Staff should be encouraged to retain a structure to the working day/week and ensure that they 'leave' work in the same way as they would if they were in the office. This is in addition to support staff in taking regular breaks – both throughout the day and by taking annual leave.

11.3 Staff and managers should refer to the Etiquette Policy for Email and other Online Communication Tools for further information about the use of notification settings to ensure that individual's non-working time is protected and respected. Information on the wellbeing resources available to staff can also be found on the Staff Wellbeing webpages.

11.4 Concerns regarding wellbeing should be raised with the relevant manager or HR Partner so that advice can be given on the most appropriate way to address this and steps taken to remove any specific work-related factors where relevant.

## 12. Equality Considerations

12.1 Managers should be mindful of equality considerations when considering how blended approaches to working could function in their teams. In addition, the School will periodically gather feedback from staff (including surveys) about their experience of blended working, so that any potential issues in terms of staff access to blended working can be identified and addressed.

## 13. Dignity at Work

13.1 The arrangement of 'desk-sharing' will mean that staff are regularly working alongside different colleagues – both within and outside of their own team/division. It will, therefore, be essential that, in accordance with the Dignity at Work Statement, staff take care to treat colleagues with dignity and respect at all times.

13.2 In particular, staff should ensure that they behave in a respectful way that embraces inclusivity and creates a welcoming and positive environment for all staff regardless of any protected characteristics.

13.3 The School's Dignity at Work Statement and Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy provide definitions and examples of inappropriate behaviour. Staff should ensure that they are informed about what is, and is not, appropriate so that they do not risk inadvertently creating an unpleasant environment for those around them.

13.4 Managers should be aware that staff, particularly those with protected characteristics, might choose to work remotely more frequently to avoid potentially uncomfortable situations. This could, in turn, lead to them becoming isolated from their team/colleagues. Where a manager is concerned that this might be the case, this should be raised with individuals in a supportive way to facilitate a resolution, if appropriate.

## 14. Sustainability

14.1. Departments, divisions and staff will take active steps to:

- Use campus buildings space as efficiently as possible, for instance by desk sharing, contributing to the delivery of our carbon reduction targets.
- Minimise business travel, and in particular air travel, as a simple way to reduce our carbon emissions.
- Reduce printing by embracing the transition from paper to Digital Smart, reducing our use of resources.
- Switch to virtual phones, centralised printing and only buy e-devices for demonstrated needs, to help reduce our environmental impacts.
- Recycle all unwanted LSE devices by arranging collection with: [estates.porters@lse.ac.uk](mailto:estates.porters@lse.ac.uk). For small items (e.g. USB sticks/CDs/cables) by using the recycling point at the Student Centre reception (Saw Swee Hock building).

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