



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

**PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT**

# HR Policy briefing – TT2026

SPEAKERS:

KATHRYN FAIRHURST JONES  
TRACY FAHEY  
ANITA PATERSON  
MEGAN WHITLEY



# Housekeeping

- Recording – the recording will be available for 3 months
- Cameras off/microphones muted, please
- We will stop recording at the end of the session for Q&A
- Questions in the chat or unmute once recording ends



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Agenda

- Employment Rights Act 2025
- General updates



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Employment Rights Act 2025

Key reforms that were introduced under the Employment Rights Act (2025) came into force in April 2026:

- **Recording Annual Leave: Mandatory for all staff from April 2026**
- **Protection of disclosures/whistleblowing**
- **Day one rights to paternity and unpaid parental leave and Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)**
- **Gender pay gap and menopause action plans**
- **Protective award for failure to consult in collective redundancy situations**



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Employment Rights Act 2025

## **Recording Annual Leave: Mandatory for All Staff from April 2026**

- All employers must now keep and retain records showing that all staff are taking at least the minimum statutory annual leave entitlement (28 days per annum for full-time staff)
- Academic members of staff who do not currently record annual leave will be required to do so with effect from 6 April 2026 in order for the University to demonstrate compliance with the new statutory requirements.
- Most University employees already record their annual leave via PeopleXD, which meets the new statutory requirement.
- Departments using PeopleXD should continue to log annual leave via the system. Departments who have not yet migrated to recording leave on PeopleXD should continue to use their current processes, as advised by their HR team.



# Employment Rights Act 2025

## Protection of disclosures/whistleblowing

- To encourage the reporting of workplace misconduct, the ERA 2025 explicitly adds sexual harassment to the list of protected whistleblowing disclosures.
- This means that from 6 April 2026, employees cannot be dismissed, nor suffer a detriment for reporting sexual harassment.
- The University has introduced new online training for managers to strengthen their capability to respond confidently and effectively to harassment or unacceptable behaviour:
  - [Thursday 21 May, 1pm-2:30pm](#)
  - [Monday 8 June, 11am to 12:30pm](#)



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Employment Rights Act 2025

## Day one rights to paternity and unpaid parental leave and Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

- No changes for the University here as these are already covered in our contractual scheme.

## Gender pay gap and menopause action plans

- Employers with 250 or more employees have the option to produce and publish a voluntary action plan alongside their gender pay gap data and subject to legislation, these will become mandatory from spring 2027.
- The purpose of action plans is to support employers to take effective action to improve workplace gender equality.
- The University has existing guidance on [Menopause in the workplace | HR Support](#) which includes guidance for managers and staff, resources and case studies.



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Employment Rights Act 2025

## Protective award for failure to consult in collective redundancy situations

- For dismissals on or after 6 April 2026, the maximum compensation for failure to comply with collective consultation obligations has increased from 90 days' pay to 180 days' pay per employee.
- Consultation is still underway on the two options to set a new organisation-wide threshold that will use either a single fixed number in the range of 250 to 1,000, **or**, tiering the threshold based on number of employees.
- Ensure that you are familiar with the existing guidance on [Redundancy procedure | HR Support](#) so whatever changes come into effect build on strong foundations.
- We are reviewing our guidance and template documentation to help support managing redundancy processes.

**NB:** Ensure HRBPs are engaged with at an early stage where redundancies are contemplated.



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Employment Rights Act 2025

## Unfair Dismissal Rights

- From 1 January 2027, the qualifying period for ordinary unfair dismissal claims will reduce from two years' continuous service to six months.
- This means that any employee reaching six months' service on or after 1 January 2027 will have a statutory right to bring an ordinary unfair dismissal claim.
- We are currently revising our fixed-term contract policy and procedures to ensure compliance with new legislation on unfair dismissal
- It is likely that the pool of priority candidates will be expanded.
- At the present time we expect to maintain current probation lengths



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Employment Rights Act 2025

## Measures that will take effect later

- Requirement for employers to take “all reasonable steps” to prevent sexual harassment, including potential liability for third-party harassment (e.g. students, visitors, contractors)
- New rights and protections for trade union representatives and strengthened union workplace access rights
- Extension of protections against detriment for participation in industrial action
- Potential extension of Employment Tribunal time limits from 3 to 6 months
- Greater restrictions on “fire and rehire” practices
- Strengthened rights for zero-hours and casual workers, including rights to more predictable working patterns
- Enhanced flexible working rights and increased employer consultation obligations before refusal
- Establishment of the Fair Work Agency with enhanced enforcement powers



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# General updates

## Template updates

- Off-system versions of the academic-related contracts have been updated to include a reference to the code on Freedom of Speech to help with compliance regarding the new regulations that have come in.
- After reviewing the letters that are sent to staff on EJRA grades 2.5 years in advance of their EJRA date, we have made some minor amendments to the templates to make them clearer and feel more supportive.

View all our templates on the HR Support website, [Templates | HR Support](#)

## Website updates

- We have made some minor updates to the adoption leave scheme guidance [University's contractual adoption pay scheme | HR Support](#) clarifying how the scheme applies in cases of overseas adoptions and/or surrogacy.
- It also lists some of the types of family arrangement which are not eligible for adoption leave.



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Cont'd: General updates

## Bereaved partners' paternity leave

- A new day-one right to leave when a mother dies in the 52-week period following birth.
- The leave is available to the surviving parent to enable them to stay at home and care for the child.
- The same entitlement applies in cases of adoption where the primary adopter dies within the first year of adoption.
- The University has enhanced the leave so that the surviving parent continues to receive their normal full rate of pay, in line with our other family leave schemes.
- Employees taking BPPL benefit from protections which are very similar to those applicable to employees taking other forms of family leave, and where the period of leave is longer than 6 continuous weeks, the provisions of the Protection from Redundancy (Pregnancy and Family Leave) Act 2023 also apply.
- Up to 10 'Keeping in Touch' days may be worked during any period of BPPL.

Further details regarding the amount of leave available, eligibility, notice and payroll actions can be viewed on the HR Support website, [Bereaved Partner Paternity Leave \(BPPL\) | HR Support](#)



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Cont'd: General updates

## Holiday reminder

- Wherever possible staff should be encouraged to take their full holiday entitlement within the year in which it is granted.
- In exceptional circumstances, and only with the prior agreement of the Head of Department, up to 5 days' holiday (pro-rata) may be carried over into the following year but must be used within the first 3 months of the new holiday year.
- There are two exceptions to the 5 days limit which are where a staff member has not been able to take their annual leave due to extended periods of statutory family leave or long-term sickness absence.
- Pay in lieu of accrued, untaken holiday is only available if the employee is leaving the University.

For full details see [Holiday entitlement | HR Support](#).



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Cont'd: General updates

## OxIntranet Migration

- Our content is currently being moved to the 'Working here' section of OxIntranet
- We will have a redirect page but any of your documents or webpages with any old links will need to be updated.
- In the meantime, you can take a look at the UAS content already live on OxIntranet, including the Safety Office, Occupational Health and Wellbeing.

See [OxIntranet Home](#) - -

**OxIntranet** Working here





PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Cont'd: General updates

## Improvements to Oxford Staff Pension Scheme benefits

- Following a positive 2025 valuation, which took place on 31 March 2025, the Oxford Staff Pension Scheme (OSPS) is introducing improvements to pension benefits for all members and the support they receive at retirement.

[Join the OSPS Briefing Session: Incoming Improvements to Members on 11 June](#) to find out more and ask questions.



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Support and resources

Details of all our policies and processes are on the HR Support website: [Home | HR Support](#)

HRBP contact details are listed in the communications webpage here: [Contact the People Department | HR Support](#)

OxIntranet Homepage: [OxIntranet Home - -](#)



PEOPLE  
DEPARTMENT

# Questions