Managing in a Hybrid Work Environment: A Supervisor's Guidebook

Updated October 2024

Since its inception in 2021, American University has continued to evaluate and calibrate its approach to hybrid work to best support the student experience and build community at AU. As a supervisor, one of your primary responsibilities is to nurture an environment where everyone can reach their highest potential as we meet the needs of the university.

The key to successfully working in a hybrid environment is intentionally creating positive working norms, dealing with critical logistical issues, and establishing a system to stay informed to keep things on track and teams cohesive. A best practice is to work with staff to establish procedures and expectations for the team. Agreeing upon operational guidelines and performance expectations and then renewing and updating them periodically provides staff with a clear understanding of how the team operates and lessens misunderstandings in the future.

This guide helps you establish procedures and expectations for your team members as you navigate our current work environment.

Setting the standards

Staff are responsible for their behavior regardless of where they work and they must comply with all university policies, including attendance, performance, code of conduct, confidentiality, leave, data privacy, and security. Staff are expected to attend all mandatory meetings and regularly check in with their coworkers and supervisors.

Hybrid schedules must conform to the overtime, record keeping, meal breaks, and other provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act and other relevant laws and university policies. Supervisors must develop and maintain procedures for time in/time out of hourly workers regardless of the employee's location, so it's clear when work occurred. Changes to standard work hours should be approved by supervisor in advance. Regardless of work arrangement, staff remain entitled to lunch, scheduled breaks, and leave time.

With advance notice, staff may be required to report to campus on a scheduled remote workday. For more information, please review the [Schedule and Work Modality policy](#) and appropriate [collective bargaining agreements](#), if applicable.

Managing performance – balancing trust and accountability

Regardless of work modality, the university's performance management program is integral to supporting staff performance and continued growth. You will continue to set clear expectations, monitor performance, coach employees throughout the year, and evaluate performance against established and communicated performance expectations.

Tools to support supervisors to manage staff performance can be found in [Workday Learning](#):

- [Setting Expectations Toolkit](#)
- [Ongoing Performance Conversations Toolkit](#)
- [Performance Review Toolkit](#)

Managing in a Hybrid Work Environment: A Supervisor's Guidebook

Updated October 2024

Managing high performers

Whether managing in-person or remotely, check-in with your high performers regularly. Ensure that you distribute work and new projects to all of your team. It can be tempting to give more work to your highest performers as they are fast and reliable, but this can lead to overwork and burnout.

Managing low performers

If performance is an issue, consider whether a performance improvement plan or other progressive processes will help the staff member improve their performance, regardless of work location. Use all the tools in your toolbox to help the staff member improve their performance (e.g., clear expectations, a written performance improvement plan under the guidance of Employee Relations, frequent check-ins, and plans to assess how the improvements are working).

If your staff member is performing poorly in a remote location, you may want to consider bringing them back to campus more frequently in order to oversee their work. However, before doing so, keep in mind:

- If additional support isn't available onsite, then requiring a struggling staff member to work onsite is merely punitive and probably won't result in better results than continuing to allow them to work their hybrid schedule.
- The office may be full of distractions, so being on campus does not guarantee that staff will be more focused or productive. Simply changing the staff members' work modality may not achieve the desired results.
- You will need to provide more direct oversight of the staff member, through frequent check-ins and review of work, regardless of location.
- You may need to engage with HR to evaluate the job duties and if they are appropriate for the position or person.
- Any changes in modality will need to be approved by the department head, and the staff member given appropriate notice.

Helping staff recognize how to do their best work and is preferable to simply denying access to hybrid work. In addition, if you help staff come up with solutions, you help develop their ability to self-manage and maintain their engagement with long-term performance maintenance.

If you need guidance on performance management, reach out to our Talent Strategies team by emailing hrpayrollhelp@american.edu. Other options include HR Employee Relations or the BHS manager coaching service (user name: AU) for resources to help you coach your staff member on needed performance improvement. Encourage staff to utilize the BHS services (user name: AU) to develop agency in improving their performance. If these strategies aren't effective, please contact HR Employee Relations for other options.

Managing in a Hybrid Work Environment: A Supervisor's Guidebook

Updated October 2024

Regardless of where we work, everyone is always responsible for their performance and accountable for their work. It is your responsibility to direct and develop staff, not to police their day-to-day behavior.

Ensuring equity and creating connections

Equity and inclusion are cornerstones of the AU experience. We strive to create a workplace that includes everybody regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity expression, religion, and work arrangement.

As a supervisor, it's essential to actively brainstorm ways to ensure your staff on and off-site feel like they are part of the team. A core day in the office can help promote inclusion for everyone on your team. Coming up with equitable and inclusive strategies can help you retain your top talent and improve engagement and productivity.

The following tips from the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) are a broad overview of what managers should consider for their teams in a hybrid work environment.

- Schedule time for the whole team to be together rather than separate meetings for remote staff and staff on campus.
- Always have an agenda in advance so that hybrid and on-campus staff can prepare thoughtful responses and questions.
- Document meetings so those who can't participate are still in the loop.
- Brainstorm as a team.
- Enable your team to select high-profile or developmental projects that showcase their skills.

Evaluating the Way You Work

It is crucial to set clear expectations and standard operating procedures early, then revisit them frequently throughout the year to evaluate and recalibrate.

There is no 'silver bullet' for creating an effective hybrid work environment. Supervisors and staff will need to be in constant communication to ensure that established rules and norms meet the service needs and expectations of students, stakeholders, and staff. Continue to evolve and refine your management tactics so that you and your team can be most effective.

Don't wait for feedback from your team and stakeholders. Instead, commit to frequent check- ins to help keep you informed about your staff's performance. Of course, how often you check-in will vary depending on the department's needs — though once a week is a good rule of thumb.

T-TS-RTC-H3.0-2025

Managing in a Hybrid Work Environment: A Supervisor's Guidebook

Updated October 2024

Check-ins should review whether:

- Things are going well on projects, and if any changes would make things better.
- Coworkers and clients are receiving the service they need from your team and what would make things better.
- Work is allocated evenly, and certain tasks do not just fall to in-person staff because they happen to be there. Be thoughtful about how you can meet customer needs with all of your team members, including remote workers.
- Assignments are being met with quality and timely delivery.
- All operational needs are being met.
- Your technology (computer, phone, access to servers, etc.) meets your present and future communication and data management needs.
- There are concerns or problems that you or another stakeholder have raised.

If you follow the tips in this guide, you set up your team to succeed in the hybrid work environment and work through obstacles together. If something isn't working, refer back to this guide for ideas to try to improve things.

We recognize that the best people management techniques don't work for everyone. If you continue to face challenges or would like additional support, please contact Human Resources at hrpayrollhelp@american.edu.