

## Framework for Blended Work Arrangements – Applied Learning pilot program

Since day one, we've done things our own way. We pioneered the blended learning model featuring an online component before many people were even online. And so, it's with that same forward-thinking mindset that we look to explore a new way of working at Royal Roads University – the Blended Working Arrangements (BWA) pilot program. It's already in our DNA to embrace a blended approach to education, and now we're going to explore working that way too.

### What do we mean by “Blended Work Arrangements”?

Blended Work Arrangements mean employees spend some of their time working physically on-campus and some of their time working from home. These arrangements may vary on an individual basis and could be either structured or flexible based on the requirements of specific roles. BWAs, however, do not offer 100% remote opportunities or work outside the province or country unless required to accommodate specific circumstances.

The BWA pilot is available to RRU exempt employees and will be based on a model of working on campus for a minimum of three days per week.

It is important to note that the BWA is not intended to be an alternative to our [Return to Campus](#) (RTC) plans, but to work in concert with the RTC and with a phased approach.

**Phase 1:** BWA launch on October 12 for departments who have already completed their RTC

**Phase 2:** BWA launch on November 1 for departments who are still completing their RTC.

BWA pilot program timeframe: October 12, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

### Criteria for participation in the BWA

Exempt employees who wish to explore participating in the BWA pilot should speak with their Manager to see if participation is operationally feasible. While we recognize not everyone will be able to take part in this pilot, we encourage exploration, innovation and equity be considered by all.

The BWA pilot program criteria includes:

- a) departments have returned to campus through the RTC plan
- b) there has been no known disruption of service to internal/external clients
- c) the manager will submit their BWA plans for review to their senior leader who will inform their respective executive member
- d) all BWA forms have been signed off to protect for liability purposes
- e) agreement to participate in surveys, meetings and other data collection activities that will inform the pilot

## RRU Guiding Principles for Blended Work Arrangements

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### Support RRU's vision, values and commitments to enable operational excellence

#### Blended Work Arrangements will:

- Align with the University's commitment to deliver high-quality, life-changing education and research centered around the student experience and student success in decision making.
- Align with RRU Strategic Priorities including Equity, Diversity, Inclusion; Reconciliation; Student Experience and Climate Action
- Align with our strategic goal to be a workplace of choice
- Utilize a student/clients-centered approach, including examining role requirements and components of work which are essential to be conducted on-campus.
- Ensure service standards, quality of work, productivity and operational requirements are sustained or exceeded.
- Incorporate principles of equity and fairness.

### Support leaders and teams

#### Blended Work Arrangements will:

- Rely on trust, open dialogue and flexibility to create arrangements that embrace inclusivity.
- Require shared accountability by employees and leaders on work expectations, agreement on work output, standards and communication.
- Need shared commitment for maintaining safe and healthy work environments.

### Support workplace culture

#### Blended Work Arrangements will:

- Encourage a vibrant on-campus community experience and support in-person connections with colleagues.
- Protect the potential for creativity, innovation and collaboration.
- Support the University's ability to attract, engage and retain diverse talent.

### Support employment obligations

#### Blended Work Arrangements will:

- Support the safety, health and well-being, both physical and emotional, of employees.
- Examine and implement new ways of working that seek to eliminate historical barriers to inclusion and embrace opportunities to continue to diversify our workforce.
- Be mutually agreed upon by the employee and their respective manager, not to be interpreted as a right of employment.

*Leaders are encouraged to use the [Blended Work Arrangements Toolkit](#) to support principle-based decision making and to think through implementation considerations for blended work arrangements in their department/school*

## Requirements and Limitations

Leaders should consider the above Guiding Principles when evaluating opportunities for staff to spend some of their time working remotely and should remember that working remotely isn't for everyone:

- Working remotely is not a right of employment. Suitability for blended work arrangements will not be one size fits all and will vary by position and department depending on a variety of considerations.
- Blended work arrangements are not guaranteed or required. They can be ended by either the manager or employee at any time with reasonable notice and are position/department specific.
- Decision making regarding blended work arrangements for a department/school lies with the senior leadership of the Associate Vice-President, Dean or Director. Front-line Managers may be relied upon for recommendations regarding suitability of specific positions for blended arrangements. The senior leader will ensure they inform their divisional Vice-President of their decision to apply or deny a BWA request.
- If blended work arrangements are determined to be an option for a particular position, employee participation is voluntary and requires the mutual agreement of the employee and the manager.
- Existing departmental technical resources (software, laptop, desktop, & monitors) will be leveraged for the length of the BWA pilot program. Additional equipment will not be available to facilitate dual workstation setups for campus and remote locations.
- For all BWA arrangements, the employee is responsible for an appropriate and healthy working environment in their remote location including all office arrangements, proper internet connectivity and additional equipment if required.
- This framework does not alter or replace the existing terms and conditions of employment. Employees must still comply with all rules, policies, practices, and instructions that would apply if the employee were working fully on campus.
- Flexibility and/or adjustments to working hours are outside of the scope of this framework which is focused on work location. (Refer to [Flexible Work Arrangements policy](#) for flexibility of working hours)
- Remote work is not a substitute for appropriate dependent care. Personal responsibilities must be managed in a way which still allows employees to successfully meet their job responsibilities.
- The blended work arrangements framework does not contemplate employees residing outside of British Columbia or Canada.
- Blended work arrangements, as contemplated in this framework, are not a requirement of employment. The employer will only complete a T2200 tax form for employees who are required to work remotely as a written condition of their employment contract, per CRA regulations.

## Process of Establishing Blended Work Arrangements

Leaders will use a principle-based approach to assess potential for BWA and are encouraged to review the BWA Toolkit for Leaders which outlines specific considerations and resources, recognizing that each department/school has unique operating needs to be met.

## Approving Requests

Decision making regarding blended work arrangements for a department/school lies with the senior leadership of the Associate Vice-President, Dean or Director. Front-line Managers may be relied upon for recommendations regarding suitability of specific positions for blended arrangements.

The senior leader will ensure they inform their divisional Vice-President of their decision to apply or deny a BWA request.

Employees may request a blended work arrangement by submitting: (1) [Blended Work Request Form](#); and (2) [Home Work Environment Checklist](#) to their manager. Signatures of the employee, manager and AVP/Dean/Director or designate are required prior to proceeding with blended work arrangements.

Ad hoc temporary remote work arrangements may be approved for unique situations or circumstances such as inclement weather, special projects or other reasons. These arrangements are approved on an as-needed basis only, with no expectation of ongoing continuance.

### **What are the potential rewards and risks of the BWA?**

As with any new endeavour implementing this pilot will be complex. An initial list of some of the risks and rewards include:

- Attraction and recruitment statistics
  - EDI quotient - Accessibility
- Employee engagement and retention
- RRU cultural impact
- Equity and Fairness
- Climate impact
- Productivity and Performance
- Service levels to students and clients
- Benefits utilization
  - Potential for reduced sick leave
- Communication
- Psychological impacts ((i.e. decreased morale, isolation, etc.)
- Determining our technical equipment needs for greater mobility
- Space planning and allocation
- Cyber security

### **How will we measure and evaluate the impact of the pilot program?**

Throughout the pilot, managers we will be engaged in regular meetings to explore opportunities and issues for those on the front line of implementing the pilot; program participants and their managers will be invited to participate in pulse surveys; and a final World Café event will occur at the end of pilot to gather the fulsome experience data and the lessons learned.

### Denying Requests

Associate Vice-Presidents, Dean or Directors are not obligated to approve BWA requests. If declined, a clear reason for denial will be provided to the employee and the manager.

If a request is denied due to the role itself/operational feasibility, this may provide an opportunity for the manager and employee to explore opportunities for development to support the employee to eventually obtain a role where blended work arrangements can be supported, assuming it is important to the employee and their career.

If the request is denied due to performance concerns, this should be made clear to the employee and provides an opportunity to discuss expected output and behaviours that need to be consistently displayed before a blended work arrangement will be considered. The manager will work with the employee to put a performance improvement plan in place.

### Duration of Blended Work Arrangements

Blended work arrangements may start at any time of the term of the pilot and should be revisited on, at minimum, a monthly basis to ensure continued viability. It is recommended that review of blended work arrangements form part of performance development plan (PDP) discussions.

### Ending Blended Work Arrangements

In consultation with the Associate Vice-President, Dean, or Director, a manager may determine that blended work arrangements cannot continue for reasons such as operational feasibility, employee situations, or other reasons.

Employees may also determine that a blended work arrangement is not working for them.

Prior to ending a blended work arrangement, a manager and employee are encouraged to first discuss the reasons/challenges and explore whether adjustments can be made (e.g., communication adjustments, shifting of tasks, priorities or schedules).

If the arrangement is to end, blended work arrangements can be terminated by either the manager or employee by providing reasonable notice in writing.

If an employee moves into a different position at RRU, their current blended hybrid work arrangement will end. The employee may wish to explore a blended work arrangement with their manager in the new position.