

# COVID-19: HR MEASURES applicable to HQ, Geneva

## GUIDANCE FOR SUPERVISORS: EXCEPTIONAL TELEWORKING

This guidance is provided to assist **supervisors** in the review and approval of GSM requests for Exceptional Teleworking from HQ, Geneva, staff members to **telework outside the duty station** in the context of the [COVID-19: HR Measures applicable to HQ, Geneva dated 25 May 2021](#).

Teleworking from outside the duty station implies working from a location other than that of the office to which the staff member is assigned and other than from the address declared in GSM as the staff member's normal residence at the duty station. The location could be in a different country, in a different time zone or from within the country of the duty station but a different location.

### 1. Approval of requests

1. Teleworking from outside the duty station is not an entitlement; requests are approved on a discretionary basis. See bullet 2. for approver roles.
2. Approval of requests for teleworking outside the duty station must be managed in a consistent, fair and equitable manner while paying particular attention to the position, tasks and personal circumstances of each staff member.
3. Requests must be made in advance, ensure your staff are aware that the approval process may take time.
4. Requests for teleworking outside the duty station may be approved:-
  - a. when the arrangement is consistent with the nature of the work involved i.e. the staff member is able to perform their normal tasks and deliver results without compromising objectives while in the teleworking location;
  - b. when ensuring that approval for some colleagues does not result in additional demands on others;
  - c. if the staff member remains available by telephone, email, via Teams or other communication method during the working hours agreed upon and attends unit/team/collaborative meetings as required;
  - d. if the staff member has sufficient equipment and access to stable internet to allow for necessary communication;
  - e. where time differences will not unduly affect the ongoing work of the staff member and/or the team.
5. Requests **may be approved for a shorter period than that requested**. In such case the request should be **returned for correction through the respective function in GSM**.
6. Where staff members request to telework in order to manage e.g. childcare, care of elderly parents, a family situation, supervisor should discuss with staff realistic expectations and encourage taking annual leave along with periods of teleworking.
7. Initial requests for more than a 3-month period should be returned for correction to ensure the end date is 90 calendar days maximum. A subsequent request can then be submitted for any period beyond 91 days. This is to ensure accurate implementation of adjustment to pay and benefits that comes with such requests.
8. Teleworking outside the duty station **for health reasons**:-
  - a. Medical condition *which requires the staff member to be in the teleworking location* – such requests are approved by SHW on medical grounds. Other approvers in the workflow validate the request.
  - b. Medical condition *which requires teleworking but does not require the staff member to be outside the duty station* – SHW may approve as 1<sup>st</sup> level approver only for the medical

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grounds while the decision to approve teleworking outside the duty station remains with the other approvers in the same context as other requests.

- The GSM system for teleworking is not flexible like the leave system. Periods of teleworking cannot be amended once approved, they have to be deleted and re-entered. They are not shown in the dashboard. Queries can be addressed to [teleworking@who.int](mailto:teleworking@who.int).

### 2. Approver roles

***N.B. Supervisors must use Vacation Rules in GSM to delegate their approver role to ensure workflow is not blocked during absence.***

Approver	Action to be taken	Process
<b>SHW</b> ( <i>requests for Health Reasons only</i> )	Reviews on medical grounds	If staff member does not require to be outside the duty station, make comment as such in approval.
<b>1<sup>st</sup> level supervisor</b>	Reviews request in GSM based on considerations in bullet 1. Agrees with staff member by e-mail exchange on work schedule if different from regular core hours at the duty station.	If approved GSM workflow automatically sends to 2 <sup>nd</sup> level supervisor
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> level supervisor</b>	<p><b><u>Prior to approving in GSM:-</u></b></p> <p><b><i>P staff up to P5</i></b> - must seek approval from ADG of Division (<i>if ADG is not already the 2<sup>nd</sup> level supervisor</i>)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In GSM request, use “Request more information” and forward to ADG/DG</li> <li>ADG/DG to provide written approval/rejection in comment box with reasons</li> <li>Once ADG/DG answer received, 2<sup>nd</sup> level supervisor approves/rejects in GSM as appropriate.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If rejected, must communicate reason to staff member in the “Note” field.</li> <li>If approved, confirms ADG/DG concurrence in the “Note” field before validating the decision; request will be forwarded automatically to HRT.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
	<b><i>P6 and above</i></b> - must seek approval from DG ( <i>if DG is not already the 2<sup>nd</sup> level supervisor</i> )	
<b>ADG/DG</b>	Reviews requests to ensure fair and equitable treatment of staff member requests across the Division/Senior Management Team.	
<b>HRT</b>	Validates that requests are in compliance with COVID-19 HR Measures (notably time limits) and that all necessary details have been correctly recorded in GSM. Shares the transaction with GHR for implementation of entitlement changes, where applicable.	

### 3. Working hours & daily schedules

- The working hours for the duty station must be respected by supervisors and staff members during periods of approved teleworking i.e. 40 hours per week for HQ Geneva.

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2. Within the weekly working hours supervisors may approve **flexible schedules** during the teleworking period for staff members who may be e.g. managing family situations or working from another time zone. In that case supervisors must discuss with staff members and agree upon a daily working schedule (see also 4. below).
  3. Consideration must be given to ensuring necessary overlap for communication purposes with team members, colleagues, contacts. Supervisors must ensure that staff in different time zones are not functioning alone without communication with other colleagues or their supervisors for long periods.
  4. For **insurance purposes** it is essential that **any deviation in schedule** from the regular core hours of HQ, Geneva, is duly recorded **in writing by email between 1<sup>st</sup> level supervisor and staff member** and agreement indicated in the teleworking request.
4. **Performance management**
1. Staff members are evaluated in the same manner irrespective of the workplace. It is essential that supervisors maintain regular contact with staff members in order to be in a position to evaluate appropriately.
  2. Be clear about expectations during teleworking outside the duty station. Progress on objectives can be discussed prior to approval of requests to telework outside the duty station.
5. **Communications**
1. With staff members working from different locations it is important to keep up regular meetings via teleconferencing means both for teams and for individuals.
  2. Ensure all staff are kept informed and included in unit/team meetings whether teleworking outside the duty station or not.
  3. Where communications are sent to staff members outside working hours supervisors should make it clear to staff that action is not expected outside working hours.
  4. Supervisors experiencing challenges teleworking with one of your colleagues or team members, try first to engage with that person. If the problem persists, get advice from your next level supervisor
6. **Mental health and well-being**
1. Ensure that their staff members are aware of the facilities available with regards to mental health, physical well-being and psychosocial support if needed.
  2. Encourage staff in their teams to take regular breaks and to ensure they shut down at the end of the working day.
  3. Encourage annual leave planning in order to ensure rest and recuperation for staff.
  4. Be attentive to not send emails or make requests to staff members outside normal working hours.
7. **Leave management during teleworking**
1. Teleworking is not intended to be used in place of annual leave, sick leave, family emergency leave or any other type of leave. Staff who are unable to report to duty due to illness must report their absence to their supervisor and request certified or uncertified sick leave in the online system. Supervisors must ensure leave is duly recorded.
  2. Teleworking is not a replacement for child or family care, supervisor should discuss with staff on taking annual leave along with periods of teleworking.
  3. Supervisors are reminded to ensure staff members take at least 15 days annual leave during 2021

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and reduce their annual leave balances to 60 days by 31 December 2021. No carry over beyond 60 days will be granted.

### 8. Discontinuation of a teleworking arrangement

1. Supervisors may request staff members to return to the duty station for work-related reasons e.g. if face-to-face contact is deemed necessary. In such a case, reasonable notice period should be given to the staff member taking into consideration specific circumstances.
2. Supervisors may end the teleworking arrangement for reasons which may include e.g. if quality or quantity of deliverables is compromised, proactive participation and contribution to team efforts is compromised, performance is impacted, communication channels do not function appropriately (N.B. availability of reliable internet connection is the responsibility of the staff member!)

### 9. Other guidance

1. Updates to COVID-19 HR Measures can be found in WHO eManual [III.22.1 Document repository for HR and administrative guidance for managing staff during pandemic](#).
2. Supervisors may refer to the HR Business Partner of the Division for guidance and for reports of staff under their supervision teleworking outside the duty station.
3. SHW including Staff Counsellor remain available if required.
4. Any other requests including system queries may be addressed to [teleworking@who.int](mailto:teleworking@who.int).