Staff Learning and Career Development
NEWSLETTER

May 2025, in this edition

Dear colleague,

In the last edition, we shared details of a range of new courses and programmes that we have added to our offer over the coming months. In case you missed them we are highlighting them again alongside an update on the next steps with the review of the PDR process.

The Organisational Effectiveness and Development Team

Upcoming Workshops and Events

This section provides details of our shorter/bite-size courses, events and one-day workshops:

For new starters:
- **Headington Campus tour**, Tuesday 20 May, 11.00am - 12.00pm
- **VCG New Starter Gathering event**, Tuesday 3 June, 11.00am - 12.00pm

For line managers:
- **Leading Change**, Tuesday 3 June, 9.00am - 5.00pm
- **Effective Career Conversations**, Thursday 12 June, 1.30pm - 4.30pm
- **Mental health - one day for line managers**, Wednesday 18 June, 9.00am - 5.00pm

For colleagues:

Essential Skills
- **Effective communication,** Wednesday 7 May, 1.00pm - 3.30pm and Wednesday 25 June, 1.00pm - 3.30pm
- **Courageous conversations,** Wednesday 21 May, 1.00pm - 3.30pm and Wednesday 9 July, 1.00pm - 3.00pm
- **Enhancing Emotional Intelligence,** Wednesday 11 June, 1.00pm - 3.30pm
- **Conflict resolution for employees** Thursday 19 June, 9.00am - 5.00pm

Career Development
- **Taking control of your career direction** Wednesday 7 May, 1.30pm - 4.30pm and Friday 13 June, 9.30am - 12.30pm

Individual Wellbeing:
- **Budgeting and money management**, Friday 9 May, 12.00pm - 2.00pm
- **Credit rating**, Monday 12 May, 10.00am - 11.00am
- **One Shop - Stop!**, Wednesday 14 May, 12.00pm - 1.30pm
- **Reframing negative thoughts**, Thursday 15 May, 10.00am - 11.00am
- **Maximising income**, Tuesday 20 May, 11.00am - 12.00pm
- **Red Flags and Rip Offs!**, Wednesday 21 May, 10.00am - 11.30am

Upcoming programmes:

This section provides details of our longer programmes which last for more than one day.

For line managers:

- **The Collaborative Leader: Unlocking your leadership potential to navigate conflict and enhance collaboration**, 12 June, 1 July, 18 July, 10.00am - 2.30pm (in person). **Deadline**: Friday 9 May, 5.00pm.

- **Building high-performing and resilient teams** 4 June, 18 June, 30 June, 16 July, 31 July, 11.00am - 2.30pm with a 30-minute lunch break. (Some sessions will be online, some will be in person)

- **Manager as Mediator** 9 June, 19 June, 8 July, 21 July and 29 July, 11.00am - 2.30pm with a 30-minute lunch break. (Some sessions will be online, some will be in person)
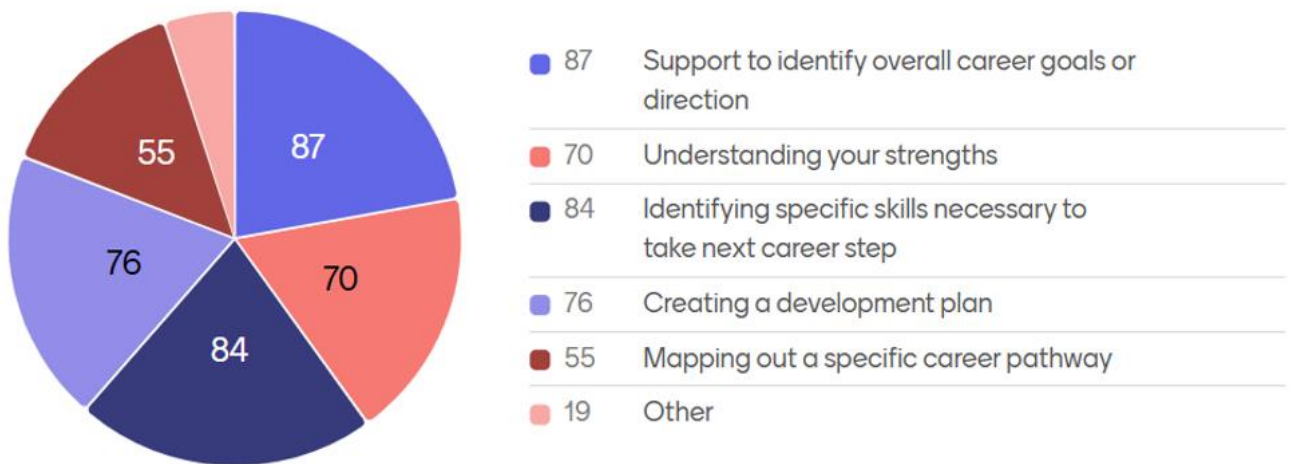
For colleagues:

- **Hear and be heard: Fostering Respectful Dialogue and Collaboration**, 17 June, 24 June, 3 July, 10 July, 10.00am - 1.30pm with a 30 minute break.

You can also find details via the **list** of upcoming workshops and events.

PDR Review - activity to date and next steps

At the end of last year, we conducted a short survey linked to the planned PDR review. It focused on the Career Development element. Over 80% of respondents agreed that Career Development should form part of the PDR, but only a minority felt that career development formed a meaningful part of their PDR currently. It was noted that both reviewees and reviewers felt they would benefit from more support in this area. Key areas identified by reviewees were:

■ 87	Support to identify overall career goals or direction
■ 70	Understanding your strengths
■ 84	Identifying specific skills necessary to take next career step
■ 76	Creating a development plan
■ 55	Mapping out a specific career pathway
■ 19	Other

In response to this feedback, we are piloting the two **Career Development workshops** detailed above - it's not too late to sign up!

Next steps

We are keen to engage further with both reviewees and reviewers to help us shape a process that works for individuals, teams, and the University. There are several ways to get involved:

Survey

This **short survey** asks what you would want to see included to make the process more meaningful and effective from an individual perspective as well as seeking insight around what the PDR process should aim to achieve - what is the wider purpose behind the process? The survey will be open until Friday 30 May. We would really value your input.

Engagement sessions

We are also running online engagement sessions to provide an opportunity to inform the review in a bit more detail.

Colleague/Reviewee engagement sessions:

These sessions will use interactive exercises and breakout groups to consider:
- What does 'performance' mean in the context of Performance and Development at OBU?
- How could the process better enable people to achieve results and meet their potential?
- Consider what principles might set the tone for how we approach the process to ensure it adds value for individuals and the wider University

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You can sign up for these online sessions via **Staff Learning**:
- Wednesday 21 May, 1.30pm - 3.00pm
- Friday 23 May, 10.00am - 11.30am
- Friday 13 June, 1.00pm - 2.30pm

Line Manager/Reviewer engagement sessions

Aimed at those who carry out the PDR Reviewer role, these sessions will use interactive exercises and breakout groups to consider:
- What does 'performance' mean in the context of Performance and Development at OBU?
- How to ensure the process provides value for the individual, team and University
- How does/can the wider system contribute alongside the PDR process to ensuring effective performance and staff development?

You can sign up for these online sessions via **Staff Learning**:
- Monday 16 June, 12.30pm - 2.00pm
- Friday 20 June, 9.30am - 11.00am
- Thursday 26 June, 1.30pm - 3.00pm

Career Development Workshops

We are pleased to confirm the details of two workshops we are running with our partners Working Transitions. Working Transitions is an expert career service provider, experienced in supporting people change and career development programmes in organisations, including many universities, across the UK.

The **Effective Career Conversations** workshop is a half-day online workshop aimed at equipping line managers with the skills to conduct meaningful career conversations that drive both individual success and business growth. Participants will gain tools and techniques to guide career conversations effectively and develop basic coaching techniques to help employees identify their strengths, interests, and values and explore diverse career opportunities.

Taking control of your career direction is a three-hour online workshop aimed at individuals at any stage of their career who need clarity to understand where their career is, and how to progress. Attendees will focus on their career motivators, strengths, and development areas. They will identify career blockers and learn practical strategies to

overcome them. By the end, participants will have a personalised action plan and increased confidence in career decision-making.

We are running each of the workshops twice - see **upcoming workshops and events** for event details. These workshops are being run as a pilot so we will be actively seeking feedback to inform future iterations of the workshops.

Leadership and Management Development - New offer

Self as Leader - New

Understanding your individual style and preferences and using this awareness effectively is an essential capability for effective leadership.

The Collaborative Leader programme This short in-person programme for line managers consists of three half-day sessions and includes the MBTI and TKI psychometrics. These provide participants with foundations for a deeper understanding of personal motivations and group interactions. Participants will build awareness of their style and approach to work, how this might differ from others and how they can use this understanding to best support their teams through conflict and challenge to foster effective teamwork and a culture focused on collaboration and innovation.

Conflict Resolution - New

Interpersonal conflict can have negative implications not only for the individuals involved but also wider team effectiveness. Having the capability to effectively address and resolve conflict is therefore a key skill for managers and one that underpins the creation of a positive working environment. We are piloting two options to meet differing needs.

Conflict resolution skills for managers. This one-day 'intensive' course provides participants with key skills and approaches to help them manage their own and others' conflicts. It aims to increase participants' confidence to secure mutual solutions in difficult situations. It provides any manager with an essential tool in their toolkit.

Manager as Mediator Programme - This programme consists of five half-day sessions spread across a couple of months to provide participants an opportunity to reflect and embed their learning. It covers the subject area in more depth and equips participants to act as mediator between team members in conflict. This is likely to be of particular interest to managers who may currently be experiencing conflict within their teams.

Team Effectiveness - New

Enabling the effectiveness of your team is core to the role of a manager. Various research[1] has identified psychological safety as the key ingredient for high-performing, effective teams. It is also linked to individual fulfilment and wellbeing and more inclusive working environments.

Creating Psychological Safety in your Team is a one-day immersion for those who are Ok with being open and working with vulnerability and conflict, including their own. The course offers practical skills, tools and resources to take away and apply.

The Building High-Performing & Resilient Teams Programme - This programme consists of five half-day sessions spread across a couple of months to provide participants an opportunity to reflect and embed their learning. The programme includes personal development work as well as a more in-depth focus on how to build psychological safety and address potential barriers. It may suit those who have tried to shift their team's culture and want ways to improve it further or have encountered obstacles and resistance.

Supporting and Managing Effective Change - New

The ability to navigate, lead and support others through organisational change, is an increasingly important leadership capability.

Leading Change - We invite you to this dynamic, day-long workshop designed to elevate your leadership skills! You'll gain valuable insights into different leadership styles and how these need to be used strategically to get the best out of others with unique roles within your teams.

Through interactive exercises and hands-on practice, you'll learn how to apply OBU Leadership qualities directly to your everyday challenges, refining your situational awareness and adapting to diverse contexts and tasks. The day will culminate with a simulated real-life scenario, guided by expert academics, allowing you to put everything into action and leave with practical strategies to lead with confidence.

Building essential skills - development for other roles

We have also been reviewing our development offer for those not in managerial roles. The following resources are aimed at colleagues looking to strengthen and develop their skills.

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[1] Duhigg, C. (2016) What Google Learned From Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team [**online**]
Delizonna, L. (2017). High-Performing Teams Need Psychological Safety. Here's How to Create It [**online**]

We have three new bite-size workshops delivered by Willow and Puddifoot.

Enhancing Emotional Intelligence - Develop core skills such as empathy and self-awareness by focusing on emotional intelligence and its key aspects.

Effective communication - Develop and apply active listening techniques. Learn how to communicate clearly, and reduce misunderstandings.

Courageous conversations - Develop practical skills to navigate tough conversations, using techniques to address interpersonal tensions early and prevent minor conflicts from escalating.

Teamwork: Conflict Resolution

Although managers play an important role in creating a positive work environment, we each make our own contribution to the climate and culture we work in.

The **Conflict resolution for employees** is a one-day course for anyone wanting to gain or develop their skills to help build confidence in handling conflict. By learning these essential skills, delegates can tackle and manage difficult or threatening conflict effectively, helping to resolve situations, reduce stress, and improve mental health.

Teamwork: Collaboration, Communication and Belonging

We all know that the most effective teams benefit from diversity of opinion and experience, however, differing needs can sometimes get in the way of productive, collaborative relationships and effective communication.

Hear & Be Heard: Fostering Respectful Dialogue and Collaboration - This programme consists of four half-day sessions over a month. Based on Non-Violent Communication (NVC) , a proven framework for enhancing empathy, improving communication, and addressing interpersonal differences, it will give participants practical skills to help maximise understanding.

Other resources to develop essential skills

There are also a range of other resources in the **Essential Skills Catalogue** in Staff Learning covering communication, problem solving, achieving goals and more

Potential to use the Essential Skills framework to identify needs and for developing transferable skills to support career development. Align with person specification.

New Financial Wellbeing Courses

We have two new financial wellbeing courses, delivered by Navigate.

One Shop - Stop! Uncover the sneaky marketing tricks used by brands like Amazon, Temu, and Shein to get you to spend more. Learn how to spot psychological sales tactics, avoid buyer's remorse, and resist the traps of influencer marketing. Take control of your shopping habits and keep more money in your pocket!

Red Flags and Rip Offs! Arm yourself with the knowledge to spot scams and outsmart fraudsters. Learn how to safeguard your finances, recognise common tricks, and keep your money safe in an increasingly digital world. Don't get caught out—stay one step ahead!

Just two things: actions you can do to improve our cybersecurity

Cyber attacks on universities are very common and cause enormous damage and disruption. Whilst organisationally we always work hard to protect the University, there are also two simple actions that everyone can take themselves to keep us safe:

1. **Always report suspicious emails (It helps everyone)**
   Did you know that more than 90% of successful cyber attacks start with an email? If you receive an email you think is suspicious then **always report it using "PhishAlarm"**. If you report a message that is malicious, then automated systems mean your action will ensure that threat is also removed from other inboxes across the University.
2. **Multi-factor Authentication (MFA) for Google**
   In March 2025 we defended nearly 27,000 attempts to steal usernames and passwords but, sadly, we won't always be 100% successful in those efforts. However, by just following these **simple steps to enable MFA on your Google account**, you can add an effective additional layer of protection for your data.

Online resources

Many of our learning and development resources are now online making them easier to access at a time and place that suits you. We have created dedicated areas on the Staff Learning platform to help you find the development that suits your needs:

- **Leadership and management**
- **Wellbeing and personal resources**
- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion**
- **Essential skills**
- **Risk and Compliance**
- **Professional and career development** (including **apprenticeships**)
- **New starters**
- **Customer service**

Keeping in touch

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Email: staff-learning@brookes.ac.uk
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