

Guidelines for remote work at Karlstad University

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Introduction

Karlstad University is tasked with conducting education and research of a high standard. Education is mainly conducted through on-campus teaching, and daily interactions with students and between co-workers are important parts of our creative, stimulating and vital work environment. The University also aims to be an attractive work place, capable of competing for the most qualified staff, by offering a good work environment, opportunities for development and flexible work forms. Digital tools enable effective ways of working remotely, which can benefit both our work, the work environment and the individual employee's work-life balance.

Beyond following laws and regulations, the University is also tasked with providing good service and being available to the public during office hours. The public trust in our ability to run the operation efficiently and with legal certainty cannot be compromised by remote work..

At Karlstad University, the guiding principle is for all work to be conducted on University premises. The employer can, however, in consideration of these guidelines and the nature of the work, come to an agreement with an employee, where the work can be conducted remotely in a limited capacity. The employer is usually represented by the dean, university director, head of department or head of office.

In these guidelines, the terms and conditions for remote work at Karlstad University are described.

Government employees are only allowed to work from abroad in exceptional cases. This is regulated in stipulations regarding the posting and local hiring of government employees abroad. The University's guidelines for remote work are therefore only valid for work within Sweden's borders.

What is remote work?

Regulations concerning remote work are stated in EU's framework agreement on remote work, as well as in a central agreement within the government. Remote work is defined as *“a way of organising and/ or perform work using information technology within the framework of an employment contract or employment status, where work, which could also be carried out at the work place, are regularly performed outside of these premises.”* Work *“regularly done outside of these premises”*, refers to the opportunity offered to the employee, by the employer, to work remotely in a manner that is not temporary or sporadic in nature. Regularity can refer to a certain percentage of the working time or a specific number of days per week or month. In case of remote work, a written agreement between the employer and the employee is required.

General information about remote work at Karlstad University

The head in charge can come to an agreement with an employee concerning remote work for a maximum of two days per week over time, alternatively 40% of the work time. An agreement regarding remote work must always be based on organisational needs and conditions. For example, remote work may prove to be beneficial to competence supply, an increased quality, lower costs or lead to more efficient work methods. Remote work shall be conducted in such a way as to not affect the University negatively, for example with regard to availability and cooperation.

Regardless of where the work is done, the University's policies, decisions, guidelines and collective agreements.

Remote work cannot be forced by neither the employer nor the employee. If head and employee cannot come to an agreement, or if the stipulations in these guidelines are not met, the work must be performed on University premises.

Remote work shall be performed in a sustainable manner, for example by avoiding half-days that generate unnecessary car trips.

Which tasks can be performed remotely?

The employer decides which tasks can be performed remotely, and this is also made clear in the agreement with the employee. Processing of matters which contain sensitive or confidential information can be done remotely, given that the documentation can be stored and handled in a secure manner. Conversations must not be overheard by unauthorised people. Tasks that carry certain risks regarding work environment, and tasks that require physical meetings with students and the public are not allowed to be carried out at the remote work place.

Availability

Regardless if the work is done remotely or at the office, the employee must be available to be contacted by phone, e-mail or digital meeting platforms, such as zoom, during normal working hours. The availability requirement shall be in line with the working time agreement that apply to the employee. The land line in the office must be coded with a referral/message. The employer can always, if the need arises and on short notice, order the employee to return to the University.

The remote work place

The main work place is Karlstad University's premises. The remote work place is normally in the employee's home. Exceptions can be made, if there are special circumstances that make another solution more appropriate. This must then be regulated through the agreement on remote work.

From an organisational perspective, the remote work place belongs to the main work place, which is normally regarded as the place of employment regardless of the scope of the remote work, providing that it is possible for the employee to conduct their work on the University's premises. An agreement on

remote work, regardless of scope, does not give the employee the right to be reimbursed for travel between the remote work place and the main work place.

Work environment

The employer has the main responsibility for the work environment, even when the work is done at home. The employer shall make certain that the physical and psychosocial is adequate, which require a good dialogue with the employee regarding the remote work environment. The employer can, after contact, visit the employee at their remote work place. Employee responsibility entails that the employee must follow instructions and inform their immediate superior about risks and deficiencies in the at-home work environment. An agreement on remote work can be revoked effective immediately if the employer does not deem the remote work place to be a good and safe work place. A check list for remote work environments, which can be used when making agreements or follow-ups, is available on the University's intranet.

The physical work environment

The employer must make sure that the work place is designed and furnished in a way that is appropriate with regard to work environment. The University will not finance any purchases of furniture or other equipment for the physical remote work environment. This means that the employee, in an agreement regarding remote work, must understand and accept that they will have to pay for any potential purchases themselves, such as procuring a desk and chair, for example.

The employee have access to and can use the University's laptop computer and mobile phone at the remote work place. The University does not lend any other furnishings or equipment to the remote work place.

The work place must be set up in a way that the employee can work undisturbed. The technological solutions must be adequate, which for example means that the employee must have access to a well-functioning online connection. Work material handled at the at-home work place must be stored in a safe and secure manner.

The psychosocial work environment

The psychological and social work environment must be adequate when working remotely. Examples of aspects to consider can be work priorities, opportunity for recuperation, socialising with colleagues, risk of isolation and the separation of work and free time.

Insurance, losses and damages

Through the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency, the employer has business insurance containing property and liability insurance. The property insurance is valid regardless of where the employer's property is damaged.

An employee who works remotely should have home insurance with full coverage. The employer cannot insure the remote work place This means that the employer cannot compensate for damages done to the employee's private property.

The agreement

In case of remote work, a written agreement between the employer and the employee is always required. This applies regardless of if the employee has non-regulated working hours, annual working hours, weekly working hours or flexitime.

The agreement must have a limited validity period, normally no more than a year at a time. If the operational needs change, or the remote work situation is not adequate, the agreement may be subject to

revision or annulment. An employee in an agreement regarding remote work must follow the stipulations in these guidelines. A template to be used for agreements can be found on the University's intranet.

Exceptions to these guidelines can, depending on the scope of the remote work, be made by university director/dean, in consultation with the HR Office.

General questions to consider at the department/office

Assignments and duties can vary between different positions and organisational parts of the University, and consequently so will the opportunity for remote work. This is why only certain parts are regulated in University-wide guidelines, while other parts are more appropriate for the departments/offices to decide on. If remote work occurs at a department/office, the head will decide on and communicate complete, general standpoints in order to give clarity to the organisation. These standpoints should be written down and referred to in the individual agreements about remote work.

Examples of such positions are:

Duties

Questions to consider: Which tasks are appropriate for remote work? Which tasks should be done at the University? How should the work be coordinated and followed-up? What materials/equipment cannot be brought to the remote work place?

Physical/digital presence

Questions to consider: Should certain days be mandatory for everyone, at the same time, or should it be divided up between different groups? Which meetings or activities shall have mandatory physical attendance? Which occasions should have mandatory digital attendance? How will a combination of digital and physical presence be handled? What reporting time applies when someone is ordered to the University?

Availability and communication with colleagues, students and management

Questions to consider: How can students, colleagues, management and the public get in touch with the staff at the department/office? During which hours should you be available to reach? Which channels should be used; e-mail, telephone, zoom, meetings in person? Who will inform about times and channels for contact, and in what way?

Your own office

Questions to consider: Can employees who often work remotely share an office? Have the needs regarding offices changed because of remote work?

What conditions apply to temporary work outside of the University's premises?

Work that is temporary and sporadic in nature and is conducted at home or some other place, is not to be considered remote work. Consequently, no written agreements are necessary in such cases. However, the immediate superior must give their approval. The employer is responsible for the work environment in these situations as well, and unless otherwise agreed, the employee is required to be available via phone and digital tools during work hours.

Links

Central agreement on remote work

<https://www.arbetsgivarverket.se/globalassets/avtal-skrifter/centralaavtal/distansavtal.pdf>

Karlstad University's policy regarding management and employees

<https://intra.kau.se/dokument/upload/C10B9412141f027E07JjFEF1E8C2/Ledar%20och%20medarbetarpolicy.pdf>