

# WORKING SUCCESSFULLY FROM HOME - GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS

## INTRODUCTION

With the current isolation restrictions many people across the country, indeed the world, are having to work from home at this time. If you are finding this challenging, you are not alone. This guidance is to help you set up a work environment that is most conducive to your studies, with what you have available in your homes. We appreciate this will be different for each student, and some of you might find it really difficult to have an adequate set up to work productively. Some of you might be preoccupied with stressors in your home environment that you wouldn't ordinarily have to deal with when you are away at university. For others it might be more of an issue of physical space or reliable internet and/or adequate computer equipment making it harder to set up an appropriate work station. This guide can only help you with making the best of your situation.

Please keep checking <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/coronavirus-advice>. The University will regularly update information and advice for students related to this pandemic.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY AND DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

1. It is recommended that where possible you designate an area of your home as a workstation e.g. a desk, home office, dining table or 'foldaway' desk that should be well lit and is ergonomically sound for their use. Where possible, try not to work from an armchair, sofa or bed where the viewing angle of a laptop will not be correct, where their wrist will not be supported and there are risks of work-related upper-limb disorders and eye strain.
2. Whilst it may not be the case that all have designated work-space in their homes, please do try to get as close as possible to replicate things like height of the screen and the position or arms on the table or desk.
3. Setting up your workstation correctly at home is equally as important as when you are in Oxford, and the same principles apply. Your workstation includes your desk or table, chair, and PC or laptop.

## COMMUNICATION/KEEPING IN TOUCH

4. Maintaining regular contact with your tutor/ supervisor/department/faculty whilst home working is very important. For those not used to it, home working can be isolating. Methods of contact might include email, online meetings (using Microsoft Teams for instance) or telephone conversations. In these current circumstances, maintaining good communication will be particularly important as it is likely you will be working at home over a prolonged period of time. If you haven't already, you may wish to set up WhatsApp (or other) groups for your subject groups etc to help you stay in touch and share ideas. The JCR and MCR will also be useful sources of online support.

Whilst the College and University are unable to offer face-to-face wellbeing and welfare support, students can still access College Welfare, University Counselling Service, and University Disability Advisory Service support remotely. See:

<http://intranet.jesus.ox.ac.uk/welfare.aspx>

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling?wssl=1>

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/disability?wssl=1>

5. It will be up to your tutor/ supervisor and you to agree the regularity of contact. It will depend on whether you are an undergraduate, taught postgraduate or research postgraduate. It will also vary according to whether it is the vacation or term time.
6. Whilst working from home, if you become unwell, you should let your tutor/department and College know.

## IT ISSUES

7. Most of you will have a personal laptop. Please remember to keep backing up your work. Remember to rest your eyes regularly to avoid screen fatigue.

8. **Phishing emails**

Whilst working at home please be even more vigilant for phishing emails.

The Information Security team at Oxford University have observed an increase in malicious email activity exploiting the Covid-19 situation. An example of this is that cybercriminals are seizing on the likelihood that people are working from home, and maybe susceptible to strange service messages. Recipients may receive branded emails which appear to be non-delivery alerts, missed call or voice mail services. A link in these credible messages will take you to a fake login page which, if you enter your details, will steal your SSO credentials, your personal details and compromise your account.

Please familiarise yourself with the normal services available to you as a member of the wider University. If you have received something for the first time, exercise caution. Check the email sender or the address bar of web-pages and, if you are uncertain, then don't engage with it. Send your suspect email, complete with message headers, on a new message to [phishing@infosec.ox.ac.uk](mailto:phishing@infosec.ox.ac.uk) for analysis and advice.

Further detailed advice and guidance on how to keep yourself safe online is available on the [Information Security webpages](#).

## HOME WORKING TIPS

9. Homeworking is a very different way of working and can present unexpected challenges, including overcoming feelings of isolation and managing the boundaries between home and study.

Below are a few tips or reminders:

- **Where possible maintain regular contact with your tutors/supervisors:** establish a sense of structure and framework.
- **Embrace video calling:** seeing each other live retains connections and replicates the in-person conversations you would normally have in your department/College. Microsoft Teams is a useful platform for this and will be used a lot by the University and College
- **Use any established virtual drop-in hours:** some departments may set up a virtual office by using a video conferencing platform that allows people to pop in and out to have live conversations.
- **Get into a routine:** Start and end the day with a routine. Get up and dressed (as if you are going into College/department/ faculty/library) and then prioritise your jobs. A balanced and well-rounded lifestyle will actually make you more productive, so it's worth including exercise; social activity and hobbies/interests into your schedule.
- **Work environment:** where possible find a space away from the main home area to work. Make sure that you are comfortable and have a supportive chair. We appreciate for some, this will pose challenges. The University and College are aware that not all students have the same resources and will be taking this into account.
- **Dress the part:** Be sure to get dressed as it will put you in the right mind set to work productively. **And** you will always be ready for any last minute video calls!
- **Keep your calendar current:** keeping people apprised of your availability could offer you a sense of structure and accountability.
- **Know when to step away from your desk- take regular breaks:** everyone needs a break from their screens at some point; step away to recharge and return ready to take on the rest of the day.
- **Take some exercise:** whilst gyms and pools are closed, meaning those that use them are facing disruption to their usual exercise routines, it is important everyone gets out once a day for fresh air and exercise, whether that's a walk or run by yourself or with household members. There are also lots of online resources and Apps for yoga, pilates etc which you may find useful.
- **Think about how you focus best:** whether you need music to cancel everything out or complete silence to concentrate, change your environment accordingly.
- **Honour quitting time:** working remotely can make it hard to set boundaries between work and home. When the day is done, close your laptop, books, and notes and walk away.

For some, home can be a stressful place. The environment might be overwhelming and demanding, sometimes even anxiety-provoking. Such environments naturally preoccupy the people who are in it, making it a lot more difficult to focus and concentrate on work. Sometimes it might be possible to negotiate some terms with family members re boundaries on what you will and will not get involved in, especially whilst you're studying/working. Ear plugs or headphones might also help you to block out any distractions/sounds.

If that is too difficult, please do not hesitate to contact the Welfare Officer (kirren.mahmood@jesus.ox.ac.uk). She would be more than happy to think through with you about how best to manage any challenges you are dealing with at home.

Everyone is finding these current times troubling and unsettling. You may find the 'thermometer' a useful construct to help you identify which aspects of your current circumstances you have control over and which aspects you don't have control over. We have less control over the external stressors in our environment, but we do have more control over our internal states and how we show up to the challenges in our environment. We tend to be most productive and focussed in the 'green zone'. We work most successfully from the 'green zone'.

It might therefore be worthwhile exploring what you need and the best you can do to help you show up more consistently from the green zone. Mindfulness exercises; yoga; exercise; a helpful mindset; a well-balanced lifestyle/routine are examples of some things that might support you to 'return to the green'.

# THERMOMETER

## ENVIRONMENTAL/ EXTERNAL

(situations/context/ triggers/events that happen around us)

Examples of 'red stressors' are any situations that may cause us stress

- A global pandemic
- A disruption to usual learning and assessment methods bringing about a lot of uncertainty
- A lockdown
- Vulnerable/ high risk relative/friend
- Bereavement
- Arguments
- Debt/financial insecurity

Safe and secure  
Predictable and consistent  
Stimulating and interesting

Neglected  
Isolating  
Boring/Dull

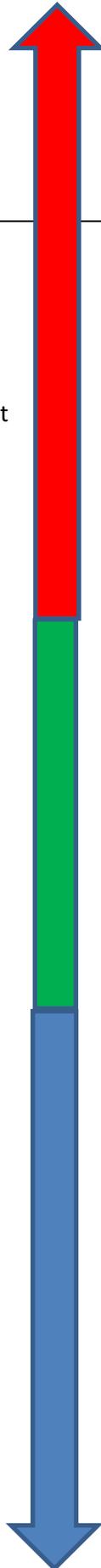
## INTERNAL STATES

(how we show up on the inside to what is happening around us)

Feeling too much or flooded  
Preoccupied Tiring/exhausting  
Highly stressed Highly aroused  
Impulsive Distracted  
Unable to focus/concentrate  
Ruminating/overthinking  
Overwhelmed

Connected to and in tune with our thoughts, feelings and behaviours  
Present, available and responsive  
Able to observe and see  
Curious, interested, focussed, empathic, mindful of our selves; others and our environment

Cut off Depressed  
Numb  
Disconnected/isolated  
Feeling very low or nothing  
Empty Tired/lethargic  
Loss of motivation/ activity levels  
Passive, disengaged, detached





# DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT Set Up Guide

## 1. Arms

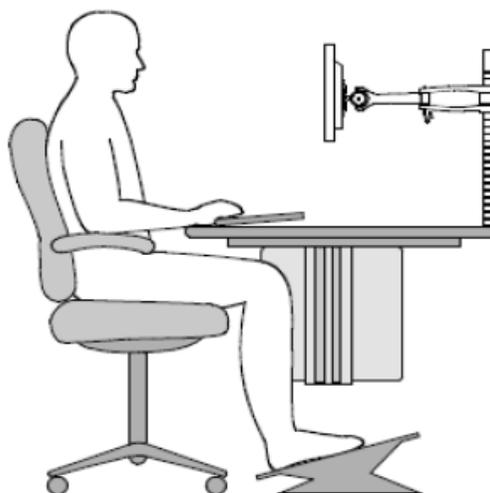
Ensure your elbows are level with the keyboard when sitting at your desk. This will position your wrists at the correct angle.

## 2. Getting Comfortable

Ensure your feet are flat on the floor with your knees at a minimum angle of 90 degrees. If you cannot place both feet flat on the floor whilst sitting right back in your chair, you need a footrest. Adjust your chair to support your back.

## 3. Head and Neck

The very top of the screen should be level with your eyes, in your line of sight. The screen should be directly in front of you; it should be an arm's distance away when you are sitting in an upright position.



## 4. Keying In

Leave sufficient space in front of the keyboard for hands and wrists. Your keyboard should be positioned towards the front of your desk to avoid overreaching and your mouse should be on the same platform (at the same level - next to your keyboard).

## 5. Reviewing Documentation

Any documents being used in the course of your work should be at the same level as the screen, on the same side as your dominant eye.

## 6. Overreaching

Items in frequent use, such as telephone, stapler, pens, etc. should be placed within easy reach.

**Ensure that the equipment, the contrast, brightness and colour, is correctly set. Alternate your tasks to avoid stressors such as eye strain and fatigue.**