

COVID-19 FAQs for HQ Staff

Updated: 23 March 2020

TELEWORKING

1. When does teleworking start?

Further to the Administrator message of 14 March from ADG/BOS, it has been decided to activate the COVID-19 Business Continuity Plan (BCP) as of Monday, 16 March and until further notice. Accordingly, full-time teleworking will begin on **Monday, 16 March**.

2. How long does teleworking continue?

Teleworking will continue until further notice.

3. Can I collect equipment etc. from my office?

Staff will be able to enter the HQ premises on **Monday, 16 March** to collect any equipment or other materials that they may need for this period. From Tuesday morning all staff will be expected to work remotely and only critical staff may come to work at the office. A list of critical staff has been shared with those concerned.

For additional information on access to the premises, staff should refer to COVID-19 : Important information to all Staff at headquarters – Message from Administrator to staff of 17 March 2020.

4. The Administrator message of 14 March states that staff should telework to the maximum extent possible. What does that mean?

All staff should telework during this period, except critical staff who need to work at the premises and have been notified accordingly. Supervisors and staff should discuss any challenges to teleworking on a case-by-case basis. In this regard, supervisors should consider the following possible limitations on teleworking:

- The nature of the work does not allow for teleworking, and no other meaningful activities, including those related to training and development, can be performed. This should be determined by supervisors and staff on an individual basis.
- Staff have family responsibilities that will not allow them to telework full time or at all. Part-time teleworking should be explored in these circumstances, with the balance of work time considered as special leave with full pay.
- Staff are already on leave including all forms of sick leave, annual, special leave, administrative leave, etc.

In accordance with the paragraph 17 of the Administrative Guidelines dated 2 March 2020, cases where staff cannot telework (and where other forms of leave are not applicable) should be submitted to Director, HRT ([through Teleworking@who.int](mailto:through_Teleworking@who.int)), for consideration of special leave with full pay.

If supervisors determine that staff cannot telework, and when other forms of leave are not applicable, staff will not be required to exhaust annual leave before special leave with full pay is applied.

5. Do I need to fill in the teleworking form?

There is no need for staff to complete the standard teleworking approval and disclaimer form. However, the disclaimer provisions (see [Information Note 15/2014](#)) remain applicable to all those teleworking under these instructions. The provisions are set out below:

The undersigned hereby confirms that s/he has taken note of and agrees to the following:

In case of an accident, illness or death which is claimed as attributable to the performance by the staff member of official duties on behalf of the Organization which occur when working from the teleworking office, the staff member (or a survivor on behalf of a staff member) will be required to provide adequate evidence of direct causal link between the accident, illness or death and the performance of the staff member's official duties.

Whilst working from the teleworking office, an accident, illness or death that takes place during any of the following circumstances, will normally not be considered as attributable to the performance of official duties on behalf of the Organization:

- a. away from the approved teleworking office, subject to § b. below;*
- b. outside the direct commute to/from the teleworking office and WHO (or any other destination authorized as official travel) for official purposes;*
- c. outside the schedule agreed to by the supervisor*

In absence of any notification to the contrary, it is assumed that the staff member's teleworking office is the location of his/her local residency at the duty station as declared and recorded in GSM. In case of doubt, please verify and update the relevant information through GSM self-service.

6. What do I do if I can only partially telework?

While full-time teleworking should be the norm, partial teleworking may be determined by supervisors and staff on an individual basis. Partial teleworking may be considered in conjunction with the various available forms of leave. HRT will provide further guidance to supervisors based upon the feedback received during the first week of implementation.

7. What do I do for medical / sick leave?

Staff should continue to submit requests for planned sick leave in GSM in the usual manner, to the extent possible with their connectivity. However, the Interagency HR Network of UN Geneva has recommended to the Security Management Team that:

- UN Organizations should exercise flexibility with regard to medical certificates and not require a certificate until an employee has been absent for at least 10 days (to relieve pressure on doctors and public health system)

WHO is following this recommendation.

8. How should I request teleworking if I have a pre-existing medical condition as described in the Administrator message of 12 March?

This initial measure is superseded by the general COVID-19 teleworking authorization. Staff with pre-existing conditions will no longer need to write to SHW for approval. They will be presumed to be on teleworking status.

9. How do I record my work status?

GSM does not currently provide for entering teleworking. A solution is being developed in this regard. In the meantime, the current practice of considering staff on teleworking as being present and on full work status will continue. Any days spent on special leave will be recorded at the end of this period. Other forms of leave should continue to be recorded in GSM as connectivity allows.

10. How can I get support for connectivity at my teleworking location?

If you need help connecting to your email or WHO IT systems, or to obtain a vConnect token, please refer to the "IT Checklist" on <https://intranet.who.int/sites/covid19/>

The checklist includes links for both staff and those on non-staff contractual arrangements to obtain a token.

The Global Service Desk will be operational every weekday between 00:30 and 18:00 Geneva time. Staff can contact the GSD at +41 22 79 17000 (or ext. 12411 on Jabber). Alternative ways to reach the GSD include email and chat on the Service Portal (<http://myservice.who.int/>).

During the initial period, there will be additional assistance available by phone and chat from Kuala Lumpur. In addition, staff can post questions about the teleworking checklist on Slido at <https://slido.com/> event code *#teleworking*. IMT staff will be monitoring the forum to answer questions.

A Spotlight session is now available online [Spotlight Series - IT Checklist](#) : <https://youtu.be/cLuN7RtvJUE>.

A group of IMT team members are compiling additional entries for frequently asked questions related to IT. They will be published on the [Intranet site for COVID-19](#) and on [COVID-19 group on Workplace](#).

In addition, there are various messages from the Chief Information Officer e-mailed to all staff.

11. How do I know if I'm critical staff?

You will be notified individually by ADG/BOS if you are a critical staff, including whether you are requested to carry out your functions off-site or on the premises.

12. How does the designation of critical and non-critical staff relate to teleworking?

Critical staff may be requested to carry out their functions either on the premises, or teleworking in an alternate location or from home. All non-critical staff are presumed to be teleworking unless other arrangements have been made.

Unless you have been notified that you are critical staff, and that your presence is required on the premises, you are not to come to the office. The names of critical staff have been communicated to Access Control with the restriction that no other staff be granted access to the premises (see also Message from Administrator of 17 March 2020 as referenced above).

13. Can I telework from a location outside of my duty station or the area of the office?

Given the travel restrictions being put in place by many countries, and the rapid evolution which is changing from day-to-day, new travel to another location for teleworking purposes is not recommended, nor is it financially supported by, the Organization.

The teleworking provisions established for staff HQ/Geneva are specific to teleworking at the duty station and locations within the area of the office.

For HQ/Geneva staff living in France, additional information is set out in COVID-19 : Important information to all Staff at headquarters - 17 March 2020 (Administrator Message to all staff).

Requests to work from other locations may be submitted to Harald Koch (kochh@who.int) and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

14. Can I bring my family members to my duty station while I'm teleworking?

Normally, any travel costs and arrangements for family members made during this period of time are the full responsibility of the staff member. Any queries on specific circumstances should be referred to GSC Global HR Operations : GHREmergencyResponse@who.int for consideration.

15. What do I do for a new staff member due to report for duty? (Or what do I do if I am outside of my duty station on duty travel on 16 March and am unable to return?)

If new staff or staff returning from contract break are unable to travel to the duty station, the hiring manager / supervisor should assess whether the person can work remotely, and contact their HR focal point to implement such measures.

16. Can consultants, interns and others on non-staff contractual arrangements telework?

Refer to the separate Q&As for consultants on <https://intranet.who.int/sites/covid19/>

17. Where do I send my questions on teleworking?

Staff should first carefully review the Q&As on teleworking. Any additional questions or requests for clarification should be discussed with the first-level supervisor, and if needed, addressed to teleworking@who.int (with copy to the first-level supervisor).

TRAVEL

18. Should I continue to plan my duty travel?

Only essential duty travel should be undertaken until the end of April.

19. What should I do when I return from an area of transmission?

It is mandatory to contact Staff Health & Wellbeing Department (SHW) in HQ or Regional Medical Services for a risk assessment. Monitor yourself for signs/symptoms of illness – including regular temperature checks – for 14 days after return from travel. During the 14 days, if you are experiencing any symptoms (fever, cough, or difficulty breathing etc.), seek medical care

immediately and do not come to work while sick. Before you go to SHW, a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead first and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms. If you are advised to seek medical care, wear a medical mask when you go to doctor's office/emergency room. Call or email SHW in HQ or Regional Medical Services and inform your manager. Comply with local public health laws and regulations.

20. What do I do if I am unable to leave my destination while on duty travel or unable to return to Switzerland?

If you find yourself on mission and your return to Switzerland is not possible (you are unable to leave or unable to return to Switzerland), if you are on duty travel, per diem will remain payable until departure is authorized and up until the first available flight.

21. What if I am quarantined away from my duty station?

If you are quarantined while on official business, per diem will remain payable until departure is authorized and up until the first available flight.

22. Can I travel for personal reasons to a location outside of my duty station or the area of the office? (Or what do I do if am outside of my duty station on annual leave?)

Be aware that if you make the decision to travel outside the duty station, re-entry into the duty station or departure from the countries to which you have travelled may not be possible.

If this happens: a) You may be asked to telework and no per diem will be paid. b) You may be asked to work from a UN system or WHO office and no per diem will be paid.

If above options are not possible, you may request Annual Leave or Special Leave without Pay (SLWOP).

23. If I am diagnosed with COVID-19, what do I do?

If you fall sick following contact with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case, immediately notify HQ medical services [at number or email]. Do not take public transport and do not report for duty. Seek appropriate medical attention and note that you will be required to meet the regular requirements for requesting certified sick leave albeit at a later date.

24. What happens if I fall sick, including COVID-19 while on Home Leave (HL) or Family Visit (FV)?

You may be granted certified sick leave upon submission of a medical report in accordance with the Staff Rule 630.7 to Director SHW.

25. What happens if I am unable to return to work by reason of COVID-19 affecting a member of my family, or because of quarantine affecting member of my family?

Alternate work arrangements should be used and the current individual workplan be revised and adapted for teleworking purposes to the extent possible. In the event that alternate work arrangements are still not (fully) possible as confirmed as such by your supervisor, or not possible on medical grounds as approved by Director SHW, the case should be submitted to Director HRT for

consideration of special leave with full pay (SLWFP) for the days on which alternate work arrangements are not possible.

26. Am I covered by Health Insurance for expenses incurred for medical treatment of COVID- 19?

Staff members and their eligible family members who are enrolled in the WHO insurance programmes are covered for expenses incurred for medical treatment of COVID- 19 administered by a recognized health provider according to WHO SHI insurance plan benefits.

Please also refer to the separate Q&As for consultants on <https://intranet.who.int/sites/covid19/>

27. Where can I find out more and who can I contact if I have questions?

Please contact SHW in HQ or for more information or advice on health and wellbeing:

- Emergency Contact 24h 7/7 shwemergency@who.int +41 22 791 11 15 SHW Director: Dr CROSS
- Caroline crossc@who.int (please copy shws@who.int) +41 22 791 3040 13040 (GPN number)
- Staff Counsellor: Ms CASALIS, Nathalie casalisn@who.int +41 22 791 3231 13231 (GPN Number)
- Staff Psychologist: Ms MURINO, Eva murinoe@who.int +41 22 791 30 40 12315 (GPN Number)