



## *In this issue:*

**Featured Interview**  
with Professor Ts. Dr  
Mohd Nazip Suratman  
*Thriving in Research  
during Pandemic*

Page 08

**Featured Articles**  
*Hope is on Its Way:  
COVID-19 Vaccination  
in Malaysia*

*Working from Home in  
the New Norms*

Page 11

**FSG Led PPE Mission  
for Sabah Frontliners**

Page 34

**FSG Won Multiple  
Awards**

Page 62

## UNSTOPPABLE: FSG WON GLOBAL PROMINENCE AWARD 2020 & THE AWARDS UiTM 2021



# Working from Home in the New Norms

by Ts. Azrena Abd Karim

The implementation of Work From Home (WFH) concept by the government and private sectors since the Movement Control Order (MCO) last year has provided a new experience for most office-based employees across the country including those in the universities.

Although at first, it took us some time to adjust, it is now increasingly being accepted by many as tasks can be completed by staff who work from home. Based on general observations, the WFH policy does not negatively affect the productivity of the staff, and the administration can still run smoothly even if we are not physically present in the office.

Working from home is more than just having a laptop and doing things online. The challenge of most staff working from home is to maintain the rhythm of the norms associated with traditional work practices. This challenge could disrupt the productivity and quality of work if not managed properly.

For working from home to be sustainable, the organisation needs to create some boundaries to make sure that the mental health of the staff is being protected. For instance, when a minor decision is to be made, it can be taken care of with a quick phone call instead of a video conference. It also helps to set "office hours" for staff, share tips on how to track time so that work is not extended beyond the normal office hours, and announce that there is no expectation that emails will be answered after a certain hour.

At the same time, the lack of office equipment facilities such as computers, and the disruption of internet facilities that fail to function properly may disrupt the momentum of doing work. For academic staff, the main challenge is related to teaching evaluation. Lecturers need to be creative in finding the most suitable method to assess their students online such as in written tests which usually require physical presence in lecture halls.

In addition, teaching and learning sessions can also be disrupted as there are some facilities that are easily accessible from within the university area itself compared to off campus. However, it is not an obstacle for lecturers to use skills and technology in ensuring that learning and teaching can continue in the best way possible.



Internet facilities for students and staff should also be given priority for the process of teaching and learning to be effective. Special broadband network facilities for tasks that require staff to access the system are also very helpful especially in locations without adequate broadband network coverage.

Of course, this new work norm has its certain advantages and disadvantages, but if the experience of its implementation during the MCO is taken into account, the operation of the office that implements the work from home system can be run well and smoothly. In fact, it could be better than working from the office.

Among the advantages of working from home to staff is that they can pay full attention to the task given without having to think about wasting time facing traffic jams. They also no longer have to pay the cost for petrol or tolls every time they go to work. It is no exaggeration to say that the problem of traffic congestion that plagues city dwellers as well as residents of major cities will be overcome when the number of those who go out to the office to work can be reduced.

For employers, by implementing the new norms of working from home, they will no longer need to provide large office space, and the utility costs such as electricity bills, telephone, and water can be reduced.

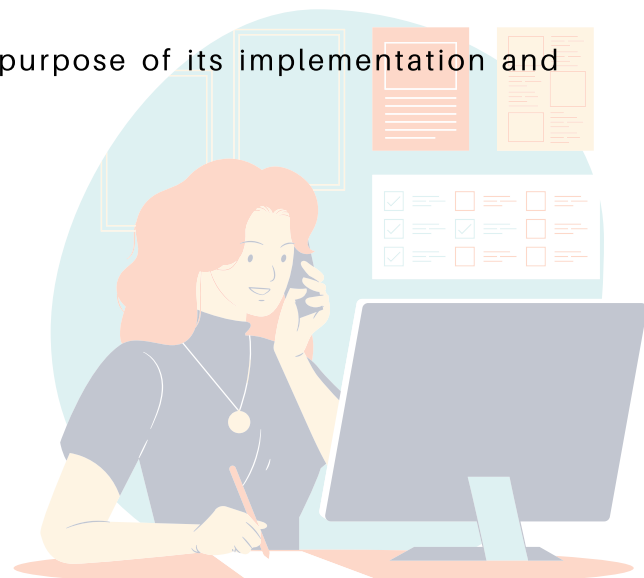
However, two important questions remain. Should the new norms of working from home continue even after the COVID-19 pandemic ends? What will be the impact on staff and universities if WFH remains in the future?

Even so, this new norm of working from home needs to be scrutinized in depth before being implemented permanently in the system. Among them are matters involving aspects of digital technology support, information security, suitability of implementation to certain services as well as the legal implications.

The most important is the question of productivity which of course there is no compromise on it because it is useless for an employer to allow their staff to do the given task at home, but the productivity results are disappointing.

Most importantly, WFH must truly fulfill the real purpose of its implementation and provide benefits to both staff and universities.

***"Organisation needs to create some boundaries to make sure that the mental health of the staff is being protected"***





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