Brasenose College
Working from home guide during Coronavirus pandemic

This guide has been put together to provide information and guidance for those needing to work remotely due to Coronavirus. If you have any further questions about home-working after reading this information, please contact IT or HR contact in the first instance.

TIPS FOR WORKING FROM HOME DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

- Stick to your normal routine.
- Try and stick to your normal working hours. We realise that this may be difficult for some people due to their family or personal circumstances. If you need to amend your hours, speak to your manager and let your colleagues know when you'll be off-line.
- Keep communication going with your manager and colleagues either by phone or video calls.
- Take coffee and lunch breaks and try arrange a virtual chat with colleagues over lunch.
- Get some fresh air during breaks by going outside. Vary your activities and day, to enable breaks away from the screen.
- Stretch or change position frequently.
- Take a break before you get tired or uncomfortable. Short frequent breaks are far better than longer ones e.g. 2-3 minutes every 20 minutes is better than 10 minutes every 2 hours.

HOME OFFICE

- If possible, try to set up in a different room, away from household distractions.
- If using a home PC, ensure it is password protected.
- Laptops have notoriously bad ergonomics, in the short-term do what you can to add a keyboard and mouse. IT may be able to help but be patient, it will take a while for everyone to get set up. Email computer.office@bnc.ox.ac.uk if you need help/advice.
- Home tables and chairs are often not best suited for home working, your arms should be angled slightly downwards towards your keyboard not upwards. Try raising your chair if possible and/or using cushions. Put books under your screen to raise it to eyelevel, if not using a laptop. Complete the Remote Working Risk Assessment at the end of this document to use as a guide for setting up your workspace and help with equipment you may need. Line managers are responsible for ensuring their staff have completed the risk assessment and are working safely.
- Talk to your family and agree your home-working timetable so that you set boundaries for quiet, uninterruptible time and for family time.

LOOKING AFTER DEPENDANTS

- Accept that your family need you, especially school age children who will need help with their remote schooling. Talk to your manager and agree protected time to do this.
- Take your annual leave as planned and use the time to explore minibeasts in the garden, and use online resources as well as good old-fashioned family games
- Encourage school age children to stick to their normal routine during term-time but take advice from their school and be prepared to be flexible to help you all cope
- Where possible, make plans with your partner to divide the childcare, and stick to the plan.

TIPS FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Refer to the staff website https://staff.bnc.ox.ac.uk/guides/ for guides with links for remote access and using MS Teams.

Remote access: https://staff.bnc.ox.ac.uk/guides/remote-access/

Remote working with Teams: https://staff.bnc.ox.ac.uk/remote-working-with-microsoft-teams/

- Agree who is Chair - everyone else go on mute to avoid background noise, and if someone wants to speak they 'raise their hand' - depending on the conference system used that can be via that very function (raise a hand) or via a chat message the Chair
- Set an agenda prior to the meeting with specific goals and discussion areas.
- Avoid extremely long meetings (stamina wanes much more quickly when you are not in the room with others)
- If bandwidth allows, have people turn their videos on - it makes it more personal and keeps everyone engaged

TIPS FOR STAYING CONNECTED WITH COLLEAGUES

- Be kind and patient as we settle into this new way of working from home and dealing with a pandemic. These are not normal working from home conditions
- Keep connected – arrange frequent and regular virtual meetings
- Microsoft Teams is a fantastic tool – start using it as soon as possible with your team
- Encourage your team to keep connected with each other; including virtual meetings just for coffee and a chat
- Use phone and virtual conferences where possible, remember that e-mail messages can be a blunt tool and don't always convey subtleties
- Give everyone permission to spend time understanding their IT connections: remember some will find this harder than others; be prepared to help and consider buddying staff up so that they can help others to get set up
- Recognise that if you, or your team, are working on home devices it may take a while to get used to the new set up and differences in the speed and capability of individual devices may be frustrating
- Everyone's home circumstances are different, be patient and tolerant, it's going to take a while for your team to find a new rhythm
- Suggest sharing calendars so that everyone in the team knows when others are free and when they are not available. Block out time in your calendar when you are unavailable due to caring responsibilities
- Agree boundaries and expectations with your team – some will want to work in the evenings, others may feel under pressure if they receive emails at all hours
- Remember team members will also be dealing with their own health issues; caring for vulnerable family members and managing childcare
- Try to stick to normal hours, working from home makes it harder to separate personal and work lives. Some people will find themselves working without a break, others will find themselves tackling the laundry and managing bickering children
- If you do work out of normal hours, make it clear that you don't expect replies to suit your own timetable
- Be empathetic and support your team to settle into new routines

- Have faith in your people: their wellbeing depends on feeling like they are doing a good job
- Be kind to yourself; this is hard for you too: take time to think through and discuss new ways of working; and give yourself permission to investigate and understand new systems

TIPS FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Use this opportunity to develop your skills. There are lots of online courses available on the People and Organisational Development website, as well as a personal development tool kit. https://pod.admin.ox.ac.uk/home
- Molly, the University IT Learning Centre's collection of online courses and resources that includes the University's subscription to LinkedIn Learning https://skills.it.ox.ac.uk/molly
- Learning and development can be a way of supporting resilience and wellbeing
- Talk to your manager about what skills development would be useful for you

TOP TIPS FOR USING MICROSOFT TEAMS FOR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

- Try using Microsoft Teams to translate office social activities to an on-line environment. Sustaining a sense of normalcy and camaraderie might require unconventional activities
- Celebrate birthdays, give public praise for goals reached and projects completed - make time for casual conversations
- Team check in: A suggestion could be to ask everyone to 'check in' on a Teams chat channel every morning when they're working to confirm they're OK, as well as a 'Goodnight' check out at the end of day. Another idea is to have some form of scheduled Daily Meeting to prioritise the day's work.
- Team social: Add a separate 'social' channel on Teams for non-work chat where you might share pictures, jokes, anything of a light-hearted nature. It is helpful to keep morale up, whilst keeping work going.
- Team world news: Pandemics are scary. Some people will want to deal with this by discussing it (perhaps particularly those living alone – see above) and some people will find it a worrying distraction from work. You could have a separate channel for this discussion to make it optional
- Team Chat (messaging) Consider establishing a new etiquette rule that you can start a direct Chat conversation with someone but there is no obligation to respond immediately. This seems to be the remote-working version of wandering over to someone's desk to ask a question.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

This is a difficult period for all of us and the following sources may provide support to protect your mental health.

College provides an **Employee Assistance Programme** through Care First Lifestyle using their website or telephone support. The website offers extensive resources including articles on health, issues at home, issues at work, management support tools, stress questionnaires and online counselling in real-time.

To find out more information on the services provided by Care first, please visit:

 www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk (Username: Brasenose, Password: Employee) or contact **0800 174319** to speak to a professional counsellor or information specialist *in confidence* free of charge**.**

Other areas offering support:
https://www.psy.ox.ac.uk/covid-19-info/covid-19-our-mental-health

https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/

https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/blog/health-and-other-forms-of-anxiety-and-coronavirus/

https://www.ocduk.org/ocd-and-coronavirus-survival-tips/

https://www.autistica.org.uk/what-is-autism/coping-with-uncertainty

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/20/after-work-drinks-by-video-how-to-survive-100-days-of-solitude-coronavirus

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

What happens to my payslip?
Payslips (and P60) will be posted to your home address during this work from home period.

What happens if I need to self-isolate?
If you have to self-isolate, further to PHE or medical advice, either because you or a member of your family are symptomatic or particularly vulnerable, you are expected to carry on working from home if possible, so long as (if you are ill) your symptoms are mild enough that you would ordinarily continue to go to work.

If you have to self-isolate but are unable to work from home for operational reasons, you will continue to be paid at the normal rate of pay for that period.

If you are too unwell to work during the period of self-isolation you should contact your manager to let them know.

You will not be required to use annual leave to cover a period of self-isolation.

If you are unwell with Coronavirus beyond the self-isolation required by PHE advice (7 or 14 days), you will still receive the college's sick pay but it will not count towards your sickness absence record.

You can self-certify for up to seven consecutive calendar days. Where you are absent for more than seven days with Coronavirus symptoms, you should try to obtain certification from the NHS website and NHS 111 online.

I've booked annual leave but I've had to cancel my holiday plans. Can I cancel my leave?
We expect everyone to take their leave as planned unless there are very strong operational reasons why not, whether or not you are able to go away on holiday. It is important for your health that you take leave, and it may not be possible for you to reschedule leave to later in the year.

March 2020

Brasenose College – Remote Working Risk Assessment

Premises / location:		Assessment carried out by:		Assessment date:			
Description of premises and activities being assessed:	Remote working at home due to Coivd-19 pandemic. Workplace health and safety law applies to homeworkers and the College has the same legal duty to protect your health, safety and welfare, as if they were working at College. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, the College is required to assess the risk of work activities carried out by staff who work at home.						

Significant hazards	Who may be harmed?	Control measures	Further actions required	By whom and by when?	Completion date
Display screen equipment	Remote Worker	• See guidance and workstation assessment checklist https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf • In particular you should use the guidance to… • Check the positioning and display of your screen/monitor • Check the positioning and suitability of your keyboard and mouse • Check the suitability of your desk and chair • Laptop users should consider using a separate monitor, keyboard and mouse • Users should take regular breaks away from screen (5 minutes every 30)	• Read the guidance and check workstation and equipment is suitable and safe	Signing this document confirms that you have read and completed the HSE guidance and are satisfied that you are able to work in a suitable and safe manner	
Working environment	Remote worker	• Check that you have sufficient space on and around your workstation • Check that lighting is appropriate • Check that temperature, humidity and ventilation make for a comfortable work environment • Ensure trailing cables are covered to prevent trips and hanging cables are secured	• Check control measure in place	Signing this document confirms that you have read and completed the HSE guidance and are satisfied that you are able to work in a suitable and safe manner	

Significant hazards	Who may be harmed?	Control measures	Further actions required	By whom and by when?	Completion date
		• Check that you are able to walk safely between your workstation and other parts of your home without risk of tripping or slipping			
Fire, accidents, noise, manual handling and lone working, electrical	Remote worker	• Fire: You are advised to have smoke detectors and a clear escape route in case of fire • Accidents: when working remotely should be reported in the usual manner • Noise: the noise level in your home work environment should not prevent you being able to concentrate and carry out your work • Manual handling: take care when moving/carrying laptop, computer and furniture • Lone working: you should maintain daily contact with your manager • Do not overload sockets		Signing this document confirms that you have read and completed the HSE guidance and are satisfied that you are able to work in a suitable and safe manner	

Remote worker Name_____

Signature_____

Date_____

Line Manager signature_____