

Message from Julian Duxfield, Director of HR

Michaelmas Term is traditionally a busy time across the University. This year more so than ever, as we aim to provide our students with the best education they can expect from Oxford in as safe an environment as possible and maintain our work-class research, whilst being ready to respond to an ever-changing and uncertain situation. This is not without its challenges for students and staff alike, and I would like to express my thanks to everyone who has worked so diligently over the summer to get us to where we are now. I would also like to introduce two new members of the Senior Management Team in University HR:

- ❖ **Alice Chilver** has started work as the new Head of POD. Enormous thanks go to **Anna Sanders** for her leadership of POD in the interim;
- ❖ **Les Wright** has joined us over the summer in the role of Interim Head of Occupational Health and Safety.

We are aware of the importance of improving staff wellbeing at this challenging time, and both Alice and Les will be involved in our work in this important area. We wish you all best wishes for the rest of this term.

COVID-19 Response - Staff advice and guidance

Whether you have been working on-site throughout the pandemic, are about to return, or are continuing to work from home, please take a few minutes to:

- Watch our [video](#) about the University-wide [Health Campaign](#), which promotes the behaviours we must adopt to reduce the risk of COVID-19;
- Visit the [University's Testing Service](#) if you have any of the three primary COVID-19 symptoms, and consult this [flowchart](#) (SSO required) for the process you need to follow. Rapid identification and isolation of positive cases is essential to slow the spread of the virus;
- If you have any one of the three primary symptoms of COVID-19, you must stay at home/immediately return home, and book a test;
- If you receive a positive test result from a service other than that provided by the University (eg the NHS), [you must complete the form for reporting external COVID-19 positive results](#) and notify your department and college. This is so they can take appropriate actions to keep others safe, and activate any relevant contingency plans,
- Download the [NHS COVID-19 app](#), which is available on smartphones from Google Play and the Apple App Store. We encourage you to use the app as it includes a number of tools to protect you, including contact tracing, local area alerts and venue check-in. Tracing recent close contacts of anyone who has tested positive is important in working to contain the virus;
- Familiarise yourself with the [important staff guidance factsheet](#) (SSO required) that has been developed to help you stay safe;
- Read how to develop effective work routines and maintain your wellbeing if you are [working remotely](#);
- Go to one of our many [mental health services](#) if you're feeling anxious (see more on p2);
- Read the latest iteration of the case response guidance (SSO required) if you are a line manager or a departmental contact. It includes 'action cards' which explain the process that must be followed if a student or staff member informs you of symptoms, or a positive COVID-19 test result. A full list of Department and College COVID-19 single points of contact [is available here](#).

Find out more and keep up to date with the new [University web resources](#).

POD – eLearning resources

POD have a new [eLearning page](#) where you can find a wide range of online learning opportunities, guides and resources available for staff.

This includes a personal development toolkit, 'delegating work' guide, 'leading remote teams' workshop and 1:1 coaching via Teams.

Updates from the Staff Immigration Team

As we fast approach the 31 December and the end of the Brexit transition period, information on all the most recent updates from the Staff Immigration Team can be found on the [Staff Immigration news page](#).

There is a dedicated website offering [advice for EU, EEA and Swiss staff](#), which includes contact details of members of the Staff Immigration Team who can provide help and advice.

Wellbeing Updates

Employee counselling and mental health services

Did you know that all University employees can access free telephone counselling through **Carefirst**? You can find out more about the service and how to contact Carefirst on the Occupational Health Service's webpage on [employee counselling](#).

The University also subscribes to **togetherall** (previously known as 'Big White Wall') which is an online peer-to-peer support community offering discussions mediated by mental health professionals, as well as self-learning courses and resources. Anyone with a University email address can [register for free with togetherall](#) (select "I'm from a University or College"). If you want to find out more before registering, take a look at this [Youtube introduction](#).

You can find lots more information on the HR websites:

- [Homeworking and Wellbeing](#)
- [Occupational Health](#)
- [Information for staff with pre-existing mental health conditions and for those in the neurodivergent community in light of COVID-19](#)

Nursery Childcare – Supporting Your Family Needs

In the current climate, staff may be called upon to help with research, step in for colleagues or return to their normal work routine at short notice.

To help support staff with any short-term childcare that you may need, the Childcare Services team within the University are opening applications for care required between now and 31 December 2020.

There are a number of Bright Horizons Nurseries that are able to support these care requests.

To discuss your requirements and the availability across these nurseries please contact childcare@admin.ox.ac.uk. All applications will be considered including ad-hoc childcare. Payment for shorter-term childcare is payable directly to Bright Horizons.

“Our Mental Wellness” – online lectures

The Department of Experimental Psychology are running a series of online lectures entitled "[Our Mental Wellness](#)". The series aims to inform, dispel myths and generate discussion on a range of mental health topics.

This is a great opportunity for staff to hear world-leading researchers from the University of Oxford share their expertise about mental health conditions and effective evidence-based treatments.

It is also a chance to have your questions answered about how we can look after each other's mental wellness in our community. Talks will run twice a term via Zoom, and are open to all staff at the University. This term's lectures are:

- [Overcoming Sleep Problems](#), presented by Professor Colin Espie, Professor of Sleep Medicine, followed by a Q&A session with Felicity Waite and Dimitri Gavriloff. This will take place on **Thursday 29 October** from **10-11am**.
- [Managing Depression and Low Mood](#), delivered by Willem Kuyken and followed by a Q&A session with Catherine Harmer and Andrea Cipriani. This will take place on **Thursday 19 November** from **10-11am**.

Next term's talks include Overcoming Mistrust and Paranoia. You can register for all of these talks now via the [Our Mental Wellness website](#).

Supporting employees suffering domestic abuse

If you manage a team you may want to be aware of the [Everyone's Business Advice Line](#). This is a resource for managers to advise them on how to approach disclosures of domestic abuse by their employees, particularly in light of COVID-19, and to triage such employees into the appropriate local specialist domestic abuse services.

It offers advice to employers for supporting employees, recognising the fact that 'Home is not always safe'.

To find out more, please see the [Everyone's Business website](#) where you can find phone and e-mail contact details.

Multi-factor authentication

The sector has seen a general rise in cyber activity, which has caused serious damage to systems at two universities. Early indications highlight that weak authentication played a role in allowing malicious cyber actors to conduct activity, which resulted in significant operational impacts from ransomware.

In order to achieve a reduction in incidents, from November, anyone with a SSO account will be expected to adopt multi-factor authentication. [Find out more about multi-factor authentication.](#)

Work + Family Space

Don't forget that University employees can register with My Family Care's [Work+Family Space](#). As a member you can access webinars, downloadable guides and a 'Speak to an expert' telephone counsellor about anything from planning to start a family, to childcare and holiday clubs, to caring for adult/elderly dependants – or just the challenge of balancing work and caring responsibilities, particularly in the current circumstances.

[Registration](#) is free - you just need your SSO and employee number (HR Self-Service).

OSPS – Default Tier for new entrants

New entrants to the University of Oxford Staff Pension Scheme go into the defined contribution section known as Investment Builder. It has 3 tiers of membership, as follows:

	Employee contribution	Employer contribution
Tier 3	8%	10%
Tier 2	6%	8%
Tier 1	4%	6%

Since Investment Builder was introduced in 2017, Tier 1 has been the default membership level. For new entrants from 1 October 2020, the default is now Tier 2. Members can opt to switch to another tier.

If you are a new employee, the Pensions Office will write you confirming details of your membership, as well as explaining how you can change your membership tier within your first three months of employment, should you wish to do so. Find out more on the [OSPS website](#).

Outcomes of the Research Staff Survey on the impact of COVID-19

The Research Staff Survey on the impact of COVID-19 took place during the Long Vacation, and just under 1,000 research staff responded. You can read more about the main findings from the survey and the recommendations that have been endorsed by the Research Steering Group on the [Staff Gateway](#). Below are details of some initiatives which are now underway in response to the concerns raised by many research staff during the survey:

- A new **internal funding scheme** has been introduced, named the [COVID Rebuilding Research Momentum Fund \(CRRMF\)](#). This will make small awards to those research staff and early career researchers whose research has been most significantly impacted by the Covid-19 crisis.
- **UKRI** has announced [additional funding](#) to enable extension of eligible projects in their final year where research progress has been severely disrupted. Work is now underway with departments to identify the most pressing cases and put extensions in place as quickly as possible.
- An **FAQs portal** for research staff has been created, which focuses on those questions which have been raised by research staff, and which directs staff to the advice given by the relevant department or division across the University. This also contains a **COVID-19 template impact log**, which research staff can use to help keep track of how the current situation has affected research progression.
- An online Town Hall meeting, 'Support for Fixed Term Research Staff and Fellows', will take place on **Monday 9 November** from **12-1pm**. [Find out more information, including details on how to register.](#)