

Equality and diversity impacts of COVID-19

Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the University has sought to ensure that all aspects of equality and diversity have been fully considered in its response. This table summarises the issues identified and mitigation measures taken or planned up to the beginning of Michaelmas term 2020. Given the rapidly evolving nature of the pandemic, the table may not reflect the University's latest advice, which can be found at: www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the Equality and Diversity Unit: equality@admin.ox.ac.uk

Equality issue	Mitigation measures
<p>1. Impact of socially distanced teaching and learning on students</p> <p>Students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, who are disproportionately more likely to be BME, may have reduced access to IT resources and private study space.</p> <p>Disabled students may experience additional barriers to participation due to accessibility issues, lack of access to adequate IT, interruptions to DSA-funded disability support and/or if they are unable to attend face-to-face teaching sessions due to health concerns.</p> <p>The inability to hold physical examinations has led to adapted assessment methods for some courses and cohorts, and cancelling of others. These changes have been disruptive for students and may have caused additional stress or mental health issues. Wider issues related to COVID-19 may have also impacted differently on certain groups of students affecting performance.</p> <p>However, the shift to more online learning and assessment could also have significant potential to contribute to reducing BME, gender and disability attainment gaps, as per institutional and OfS targets.</p>	<p>The University surveyed all students on their home access to teaching and learning during the Easter vacation. Colleges and a central student hardship fund provided students with laptops, broadband and accessibility needs.</p> <p>A teaching and assessment survey was run during Trinity term to assess staff and student experience of remote teaching and identify areas for improvement and increased support. Results were analysed by demographics to identify whether certain groups were disadvantaged in relation to others.</p> <p>Students undertaking assessments were able apply for mitigating circumstances. A safety net policy was introduced for students undertaking remote assessment to reduce the risk that they might be disadvantaged by the conditions in which they revised for and sat their exams.</p> <p>Planning for Michaelmas term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Took into account the needs of those students who may not be able to participate in face-to-face teaching.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed students in advance of the IT basic spec they will need to engage most fruitfully with online provisions. Hardship support could be an avenue for provision of laptops where students have limited funds and Crankstart bursaries are increasing for the most disadvantaged students. <p>A new COVID-19 Hardship Fund (CHF) will provide grants of up to £5,000 to students whose finances have been negatively affected by the pandemic since they began their studies at Oxford.</p> <p>The Centre for Teaching and Learning has published new ‘Skills for Remote Study’ materials to help students adapt to remote study and created new guidance and training on ‘Teaching Remotely’ for academic staff.</p>
<p>2. Impact on student admissions</p> <p>Lockdown severely impacted education and exams for school pupils and disruption may continue into the new academic year. This has had a clear impact on the 2020 cohort of A level students and may impact on the ability of students in other year groups to achieve the grades necessary for admission in future years. Students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds may be among the most severely impacted. Many of the University’s widening participation initiatives have not been able to take place in their usual format.</p>	<p>Following the announcement of A level results, the University and colleges reviewed each applicant and accepted over 300 students who missed their offers under the Ofqual algorithm, prioritising those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Following the government’s change of policy to award Centre Assessed Grades, all students who had met their conditional offers were accepted or offered a deferred place. This led to the University accepting its highest ever proportion of applicants from state schools, 68.4% compared with 62.3% in 2019, and means the University has successfully met its access and participation targets.</p> <p>Online resources to support student study skills, available to all incoming students to help them prepare for the new academic year, will provide additional support for students who have had their education so severely impacted.</p>

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	<p>Online open days have been run and the September virtual open day included extended hours for popular sessions to cater for international audiences.</p> <p>Undergraduate admissions interviews for entry in 2021 will be conducted remotely to minimise the risk to public health.</p>
<p>3. Impact on international students Some international students may have been unable to return home during lockdown and may have remained in University or private accommodation but isolated and financially insecure.</p> <p>International students coming to Oxford in Michaelmas term may be required to self-isolate for two weeks, and/or to commence their studies remotely.</p> <p>Some students have had national government funding cut as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19, leaving existing students with hardly any funds.</p>	<p>Detailed information for students is available on the University website and planning for Michaelmas term has considered the needs of international students.</p> <p>International students travelling from outside the UK who are required to isolate for 14 days on arrival have been provided with support in College or University accommodation.</p> <p>Arrangements have been put in place for approval by the Proctors of blanket dispensations from the University's usual residence requirement to support international students unable to travel to Oxford.</p> <p>Students affected by funding cuts have been allowed to suspend their studies until funding has been re-established.</p>
<p>4. Impact on doctoral students Many students have been unable to access research facilities or undertake fieldwork or other research activity during lockdown. Some have had to dedicate themselves to their caring responsibilities and postpone their studies. Others have been drafted into working on COVID-19 research. A lack of access to quiet working space is an issue of increasing concern. All of these factors impact on research progression.</p>	<p>The University has provided funding extensions to students in cases where they have been clearly impacted by the ongoing pandemic by underwriting co-funded extensions for UKRI and Wellcome Trust funded students currently in their final year of funding, and doing the same for students in the final year of Oxford-funded schemes (the COVID-19 Scholarship Extension Fund).</p>

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<p>The Vitae/SMaRteN survey of early career researchers and doctoral students showed that women and BME students were disproportionately negatively affected by a range of issues.</p> <p>Disabled students may have additional accessibility issues and/or lack of access to support.</p> <p>International students may have had to leave Oxford and unable to study effectively in their home country due to lack of access to essential resources and/or internet firewalls.</p> <p>Only a small proportion of doctoral students are eligible for the funded extensions offered by UKRI while many charities have been severely impacted by lockdown and are unable to offer similar extensions. Some students funded or co-funded by external organisations may find their funding withdrawn in part or entirely. Future charitable funding will decrease as many charities have been forced to reduce or suspend research funding.</p>	<p>Other students, including those who are currently self-funding their studies, will be eligible for a new hardship scheme in 2020/21.</p> <p>Students can complete their milestones and undertake the doctoral viva online.</p> <p>The University has granted all doctoral students a four-week grace period before assessing liability for University Continuation Charges in Michaelmas term 2020.</p>
<p>5. Impact of shift to home working</p> <p>Home working has had both positive and negative impacts and early indications are that many staff would welcome the option to work from home at least on a part-time basis in future. At the same time, the University needs to be aware of – and take steps to mitigate – the negative impacts on some groups of staff.</p> <p>Disabled staff need particular support to ensure that they are able to access appropriate reasonable adjustments whilst working from home and that home working arrangements do not exacerbate existing physical and mental health conditions. The University also needs to ensure that new technologies and ways of working are fully accessible.</p> <p>Staff with caring responsibilities have experienced challenges during the lockdown period – see section 12 below.</p>	<p>Equality considerations were integrated into guidance for staff and guidance for managers on working from home. Guidance has been updated to reflect that for many staff home working is no longer a temporary arrangement and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A stronger steer on DSE considerations; • A clear statement of expectation that departments should fund any necessary assistive technology; • Clear communication of support available from Occupational Health and the Staff Disability Advisor; • Advice for managers on supporting remote teams. <p>The Digital Access Working Group is considering accessibility issues.</p>

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	<p>Initial revisions to the University's flexible working guidance have been made. In the longer-term, consideration will be given to the need for an enhanced University policy on home-based working as a means of promoting equality and diversity, with particular focus on provisions for disabled staff and those with caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Research and Innovation Committee is considering measures to support those whose research has been significantly disrupted by caring responsibilities or health reasons (see 11 below).</p>
<p>6. Impact of furlough Implementation of the University's furlough scheme sought to ensure that decisions about which staff to furlough were equitable but also to allow staff with heavy caring responsibilities to request furlough if this was their preferred option.</p> <p>Whilst furlough may have alleviated pressures for some staff, a small proportion (7% of those responding to a survey run by the EDU to inform the University's equality impact assessment) experienced it negatively. Some staff may also have concerns about the impact of furlough on their career progression and job security.</p> <p>Although staff have been encouraged to undertake training and development activities during furlough, some groups of staff may have experienced barriers to doing so.</p> <p>An equality impact assessment (EIA) of the furlough scheme showed that at 1 July:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women were more likely than men to have been furloughed (60% of furloughed staff vs. 50% of the University population), although further 	<p>HR guidance on University implementation of the furlough scheme required equality considerations to be taken into account at all stages of the process.</p> <p>An EIA of the furlough scheme has been conducted and will be published. A report on the survey findings is available on the EDU website (SSO required).</p> <p>Criteria for the Returning Carers Fund allow academic and research staff furloughed for caring reasons to apply for support to re-establish their research.</p> <p>Communications to managers on supporting staff on furlough and on their return to work have been circulated.</p>

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<p>analysis was needed to determine the interaction with job role and contract type.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7% (107 individuals) of those furloughed were furloughed due to excessive caring responsibilities, of whom 75% were women. • Disabled staff may be more likely to have been furloughed than staff without a disability although low levels of disclosure make it difficult to draw firm conclusions. <p>Consultation with the equality networks to get feedback on experiences of furlough has been conducted and resulted in a number of recommendations to support staff on furlough and the return to work of staff on furlough.</p>	
<p>7. Impact of socially distanced teaching and learning on staff</p> <p>Teaching staff have had to make a rapid transition to teaching remotely and preparing for the next academic year of blended learning and smaller class sizes. Workloads have increased and are likely to remain high due to social distancing requirements as well as the requirement for many students to complete assessments to meet PSRB (professional, statutory and regulatory bodies) standards. Both undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers for 2020/21 are higher than expected, further increasing workloads. This is likely to require some degree of extended hours and Saturday working.</p> <p>Female academic staff may be disproportionately affected by high workload - and experience a negative impact on research productivity - due to high teaching loads, increased pastoral responsibilities and domestic caring responsibilities.</p> <p>There may also be a differential impact on disabled and older academics due to accessibility issues and concerns about the return to onsite working (see section 9).</p>	<p>The CTL has produced extensive guidance and training on teaching remotely, with a focus on flexibility and inclusion, plus a helpdesk service. The guidance was developed in the light of feedback from students and tutors during Trinity term.</p> <p>A teaching and assessment survey was run to assess staff and student experience of remote teaching and identify areas for improvement and increased support.</p> <p>Allowance will be made for overspends to accommodate extra teaching provision where required to alleviate academic workload and to support staff not be able to engage in face-to-face teaching.</p>
<p>8. Workload of female professional and support staff</p> <p>Many administrative roles and services have been affected by increased workload and a need to respond rapidly to the COVID-19 pandemic. Women</p>	<p>Consideration of measures to reduce workload and minimise the risk of burnout is required, particularly if access to child</p>

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<p>are overrepresented in such roles (60% of professional and support staff are women) and in many instances have been working at reduced capacity due to the demands of child care and home schooling, whilst also trying to respond to the urgent demands of the University's evolving context.</p>	<p>care remains restricted and workload does not ease during Michaelmas term.</p> <p>Investigation into the impact on the careers of women in professional and support roles will be conducted as part of the Athena SWAN self-assessment process, which will run through 2020/21.</p>
<p>9. Return to onsite working (RTOSW) We need to ensure that equality considerations are taken into account as departments plan for reopening, and also consider the differential impact on certain groups as some colleagues return to onsite working whilst others continue to work from home or are on furlough.</p> <p>The RTOSW presents particular risks to staff with certain underlying health conditions and to older staff, BME staff and pregnant women. Until now the University's position has been that no staff member has been required to RTOSW if they do not feel safe doing so; this general approach will be replaced by a more nuanced consideration of individual risk over the course of Michaelmas term and in reference to changing government policy.</p> <p>Staff with caring responsibilities may continue to experience barriers to onsite working, although it should not be assumed that they will do so.</p> <p>Vulnerable staff may feel under pressure to prioritise their career over their health if they see other colleagues returning to the workplace.</p> <p>The University's policy on face coverings will have both positive and negative impacts on staff and achieving balance between conflicting needs may be difficult.</p> <p>Some staff may experience an adverse impact on their mental health associated with the RTOSW.</p>	<p>Equality considerations have been integrated into RTOSW planning and guidance. Guidance emphasises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality factors to take into account during planning and risk assessments; • The need for dialogue to understand staff concerns; • That onsite working may be a positive option for some, e.g. to support staff with certain disabilities. <p>A template risk assessment document for departments includes consideration of equality issues and the needs of vulnerable staff.</p> <p>A COVID-19 vulnerability assessment, process for referral to OH and associated managers' guidance for use with vulnerable individuals has been developed. This will allow individual staff members to assess their vulnerability and receive further OH advice, if necessary, and for managers to refer staff to OH if they have reason to believe that they are vulnerable.</p> <p>The development of the University's policy on face coverings has fully considered potential positive and negative equality impacts. The CTL have produced a briefing document to help with the planning of teaching in-person with face coverings.</p>

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	<p>Further consideration will be given to the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance to managers on supporting staff who are experiencing anxiety and other mental health impacts associated with the RTOSW and to promote awareness of neurodiversity. • How to mitigate career impacts for individuals in departments which have reopened but who are unable to return to onsite working, e.g. due to risks to health or caring responsibilities.
<p>10. Impact on research funding The Oxford Research Staff Society (OxRSS) gathered feedback from the researcher population on the impact of COVID-19, which included concerns about job security and availability of future funding.</p> <p>Results of a Vitae/SMaRteN survey of early career researchers show that women and BME staff are disproportionately negatively affected.</p> <p>Research Services have conducted a survey of research staff to further interrogate issues.</p> <p>Concerns have been expressed about a risk of widening gender and other inequalities in access to research funding due to a drop off in research grant opportunities and/or applications due to cancellations/deferrals by funders, departmental reprioritisation and/or shift in focus of research funding to bigger grants/subjects where women are less represented.</p>	<p>Research Services have developed a page of COVID-19 funding and project management guidance to respond to the specific concerns of researchers.</p> <p>Additional HR support has been put in place for staff seeking redeployment at the end of their contract (Priority Candidate Support Scheme).</p> <p>Initial monitoring by Research Services and MSD did not show any evidence of women's grant application and success rates being adversely affected but this will continue to be kept under review.</p> <p>Analysis of the results of the research staff survey will inform the development of further support measures.</p>
<p>11. Impact on research productivity OxRSS have gathered feedback from the researcher population on the impact of COVID-19, which include concerns about disruption to research/reduced outputs during the lockdown period. Research Services have conducted a survey of research staff to further interrogate issues.</p>	<p>Initial Period of Office (IPO) guidance has been revised, with extensions available to anyone whose research has been adversely affected by COVID-19.</p>

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<p>Internationally, it has been observed that increased caring responsibilities have led to lower numbers of journal submissions from women and the adverse impact is expected to become more pronounced over time.</p> <p>BEIS has commissioned a CRAC/Vitae survey of researchers, particularly PIs and research leaders, on the impact of the pandemic to inform consideration and design of potential interventions to help protect researchers, research institutions and facilities.</p>	<p>In instances where staff due to retire this summer have applied for an extension to their retirement date directly related to the impact of COVID-19 on their ability to complete a funded research project to the original timetable, the EJRA Committee has permitted their contract to be extended by the equivalent length of the extension agreed by the funder.</p> <p>Research Services has developed a COVID-19 Rebuilding Research Momentum Fund to mitigate the impact of COVID-related disruption for researchers in the early stages of research independence and academics in their initial period of office. The John Fell Fund has earmarked £500k for this purpose.</p> <p>Some support to researchers funded by UKRI will be available via a block grant to the University and equality, diversity and inclusion will be key considerations in making decisions about funding allocation.</p> <p>Analysis of the results of the research staff survey will inform the development of further support measures.</p>
<p>12. Impact of caring responsibilities</p> <p>During the lockdown period many staff have balanced work with caring and home schooling responsibilities; there is some internal evidence (e.g. data on furloughed staff) that women have been disproportionately affected, in addition to the results of both national and international analyses.</p> <p>Although nurseries and schools have now reopened, uncertainties remain about what might happen if there should be a local increase in COVID-19 cases, and some staff may still experience constraints to their working hours, e.g. where after school clubs do not reopen or nurseries are operating with reduced hours.</p>	<p>The needs of staff with caring responsibilities have been considered in the development of all relevant University policies, procedures and guidance (e.g. furlough, RTOSW, homeworking).</p> <p>Staff with caring responsibilities have continued to receive their full usual rate of pay regardless of actual hours worked.</p> <p>Some departments have made funds available to cover additional childcare costs for staff engaging in work-related training.</p>

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	<p>The extent of impact of caring responsibilities, and support needed by staff (e.g. to work flexibly), will be kept under review as the University reopens further and the local situation develops.</p> <p>The longer-term impacts of caring responsibilities on the career outcomes of researchers will be monitored by Research and Innovation Committee.</p>
<p>13. Impact of recruitment freeze The recruitment freeze is likely to impact on the University's capacity to achieve greater diversity among staff. It will be harder to change the existing gender/ethnic balance if there are fewer recruitments, and turnover is likely to be lower (due to the general economic downturn and redundancies elsewhere), on top of already extremely low turnover rates for both academic and professional services staff.</p> <p>It is also likely to place additional workload pressures on existing staff members. Depending on which roles remain vacant, this may have a particularly adverse impact on female staff.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring of implementation of the recruitment protocol from an equality perspective is necessary.</p>	<p>Maternity cover posts are exempt from the recruitment protocol.</p> <p>In Trinity term 2020, Personnel Committee strongly encouraged all members of recruitment panels to undertake relevant online training: Recruitment and Selection; Implicit Bias in the Workplace; Tackling Race Bias at Work.</p> <p>Personnel Committee will receive regular reports on the operation of the Recruitment Protocol.</p>
<p>14. Redeployment may reproduce implicit bias While the recruitment freeze is in place, fair and transparent redeployment processes will be critical and should be monitored to ensure that implicit bias does not lead to the University's staffing profile becoming less diverse.</p>	<p>Additional HR support has been put in place for staff seeking redeployment (Priority Candidate Support Scheme).</p>
<p>15. Increased demand for mental health support We are beginning to see an increased number of referrals to OH for counselling and growing numbers of staff approaching the Staff Disability Advisor for support with mental ill-health.</p>	<p>All staff have access to counselling from Care First and to support through the University's subscription to togetherall</p>

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<p>There is evidence that lockdown has led to an increased incidence of mental ill-health in general and certain protected groups may be particularly vulnerable, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with pre-existing mental health conditions may have experienced a deterioration of their condition; • Disabled people required to shield may have experienced isolation; • BME people are more likely to have experienced bereavement and/or the serious illness of a friend or family member; • LGBT+ people are disproportionately likely to experience mental ill-health; • Women’s mental health may have been negatively impacted by job anxiety and the stress of juggling work and childcare; • Research staff on fixed-term contracts, who are disproportionately likely to be younger, female and/or BME, may have experienced anxiety about job security. <p>These groups are also likely to be disproportionately adversely affected by a ‘second wave’ of coronavirus and the reimposition of local and national restrictions.</p> <p>Conversely, some staff who have experienced working from home positively may experience adverse mental health impacts on returning to onsite working.</p>	<p>(previously Big White Wall). Regular and clear communication of the availability of this support will continue.</p> <p>Regular welfare blog posts and podcasts were published by Student Welfare and Support Services in Trinity term with more planned for Michaelmas.</p> <p>The EDU and Disability Advisory Group (DAG) have developed guidance for staff with pre-existing mental health conditions.</p> <p>Mental health resources for staff are available on the OH website and for students on the Student Welfare and Support Services website. These online resources for students were commended as an example of good practice by the OfS.</p> <p>Welfare provisions for BME students include increased access to BME counsellors at the Student Counselling Service. The Counselling Service also trains and supports Student Peer Supporters, who include Peers of Colour and Rainbow Peers.</p> <p>There have been targeted communications to the LGBT+ staff network on mental health support throughout the summer.</p> <p>The University has renewed its membership of the Mindful Employer charter and a staff mental health strategy will be developed in 2020/21.</p>
<p>16. Increase in discrimination towards BME staff and students Chinese students experienced xenophobia at the beginning of the pandemic and wider racial tensions have also increased, particularly in the wake of</p>	<p>The PVC for Education explicitly addressed racism in COVID-19 communications to students.</p>

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<p>George Floyd's killing and the global Black Lives Matter protests. Oxford has seen a number of peaceful protests related to BLM, colonialism and statues.</p> <p>The Proctors' Office has seen an increase of cases of harassment by students on students, often between different ethnic groups. Lockdown may have been a contributing factor, although this is difficult to ascertain.</p>	<p>Individual cases are being addressed as they are reported.</p> <p>Formal and anecdotal reports of harassment will be monitored and action taken to respond to any emerging trends.</p> <p>Further information about the University's Harassment Advisory Service is available here.</p>
<p>17. Increased risks to personal security</p> <p>During the lockdown period, LGBT+ staff and students may have had to live with family who do not accept their sexual or gender identity or are LGBT+ phobic. Subsequently they may have had to hide their identity and been unable to safely take part in online activity or initiatives (Pride, Role Models, LGBT+ social events) and access their usual support networks.</p> <p>LGBT+ students may be estranged from their families and may have been unable to return home during lockdown, remaining in University or private accommodation but isolated and financially insecure.</p> <p>There has been a well-documented increase in domestic violence during lockdown, which disproportionately affects women and the LGBT+ community.</p>	<p>The University published advice for LGBT+ students on being at home with family who struggle to accept their identity and issued a reminder to staff on sources of support for LGBT+ people.</p> <p>Sources of support for staff experiencing domestic violence are signposted in staff homeworking guidance.</p>
<p>18. Financial insecurity</p> <p>Some staff and students may be experiencing financial hardship during the pandemic. Younger, BME and disabled staff and students may be disproportionately affected, although further evidence is needed.</p>	<p>Hardship funds have been established for staff and students.</p>
<p>19. Time and resource for equality work is squeezed out due to other work pressures</p> <p>There is a risk that equality considerations may be overlooked as staff are working under pressure and to tight deadlines. Staff who would usually be</p>	<p>At minimum, equality considerations should be fully embedded into decision-making processes. A revised guidance note to committees was issued before the</p>

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responsible for leading equality and diversity work may be diverted into other areas.	beginning of Michaelmas term and guidance on the EDU website has been updated.. Applications (institutional and department-level) to Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter have been granted a year's extension in recognition of the disruption caused by COVID-19.

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