Remote Work from Outside the U.S.
March 9, 2021

Penn State is a global university and values global collaborations. In addition, the University values in-person interactions that take place between faculty and students and among faculty in the classroom, in laboratories and studios, and in other settings. Permitting Penn State faculty or staff members to work remotely for an extended period of time while living in another country, or sometimes another state or territory, presents complex challenges for the University; among them are tax and regulatory requirements to which Penn State must adhere, and these vary by country.

Beginning with calendar year 2021, remote work for an extended period of time from outside the U.S. by faculty members, postdoctoral fellows, and staff will not be permitted. Requests for exceptions will be granted only in the event of very exceptional or unusual situations, and must be made by the unit executive to the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs for faculty members and to the unit HRSP for staff employees. It is expected that faculty who have been given permission to work from another country due to the pandemic during the current semester (spring 2021) will return prior to the beginning of fall semester 2021; those who are unable to return will be placed on unpaid leave.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does this guidance pertain to faculty on sabbaticals or similar formal study leaves?
Generally, no. Sabbaticals and similar formal study leaves are typically structured as leaves from the University in which faculty are engaged in self-directed work; as such, travel to other countries as part of an approved sabbatical leave is still permitted.

What does an ‘extended period of time’ mean?
“Extended period of time” is intended to apply to a period of time longer than a short trip to another country, generally of more than two weeks. Consult with your HRSP if you have questions about whether your travel might constitute an extended period of time.

Can I still attend a conference in another country?
Currently, any University-affiliated travel outside the U.S. must be approved by the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

Is there a time limit beyond which the University would be subject to legal and other regulations?
The period of time that an employee of a U.S. institution can work from another country without triggering tax and other obligations for both the institution and the employee varies by country and situation.
**Does this guidance apply during the summer to faculty on 36-week contracts?**
Teaching for Penn State from another country for an extended period of time is not permitted. This guidance does not apply to other activities in which faculty might engage outside of the appointment period. Faculty members are encouraged to consult their unit’s [AD77 guidelines](#) for further information about activities that are permitted to occur both during and outside the appointment period.

**Does this guidance apply to graduate students or faculty members doing field work?**
Faculty or graduate students may request to travel internationally for essential purposes, such as critical research purposes, by following the processes outlined in [University-Affiliated Travel Guidance](#) (faculty) or “Student International Travel Exception Documents” at [https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/back-to-state-spring-2021-resources/](https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/back-to-state-spring-2021-resources/) (students).

**Does this apply to World Campus instructors?**
World Campus instructors who are U.S. citizens or residents may not teach from outside the United States. World Campus instructors who are not U.S. citizens or residents may be approved to teach from another country as independent contractors, unless performing additional services for the University that constitute employment.

**Does it matter whether the faculty member is a U.S. citizen or not?**
These guidelines generally apply to both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals.

**Does this apply to faculty who are teaching an Education Abroad course?**
These guidelines do not apply to faculty members who travel to another country to teach a Penn State course offered through Education Abroad. However, if the faculty member remains out of the U.S. either before or after the course takes place, then remote work during that time is not permitted, unless this work is outside of the appointment period.

**Whom should I address my questions to?**
Faculty with questions about remote work from outside the U.S. should first contact their HRSP. Questions can be elevated to the unit executive or the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs as warranted.