

Message from Julian Duxfield, Director of HR

I do hope you managed to have a refreshing break over Christmas and New Year, despite ongoing restrictions. 2021 is already proving to be challenging and the third national lockdown will have brought difficulties and uncertainty to many of us. I am however confident that the resilience and supportiveness of all of our teams will enable us to overcome the challenges ahead together.

We have pulled together our usual round-up in this newsletter but with the situation changing so rapidly at present please keep a close eye on the Cascade messages each week, as urgent updates will continue to be sent through that route.

Furlough updates and reminders

The furlough scheme is being regularly updated. Please note:

- the extension of the scheme until 30 April 2021, on the same terms;
- those who are unable to work due to caring responsibilities arising from the lockdown can be furloughed on a part-time or full-time basis, where the criteria are met, and where necessary;
- the previous requirement that those being part-time furloughed could work for a minimum of 40% of their contracted hours has been removed but departments are requested to minimise the number of changes to hours of furlough;
- variable hours staff can be furloughed completely but cannot be furloughed on a part-time basis;
- all staff who meet the criteria, including academic staff, can be furloughed

Annual leave and furlough

The normal leave carry-over rules apply whether or not staff are furloughed. If you are on furlough you are encouraged to book periods of leave so that you don't return to work with an unmanageable amount of accrued leave. Please also note that whilst on furlough you must be available to attend/recommence work with 24 hours' notice and therefore that you must book leave for any period that you would be unavailable to do so.

Find out more: [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#)

School places for critical workers

Pressure on school places during the current lockdown is acute and parents and carers are asked to keep their children at home where they can. The DfE has issued new guidance giving further information about which HE roles may be considered critical workers for the purposes of access to education.

The University's [webpage on critical workers](#) has been updated and a message was sent to Heads of Departments/HAFs via the cascade on 15 January.

The DfE has also provided a template letter for the University to use to confirm that a member of staff is critical to the continuing operation of the institution, for the purposes of supporting applications for a school place.

Where a school requests evidence of an applicant's critical worker status, staff may request a letter of support from their Heads of Departments and Heads of Administration. Departments have the opportunity to discuss any alternatives that may be available such as part-time furlough, flexible working etc.

Find out more: [Critical workers](#)

Registrar's Update for Professional Services Staff

The Registrar, Gill Aitken, will be providing an update on a number of areas, including Brexit and the University's COVID-19 response. She will be joined by Julian Duxfield, Director of Human Resources, and Alice Chilver, Head of Professional and Organisational Development, who will outline the steps which the University is taking to support Professional Services staff throughout the coming year.

The update will take place on **Monday 8 February** from **11.30am to 12.30pm**.

Please [register to attend](#) by 12 noon on Thursday 4 February. If you have any queries about the event, please contact the [UAS Comms team](#).

Reward updates

Thank You Board

The University has introduced a University-wide Thank You Board hosted on the Staff Gateway. The platform aims to enable, encourage and support recognition across the University and from all staff groups.

It was first activated in early January with a small number of pilot departments and has proved very successful.

The Board is now available for all employees to post messages of thanks to others around the University for their help and support.

You can submit a Thank You Note to anyone for anything – including from outside your immediate team and the department. Thank You Notes are submitted via a quick online form.

[Find out more and view the Thank You Board on the Staff Gateway.](#)



Oxford Living Wage

The University became an Oxford Living Wage employer in August 2020. The Oxford Living Wage is a minimum hourly pay rate which promotes liveable earnings for all workers and recognises the high cost of living in Oxford.

With effect from 1 April 2021 the Oxford Living Wage will increase From £10.21 to £10.31 per hour.

This will be implemented in the April payroll, by increasing point 10 on the University's salary scale to the new value of the Oxford Living Wage.



The 2021 Recognition of Distinction Exercise

The Recognition of Distinction Scheme is an annual exercise to confer the title of full professor at the University of Oxford.

The 2021 Recognition of Distinction Exercise will launch in March 2021 - please see the [Reward website](#) for further information.

Free webinars to support you

Understanding and Managing Eating Disorders

Thursday 25 February, 10:00– 10:45am (via Zoom)

Speakers: [Rebecca Murphy](#) (main presentation), plus [Robin Murphy](#) and [Deborah Waller](#) GP on the Q&A panel

In this talk, you'll find out what eating disorders are and common myths about them. We'll also discuss evidence-based treatments and provide guidance on what you can do if you, or someone you know, is struggling with eating problems.

Find out more and register via OxTalks: <http://bit.ly/3s4CcNO>

Catch up on previous talks in the series: <https://bit.ly/2VTSDNT>

WORK+FAMILY SPACE

Sign up for free webinars with the [Work+Family space](#)

Coming up in February:

All Zoomed Out: Managing virtual interactions and relationships

Recently recorded:

Reboot & Revive: Strategies for positive mental health

Registration is free for employees - you just need your SSO and employee number (*from your payslip, not University card*). Through your registration you can also:

- Access back-up care;
- Speak to an expert;
- Download an Insider guide.

Returning Carer's Fund

The University's [Returning Carer's Fund](#) was set up in 2014 to provide support for research and academic staff to re-establish their careers after a caring break of six months or more.

Support of up to £5,000 (exceptionally, up to £10,000) is available. Typical requests are to fund conference participation, buy in temporary teaching, research or administrative assistance, buy equipment or fund other research-related costs.

The growing challenges in the funding environment and job market post COVID-19, mean that support for returning carers is more vital than ever to help offset risks of widening of gender gaps. EDU is grateful for any support you can give in promoting the Fund.

The next round of applications will close on **Friday 19 February**. Full details of the eligibility criteria and application procedures are on [RCF page](#) on the EDU website.

Adoption leave guidance

Adoption leave guidance has been updated to explain how the scheme applies to **dual approved** prospective adopters, in cases where a child is placed on a **fostering for adoption** arrangement, **concurrent planning placement** or similar formal, local authority approved scheme.

For full details see the [adoption leave guidance](#).

Parental Bereavement Leave

Since April 2020 parents who lose a child under the age of 18 (including in the case of stillbirth after 24 complete weeks of pregnancy) have been entitled to take two weeks parental bereavement leave.

The University's guidance and staff handbooks have now been updated to reflect the fact that University employees are entitled to take this leave at the rate of full pay. In common with other family leave benefits this is also a Day One entitlement.

Read the full [parental bereavement leave](#) guidance.

News from Finance Division: E-expenses

The online SAP Concur eExpenses system will be introduced in February 2021, replacing the paper form. Read more on the [Finance Division website](#) or email the project team at expensesproject@admin.ox.ac.uk.

SERPs and UAPs

Since February 2017, Staff Employment Review Panels (SERPs) and University Appeal Panels (UAPs) have been hearing cases for dismissal and appeals (against the end of fixed term contracts, EJRA Committee decisions and dismissals) in relation to academic and academic-related members of staff, following revisions to Statute XII.

You can now [download the report to Personnel Committee](#) on the operation of these panels.

Personal data breaches: *prevent, report, protect*

Prevent data breaches, **report** incidents immediately, and **protect** personal data.

We all have a responsibility to report data breaches immediately.

Visit [Personal data breaches: prevent, report, protect](#) for more information such as steps you can take to prevent breaches happening, how to report breaches in compliance with the law and how doing these things helps protect each other and the University.

Make sure you have done the mandatory [data protection and information security training course](#) as all staff must complete it once every 12 months.

This helps the University remain compliant with its obligations under GDPR but, equally importantly, provides a helpful reminder and illustration of the importance of keeping data safe. The course takes approximately 30 – 40 minutes.