

ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS (AWA) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

1) Can management impose a minimum number of in-office days?

Some UofT faculties have imposed a minimum number of in-office days. This limit may be considered arbitrary and could be a violation of the [Staff-Appointed Collective Agreement](#) and the [AWA guidelines](#).

The AWA guidelines **do not** state a minimum number of days for in-office work, but the guidelines do state that fully remote work will not normally be approved. The Staff-Appointed Collective Agreement states that decisions to grant AWA requests should be based on departmental operational efficiency and service effectiveness.

If your department/division/faculty has sent a memo identifying a minimum number of in-office days and/or you've been denied an AWA request because of a departmental minimum, please contact us. It is possible that your department/division/faculty is not reviewing AWA requests through the lens of operational efficiency and service effectiveness. This would be a violation of the Staff-Appointed Collective Agreement.

2) Can management require that members make up scheduled in-office days that are missed due to sickness or vacation?

The AWA Guideline and Staff Appointed Collective Agreement is silent on this question and managements rights to do this is untested. So, if this is happening to you then please get in touch with us so we can determine next steps. We will want to hear more.

3) What if management does not allow members to submit an AWA or directs members on what to request?

Members have a right to submit a request for an alternative work arrangement and management must respond to their request within 20 working days. If you were prevented from submitting an AWA request, please contact the union at info@usw1998.ca.

We have heard of examples of management directing members on what to write on their AWA requests in some departments. This goes against the spirit of the AWA process in which a member requests an alternative work arrangement. When you submit an AWA request, you should consider requesting the number of days that you want instead of the number of days that are being suggested by management. For example, if a member wants

to work remotely for 3 days per week but only requests 2 days remote work, then it is difficult for the union to argue that the member should be granted 3 days remote work. Please consider getting in touch with the union to discuss these issues.

AWA SCOPE

4) Can members who need accommodation due to family or health concerns submit an AWA?

These issues are out of the scope of the AWA process. Members who need accommodation due to family care or family health issues should speak with the [Family Care Office](#). Members who need accommodation due to health concerns should connect with [Health and Well-being](#). The relevant offices may determine that working remotely would be an appropriate accommodation. If members are unsatisfied with the response, then please connect with the union to discuss the situation.

COVID CONCERNS

5) Can members whose AWA requests have been denied refuse in-person work if they have already had COVID and are afraid to contract it again or if they have family members who are immunocompromised and/or are vulnerable to COVID?

Health & safety issues fall under the University's obligations under the [Health & Safety Act](#) and duty to accommodate disability. Family accommodation fall under the University's duty to accommodate obligations. The University department that deals with family accommodation is the [Family Care Office](#). The University department that deals with medical accommodations is [Health and Well-being](#). If you would like union support with accommodation issues, please contact the Local union office.

SAFETY IN THE OFFICE

6) What if members have concerns about being scheduled to work when they are the only person in the office?

If you are concerned about your safety in the office, please feel free to get in touch with the union to discuss your concerns and available support.

UTM, UTSC, and UTSG have walk safe and work alone programs from the respective campus safety offices. Call the relevant number for a free escort when walking or travelling between university buildings, parking lots and transit stops near campus:

- [UTSG: 416-978-SAFE \(7233\)](#)
- [UTM Work Alone / Walk Safe: 905-828-5200](#)
- [UTSC Patrol: 416-287-7022](#)

AWA REVIEW PERIOD

7) If members sign an AWA but want to revise it, can they only request to do so at the review period/the end of the AWA term?

Members should speak with their manager about making changes. There is nothing written in the Collective Agreement or the AWA guidelines that stipulates that a member cannot

submit a revised AWA request. If there is a concern with revising or resubmitting an AWA request, please feel free to contact the union.

AWA APPROVAL

8) Who has the final say in either approving or denying AWA requests?

The Departmental Head in consultation with HR has the final say in approving or denying AWA requests. They may consult with other managers in making their decision.

AWA TRACKING

9) There seem to be inconsistencies between departments with respecting to approving AWA requests. Does the union keep track of this in any way?

The Union encourages members to keep it informed on AWA practices within their unit. The more we know about how AWAs are being approved or denied, the better we will be able to make decisions on when a viable policy grievance can be filed and how to address problems with the AWA process in collective bargaining.

AWA TOWN HALLS

10) Is there a plan to schedule more AWA Town Halls?

If the membership desires additional AWA Town Halls, then the union will offer them.

If you still have questions and would like to speak with someone, please contact info@usw1998.ca or 416-506-9090.