

Covid-19-related updates to HR Guidance

Resources for homeworking and wellbeing

We hope you have found our [New Resources for Homeworking and Wellbeing](#) pages useful. We have aimed to make it a 'one-stop-shop' with guidance for individuals, managers, HR staff and links to all other sets of Covid-19 guidance which exist. Our pre-existing guidance on working from home has been supplemented by the new guidance on the above page, which includes guidance for managers on managing a whole team working remotely.

The guidance for individuals covers practical issues related to homeworking, and provides information on many resources available to help with looking after your mental and physical health, advice for those caring for dependants, those teaching remotely and for research staff. We are adding to these resources all the time, including the new mental health helpline launched by the NHS, and the Zurich Insurance telephone counselling service offered to University staff through DAS.

We have also included special Covid-19 guidance from colleagues in the Disability Advisory Group, Experimental Psychology (on supporting young people, and those with anxiety), and Education (on home-schooling). There are also resources to help keep us all entertained during lockdown, from Sports, the Ashmolean Museum and Continuing Education as well many external organisations.

Recruitment Freeze and Redeployment Protocol

The University introduced a recruitment freeze and redeployment protocol on 21 April. This is a means to manage University-funded staff numbers and salary costs. Apart from posts that are externally funded, before recruitment can go ahead, departments will need to get approval from a central panel. The scheme also seeks to ensure that where recruitment goes ahead existing staff who are coming to the end of a fixed-term contract or otherwise at risk of redundancy are given first priority.

Recruitment exercises which are currently underway will be paused to assess whether they meet the new criteria. If they do, and are approved under the protocol, the process will continue. Information about the protocol can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions, please speak to your local HR contact in the first instance.

New starters who are currently overseas

Before agreeing that a new starter may work 'from home' if their home is overseas, departments need to check all relevant tax, social security and insurance implications. Guidance is available on the [Finance Website](#) or from the Tax team via contacting overseasworking@admin.ox.ac.uk.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS or Furlough)

The Government's CJRS allows employers who have staff who are unable to do any work at all because of the Covid-19 pandemic to put these staff on furlough, and to reclaim 80% of their salary costs up to a maximum of £2,500 per month, plus some employer on costs. Employees and casual workers can be furloughed if they cannot work at all either because of the nature of their work, or due to intensive caring responsibilities.

The University has implemented the CJRS from 28 April 2020 and departments are asked to identify which of their staff could be furloughed.

Furloughed staff members remain employees of the University on the same terms and conditions of employment. The University will pay all furloughed employees 100% of their salary during the current period of furlough supported by the Government's scheme, which runs until 30 June 2020.

Please direct all queries to your local HR contact in the first instance.

New Jobs board for internal applicants

From Wednesday 6 May, the [Internal Job Board](#) will be the new place where all Oxford University employees can view and apply to all advertised job vacancies.

The Internal Job Board allows Oxford University employees to easily and securely view and apply for University jobs, with the benefit of having access to internal-only roles that are not published on the University's Jobs website.

The Internal Job Board can be found inside [HR Self Service](#). (NB you need to connect to the VPN to see the Jobs board).

Sickness absence

Sickness absence – we are aware that due to Covid-19 it is very difficult for staff who are sick beyond the 7 days for which self-certification is allowed to get a Fit Note at present. The guidance on [sickness for more than 7 days](#) has been temporarily updated.

Annual leave

Annual leave carry over – the guidance has been updated to reflect the statutory change which allows [key workers to carry over more than 5 days leave](#) if coronavirus has prevented staff from taking leave. For most staff the normal 5 day rule will continue to apply.

Additional annual leave – we have clarified that coronavirus counts as a 'life event' significant enough to allow staff to cancel their annual leave agreements, if they no longer need the additional leave which they requested. As this is a salary sacrifice arrangement, the cancellation *cannot be backdated* and any salary exchange made to date cannot be 'repaid'.

However, staff may cancel the agreement for the rest of the holiday year so that no further AAL is accrued. [Read the full updated guidance here.](#)

Recognition of Distinction

Following consultation with divisions, the University's Silver Group has agreed that the current Recognition of Distinction process should be delayed.

We are now working with the Divisions to determine at what point the process might re-start and a proposal will be considered by Personnel Committee in week 2. We are aware that applicants are currently expecting an outcome during the Long Vacation.

Following the Personnel Committee meeting in week 2, we will write to individual applicants to advise them of the revised timescale. Any ongoing queries should be directed to **Tracy Fahey** (tracy.fahey@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Covid-19 and Domestic Violence

The need for household isolation and social distancing due to Covid-19 will have a direct impact on people and families experiencing domestic abuse. As such, this is an extremely risky time for victims of abuse. If you are supporting a colleague who is experiencing domestic abuse, including coercive control, there are things you can do to try and minimise the risk to that individual.

- Consider that any communication you may have with your colleague may be monitored, therefore:
 - If you have telephone contact **NEVER** leave a voice message alluding to the perpetrator, their relationship or domestic abuse. Also avoid referring to them in email unless you are absolutely sure your colleague's emails are secure.
 - Always assess if it is safe to talk about domestic abuse first, if it is safe then discuss code words for future contact.
- Let them know that relationships are likely to be under increased pressure in this time and domestic abuse might get worse, or people might experience abuse for the first time.
- If they are in need of immediate assistance / are in danger, they must call 999. Let them know they can use the silent solution if they can't talk by pressing 55 when prompted on a 999 call.
- They can contact:
 - [Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) on 0800 7310055
 - [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) on 0808 2000 247
 - [Men's Advice Line Respect](#) on 0808 8010327
 - [Galop, LGBT+ Domestic Abuse helpline \(0800 999 5428\)](#)
- If it is safe to do so, recommend that they download the safety app Hollie Guard: hollieguard.com.

For more information and signposting to other resources, please see the [HR Covid-19 guidance: personal safety and safeguarding](#) page.



ENVIRONMENT HEALTH & SAFETY

Recording Health & Safety/Environmental Incidents

From **1 June 2020**, University employees and students will be able to record health and safety or environmental incidents online, following the launch of the new Incident Reporting and Investigation System (IRIS).

The online form will replace paper incident books, which will be removed from departments by the end of June.

All Safety roles (University, Area, Divisional, Departmental and Specialist Safety Officers) will have access to IRIS, where they will be able to review incidents for their Department/Division, view and complete actions and record investigations. Training for these roles has been available from 7 April.

Further details on how to access the online reporting form will be released nearer to launch. In the meantime, if you would like to know more, please contact the project team at irisprojectcomms@it.ox.ac.uk.

Experimental Psychology – ‘Our Mental Wellness’ Seminar

The Experimental Psychology Department has recently opened registration for the first talk in its new *Our Mental Wellness* seminar series. In light of the Covid-19 outbreak, the talk will place online instead of at Worcester College as originally planned. Please note that this event is open for staff and students only, not the general public.

The series aims to inform, dispel myths and generate discussion on a range of mental health topics. This is an excellent opportunity for students and staff to hear world-leading researchers share their expertise about mental health conditions and effective evidence-based treatments.

The inaugural talk, delivered by [Associate Professor Jennifer Wild](#), will focus on ***Managing Stress and Overcoming Anxiety*** and will take place via Zoom on Thursday 21 May, from 10:00-11:00am. [Emeritus Professor Robin Dunbar](#) (evolutionary psychology) and [Dr Polly Waite](#) (adolescent clinical psychology) will join Prof Wild for a Q&A panel discussion.

Registration is required, and staff and students will have the chance to submit a question for the panel when they register. Prospective attendees may register via the following [link](#).

If you require any further information, please contact **Halley Cohen**, the Department’s Public Relations and Development Officer (halley.cohen@psy.ox.ac.uk).

Adoption Leave

We will be updating our guidance on adoption leave to clarify the rules for adopters who are approved under the ‘fostering to adopt’ or ‘early permanence’ route, and the arrangements which apply in the event that adopting parents are offered the opportunity to adopt a second sibling during an ongoing adoption leave.

If you are considering the fostering to adopt/early permanence, please speak to your local HR contact in the first instance.

COVID-19 - staff hardship fund

As announced in the VC’s email to staff on 6 May, the University has created two hardship funds for those adversely affected by COVID-19, one for staff and one for students. Information how to make an application to the staff fund can be found on the [HR web pages](#).

Any members of the University who would like to contribute to these funds can [make a contribution](#) through the Development Office.