Thriving in a Remote Work Environment

As the University of Alberta continues to navigate business operations while the majority of staff and faculty work remotely, ensure you have the necessary support to thrive in challenging times. This document is intended to serve as a guide to supports and services that may make working from home a little easier.

Health and Wellbeing Resources

Recognize the magnitude of the changes in our work and personal lives that have resulted from the global pandemic. It’s normal, even for the most resilient people, to feel stressed, fatigued and a little beaten up from time to time. Working from home can be difficult, especially when we add our additional roles (son/daughter, parent, partner/spouse, friend) into our “work” environment. If you are struggling, speak to a friend, colleague, manager or supervisor. We all have a responsibility to ensure we practice self-care while we care for others. Support is available.

- Workplace Health Promotion email list
- Health Promotion newsroom
- Wellness Together Canada

Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)

The university’s EFAP program is more than just counseling services. While the EFAP does offer confidential, solution-focused psychological counseling and coaching services, there is a wealth of additional services in the program including nutritional consultations, financial planning resources, fitness consultations, legal consultations, pre-retirement planning, e-courses and much more! You do not have to leave your home to access services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, services are offered by phone or online, depending on the service you want to access. You can access services by calling 780.428.7587 or logging on to homeweb.ca. Services are available to all University of Alberta faculty and staff regardless of benefits eligibility.

Maintaining Connections

Relationships at work are what helps keep us anchored, invested and engaged in the workplace. Maintaining those connections is even more important when we don’t have the opportunity to bump into a colleague going for coffee or pass by their desk on the way to the photocopier. There are a number of ways you can stay connected working in a remote environment.

Consider setting up a quick 10-minute Google Chat rather than just an email. Turn the video on in meetings or send someone a note to let them know you are thinking about them.

- UAlberta E-card app
Parenting/Elder Care Supports

Many people find themselves in caregiving roles. Whether you have children, or aging parents, or family members who require support, managing these activities while working from home can be particularly challenging. There are a number of supports available to assist those in caregiving roles as they navigate these challenges.

- Childcare and Parenting Plan Smart Resource - EFAP
- Elder and Family Care Plan Smart Resource - EFAP
- Kids & Co. Family Resource Room

Flexible Work Arrangements

The goal of the university is to support all employees in fulfilling their personal and work commitments during these uncertain times. If you need flexibility with your schedule in order to meet your personal or family obligations while working from home, talk to your manager or supervisor, department chair, or director.

Professional Development

Whether on campus or working remotely, it is important to maintain our professional development and seek out learning opportunities. For some, courses and workshops are necessary to maintain professional accreditation; for others lifelong learning keeps them energized. As on-campus and external learning providers move more of their programming online, University of Alberta employees have more access to learning and professional development opportunities.

- LearnCentre
- Sign up for the Professional Development Listserv
- Academic Impressions (Register to access here)
- COVID-19: Calming Your Mind in Challenging Times
- Building Resilience in the Face of COVID-19
- COVID-19: Strategies for Managing Stress
- Anxiety, Depression and COVID-19: Supporting Yourself and Others
- Mindfulness and Mitigating the Stress Response to COVID-19
- Managing Your Emotional Labour in the Workplace
- Building Resilience During and After the Pandemic (Dec 2)
- Upgrading your Self-Care during COVID crisis

Preparing for Ongoing Change

COVID-19 is one element contributing to what is likely to be a year of substantial change at the University. Employees can benefit from personal and institutional change management resources available to our community.

- Academic Impressions
• Learn Centre  
• Embracing Workplace Change EFAP ecourse

Equipment/Software
In order to be successful working in your home environment, it is essential that you have the necessary software and hardware to function properly. If you do not have the technology or software to perform your responsibilities, speak to your supervisor about who you can ask and how they can support you or help troubleshoot your request.
  • IST Help Desk  
  • Working Remotely Guidelines

Ergonomics
In order to maintain health and prevent future problems, staff should have an ergonomic setup in their current work environment. Whether working off a kitchen table or in a home office, there are a variety of tips and best practices that you can consult to check on the ergonomics of your setup.
  • EHS Ergonomics Self Assessment  
  • Working from Home video

Safety
Whether you are working from home or coming to campus, your safety is a priority for the university. Specific information is available online and is updated regularly. The university follows provincial health guidelines and takes our particular environment into account. If you have concerns or questions about workplace safety for yourself or others on campus or while working from home, contact your supervisor.
  • COVID-19 information for faculty and staff  
  • Here@UAlderta  
  • Environment, Health and Safety - Returning to Campus e-learning

Vacation
For many, vacation and travel have become synonymous. However not all vacations must mean travel. Taking breaks from your regular work routines is essential to maintain your mental health and wellbeing. At-home breaks free from work-related stressors are good for the mind, body and soul. They also provide the necessary rest required to re-engage productively in work activities. Talk to your manager or supervisor about how you can plan to take time to rest and recharge.

Managing work time
Pay attention to the hours you are working and make sure that you build in both regular breaks during the work day and clearly defined “off” hours. Note that Settings in Google Calendar
allows you to select “speed meetings” as the default setting: 60-minute meeting slots become 50 minutes and 30-minute slots become 25. For those university employees who are interested in tracking their time, you can use a free service such as Clockify.

Personal Illness
Faculty members and staff may find it strange to “phone in” sick when they are already at home. Please know that you are entitled to take time off to rest and recover if you are ill or injured, whether you are working from home on campus.

Contact us
For COVID-19-related employment-related issues, University of Alberta staff can direct their questions to hrs.covid19@ualberta.ca