**Working from home**

This guide is focused on practical tips and guides to support you during a period where you may be working from home.

If you’re a manager and would like further support on managing remote teams please take a look at our new [guidance for managers](#).

ITS also has details on setting up IT for working from home. This information also highlights other areas or systems you can access from the web without needing to use a virtual private network (VPN).

**What you need to do in order to work remotely**

- Check that you are set up to be able to use the [VPN service](#); but only if required.
- Make sure you have access to Box (the University’s chosen provider), ensuring you have files that you many need to access. Check the [ITS information](#) for working from home.
- If you have young children at home when the schools are closed or have other caring responsibilities and are working at home, we know that you may be unable to commit to a full day of work. Agree with your manager what your priorities will be when and have an open conversation about any aspects of your role that you would not be able to undertake when working from home. Have a plan with your manager about how these parts of your role will be completed. We understand that and thank you for your best efforts. Do what you can and ask for help where needed, you do not need to take annual leave to make up any perceived difference.
- If your phone has the facility, update your voicemail message to inform callers that you are working remotely. Include your email address to give callers the option to send an email rather than leaving a voice message. You can access your voicemail remotely by:
  - Dialling 01206 873467
  - During your greeting message dial 9 followed by your extension number
  - Follow the instructions
- Agree how best to communicate with your manager and team e.g. will you use [Zoom video conferencing](#)? It is the supported tool for online meetings.
- Agree what contact with your manager will look like in terms of frequency or format. How will you will stay in touch or hold meetings?
- If appropriate, share your contact details with your line manager and colleagues, ensuring that you set some ground rules on when you can be contacted and who else can have access to them.
- Complete the [risk assessment for working at home](#) and discuss the outcome with your manager.

**Practicalities**

- It is best, if possible, to try to identify a space for you to work; carry out a [home working risk assessment](#) of your space to make sure it is set up for
your comfort and safety. If you need further advice, contact your DSE Facilitator.

- If possible, use a room to work in that will enable you to distance yourself from home distractions. Ideally it should be a room with daylight that will enable you to replicate your office set-up at home.
- If you use IT equipment at home, please make good use of any table and chair as opposed to sitting on the sofa or in bed. If you are using a dining table or similar, ensure that you take regular breaks every 30 minutes. Contact your DSE Facilitator if you experience any discomfort or pain.
- Should you have a computer problem, please contact the IT Helpdesk.
- Be mindful of working on any confidential data and the challenges faced from working at home; make sure you lock your computer when leaving it, exactly as you would in the office.

Looking after yourself when home working

- Make sure you schedule regular short breaks every hour to move and re-hydrate and get some fresh-air, and if lucky, a little sun.
- Take some of the time you are saving by not commuting to do something good for your health: walk, light exercise or read. One of the most significant contributors to physical and emotional well-being is sleep.
- Take a lunch break away from your home working set-up.
- Don't become isolated. Keep in touch with others via Zoom (the University's supported tool for video conferencing and online meetings). Commit to virtual coffee breaks at least once a day.
- Try to structure your day; have set times for set tasks, be realistic about what can be achieved.
- Try to pack away your work things at the end of the working day, ideally keeping some definition between working hours/space and your own time.
- Where possible try to keep to normal working hours, make sure your team know the hours you will be keeping, give thought to the times your customers may normally contact you and how you can build this service into home working.
- Be mindful that other colleagues may not be keeping the same hours as you; try to limit the sending of emails to within normal business hours. Should you be working early mornings or late nights for ease, delay the sending of the emails until a more reasonable hour. In your email options, there is the functionality to delay the delivery of emails, think about how this can be used to help colleagues.
- During the pandemic you may experience stress, depression and anxiety due to the pressures experienced by yourself or members of your family and friends. With the difficulty of accessing the Universities Occupational Health service whilst offsite, you are still able to access the following wellbeing resources:
  - SilverCloud is an online Cognitive Behaviour Therapy service which uses clinically proven tools and techniques to help you if struggling with these issues, offering activities to help you overcome these.
SilverCloud can be accessed from your computer, tablet or mobile phone, 24/7.

- **Validium** is a professional and independent employee assistance and offers access to information services such as counselling support (i.e. signposting and online resources), legal guidance, financial advice and wellbeing information.

- **Coaching for success** is able to offer coaching either on the telephone or via Zoom. Email coaching@essex.ac.uk

- If you feel you need a referral to Occupational Health, we still are able to offer appointments either onsite, on telephone or via Zoom. To do this you will need to have your line manager or Employee Relations Advisor complete a referral form. You can also make direct contact with us by emailing ohquery@essex.ac.uk or telephone on 01206 872399 if you have any wellbeing questions