

## ***Message from Julian Duxfield, Director of HR***

Happy New Year. I hope that you were able to have a good break over the Christmas period and were able to reconnect with friends and family.

Welcome back to what promises to be a very busy term for all of us across the University. I know that many of us have returned to working from home in line with 'Plan B' and the return to BCP level 2 for the University, but our offices and buildings continue to be open for staff and with as full a cohort of students as possible on site and a fully operational research programme underway.

There are a range of resources to support staff with [working from home](#) and those affected by Coronavirus, including updates to the [sickness absence policy](#). I hope you all have a healthy start to this New Year.

## **Upcoming Events**

- 27<sup>th</sup> January – [Our Mental Wellness, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder webinar](#)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> February – [EJRA Virtual Consultation Meeting](#)
- 11<sup>th</sup> February – [Work +Family Space Webinar: All Zoomed Out](#)
- 18<sup>th</sup> February- Deadline for the [returning carers fund](#)
- 10<sup>th</sup> March – [Work +Family Space Webinar: A Confident Return](#)

## **Reward updates**

### **Discretionary Pay exercises 2022**

Further to the pay mitigations put in place in response to the financial uncertainties posed by COVID-19, it has been agreed that all discretionary pay exercises will resume in 2022 with payments for exercises taking effect from the beginning of the 2022/23 financial year (i.e. 1 August 2022).

Owing to the resource required from across the University, the optimum time for running the exercises has been carefully considered along with the pressure points of running multiple exercises. Further information about each exercise will be provided when it is launched.

### **New Cycle to work scheme**

Staff who want a healthier and more sustainable commute will be able to get a new bicycle for less in 2022, with the launch of a new salary sacrifice scheme.

For most people, this will mean a saving of around a third, and in some cases this could rise to almost a half. You'll be able to take advantage of the offer whether you're a novice making your first tentative journeys on two wheels, or an experienced cyclist looking to take things to the next level with a better bike. Visit the [Cycle to work Scheme page](#) for more details.

## **Work + Family Space**

Childcare Services would like to draw your attention to a number of family support services offered through our partnership with [Work & Family Space](#). From January staff will be automatically enrolled to the [Work + Family Space](#) service, staff will also have the option to opt out of the enrolment.

### **Bubble childcare search app**

The Bubble childcare search app allows parents to arrange ad-hoc and regular childcare and family support quickly and conveniently. University of Oxford staff are eligible to make one-off or block bookings, minus the usual booking fee, when signing up using their work email address. Bubble can be downloaded as an app from [Google play](#) or from [Apple](#).

Through Work & Family Space, University of Oxford employees are also able to access exclusive offers on permanent childcare and domiciliary care. Please see: [The Work + Family Space | HR Support \(ox.ac.uk\)](#) for further information.

## **Temporary Staffing Service (TSS)**

The TSS has seen a notable drop in applications from suitable candidates, at a time when demand for temporary staff has surged to an all-time high. Please direct any friends or family with administration experience interested in temporary work to the TSS.

# Staff Updates

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## Sickness during holiday and fixed closure days

A reminder that staff who are sick during a period of holiday can request that the days that they were ill are recorded as sickness absence and ask for the holiday days to be re-credited to their untaken holiday balance.

This provision was recently expanded to include fixed-closure days (as long as these are fixed closure days which are taken from the standard 38 days annual leave provision and not additional days) but was not extended to bank holidays. Please note that this is not automatic, and the re-crediting should only be at the request of the individual who may prefer that the days are taken as holiday rather than recorded as sickness.

The normal rules around reporting and recording sickness absence apply and staff should report the sickness as soon as possible, and submit an appropriate self-certification or Fit Note form for the absence.

### Carry-over Annual leave

Where staff are authorised to carry over annual leave from one year to the next, (up to 5 days, except for the specific Covid arrangements for up to 20 days) any carried over leave should be used within the first 3 months of the new leave year.

The guidance on carrying over leave has been updated to clarify this point.

### Long service leave

The guidance on long service additional leave days has been updated to clarify that any additional days that are accrued should be applied from the start of the holiday year within which the length of service threshold will be crossed.

### Payment in lieu of holiday

It is important for wellbeing that staff book and take all their annual leave each year. Therefore, the only circumstances in which holiday can be paid in lieu of being taken, is when an employee is leaving University employment completely: where an employee is transferring between departments (where continuity of service continues) it cannot be paid, and must be taken or – by agreement – transferred to the new department.

### Apprenticeship cohort recruitment

The apprenticeship team are moving towards cohort based apprenticeship recruitment in 2022. This will enable us to streamline the processes and improve efficiency. We will be able to better plan our apprenticeship recruitment across the University, and it will also offer a better experience for those looking to apply to our apprenticeship vacancies as they can plan their applications ahead of time.

The new apprenticeship recruitment calendar page outlines the timelines the team advise when recruiting an apprentice and the stages that need to be considered throughout the process. The cohort recruitment will take place in September, January and April in line with the academic year and the training provider's course dates. For further information see Apprenticeship Recruitment Calendar | HR Support

### Employer-Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) Town Hall Consultation Meetings

13<sup>th</sup> January 11am & 3<sup>rd</sup> February 3pm (online)

The EJRA 10-year review is now underway. Information about the Review Group and the review process are available from the dedicated webpage.

As part of the review, the Review Group are conducting a consultation on how the University should manage retirement while balancing the needs of all staff, whatever their career stage.

The chair of the Review Group, Professor David Paterson, will host two online Town Hall meetings (13<sup>th</sup> January 11am & 3<sup>rd</sup> February 3pm). Feedback from these meetings will form an important element of the consultation so please sign up.

### Returning Carers Fund

The University's Returning Carers' Fund provides small grants to support those who have taken a break of at least six months for caring responsibilities to re-establish their research careers. Applications are reviewed termly. The closing date for this term's applications is **Friday 18 February**. Full details and application forms are on the Returning Carers' Fund website.