

Occupational Health Referral Guide

Occupational Health (OH) is a medical speciality focussed on the interaction between work and health. At Imperial College, the OH team is an advisory service led by specialist clinicians who provide guidance on work-related health issues, help manage work-related health problems and offer impartial advice on improving overall health in the workplace. Employers are required by law to do all they reasonably can to support their employees' health, safety and wellbeing. Access to expert led, impartial OH advice can help employers provide support so that their employees can manage work in the context of their health conditions. This, in turn, not only leads to better retention and return to work prospects, but also improves business productivity, which can be adversely impacted by sickness absence.

1. What is an Occupational Health referral?

An Occupational Health referral is a referral made by a manager, HR advisor or other support services to an Occupational Health specialist. This is done to assess an employee's health and fitness for work, or to provide support and advice on work-related health issues.

2. When would an Occupational Health referral be made?

Typical reasons for an Occupational Health referral include:

- where workplace adjustments or accommodations for an employee may be necessary with an active physical or mental health condition
- Providing advice on work-related health concerns, such as stress, musculoskeletal issues, or exposure to hazardous substances
- Advising on return to work after an illness or work-related injury
- Occupational Health does not manage the Neurodiversity assessment or support process, EDIC can provide advice and support to managers and staff [EDIC Neurodiversity Resources](#)

The following reasons for referral are listed in the referral form

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Concern over attendance○ Concern over performance*○ Concern over welfare/well-being○ Safety assessment○ Assessment following an accident at work | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Advice to support return to work○ Disability assessment○ Fitness for re-deployment if alternative role is available○ Consideration for medical retirement |
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3. What happens during an Occupational Health assessment?

During the assessment, the Occupational Health specialist will typically:

- Take the employee's medical history and discuss any current health concerns
- Perform a physical examination, if indicated
- Use clinically validated assessment tools to assess health
- Review any relevant medical reports or test results

- Assess the employee's fitness for their role and any workplace adjustments that may be required
- Provide recommendations to the employer on managing the employee's health and supporting their return to work

4. How is the Occupational Health report shared?

The Occupational Health specialist will provide a report to the employer, with the employee's consent. The report will outline the specialist's findings and recommendations, without disclosing confidential medical information. The employee will also receive a copy of the report.

5. What are the benefits of an Occupational Health referral?

Occupational Health referrals can provide several benefits, including:

- Helping to identify and manage work-related health issues
- Supporting employees in returning to work after illness or injury
- Providing guidance on workplace adjustments and accommodations
- Promoting a healthy and productive workforce
- Reducing sickness absence and associated costs for the employer

The Occupational Health Consultation

During the Occupational Health (OH) consultation, the clinician will:

Assess the Employee

The clinician will conduct a functional assessment of the employee and any other indicated examinations. This may involve the use of standardised clinical tools as part of the OH assessment.

Make Individual Recommendations

Based on the assessment, the OH clinician may provide recommendations and signpost the employee to any relevant professional medical services, University services such as the [EDIC](#) for disability related advice and support or self-care resources.

Provide Management Advice and Recommendations

The clinician's recommendations for the employer will be presented in a report format. In line with national OH practiceⁱ, these reports will only be released with the employee's consent.

The report will be provided to the referring manager and the HR Staff Hub, ensuring compliance with confidentiality agreements and data protection regulations (GDPR). The employee is free to share the report with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (EDIC), if they require additional support.

Following the consultation, the next steps in the process are covered in the "Interpreting the Occupational Health Report" section.

Consent and Report Release

At the end of the Occupational Health consultation, the clinician must obtain the employee's consent to release the OH report to the referring manager. All service users (employees) have the right to review the report prior to its release.

When the Employee Consents to Direct Release

If the employee consents to the report being released directly, the OH clinician will send the report to the referring manager and the HR team within 48 hours of the consultation, if there are no delays.

When the Employee Requests to Review the Report First

If the employee requests to review the report before it is released, they are expected to provide consent for the release within 2 working days. An email reminder will be sent if consent has not been received by then.

Employees have the right to request amendments to the report if there are any factual errors, but they cannot request changes to the clinical opinions or recommendations made by the OH clinician.

Withdrawal of Consent

At any stage in this process, the employee may withdraw their consent for the report to be released. If this happens, the referring manager will be notified that consent has been withdrawn, and no further information can be provided.

The OH report contains advice and recommendations, but it is not an instruction. The manager will need to consider the practicality and feasibility of implementing the recommendations based on the needs of the service, business requirements, and available resources.

Receiving and Interpreting the OH Report

After the Occupational Health consultation, the clinician will provide a report to the referring manager, with the employee's consent.

Understanding the Report Content

The OH report will contain the clinician's assessment, recommendations, and opinions on the employee's fitness for work and any workplace adjustments that may be required. It is important to remember that:

- The report is objective and impartial - the OH clinician is neither an advocate for the employee nor working to a pre-agreed agenda with the manager.
- The report provides advice and recommendations, not instructions. The manager will need to consider the practicality and feasibility of implementing the recommendations based on the needs of the service, business requirements, and available resources, with the understanding of the duty to make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010.

- The OH opinion does not override the employee's GP, but the employer is entitled to consider the specialist OH opinion alongside the GP's assessment.

Differing Perspectives

It is important to note that sometimes there can be differing views between the employee and the manager regarding the situation. The occupational health clinician's role is to reflect these differing perceptions back to the manager, not to take sides. Managers should be made aware of any conflicting viewpoints, as these need to be discussed with the employee to resolve any barriers to a successful return to work.

Discussing the Report with the Employee

Upon receiving the OH report, the manager should schedule a confidential meeting with the employee to discuss the content. In this meeting, consider the following:

- If there is anything in the report that requires further clarification, the manager should first contact the clinician who undertook the assessment.
- Review the recommendations in the report and agree on a plan to implement them, where possible.
- If you are unable to implement the recommendations, explain to the employee why they are not practicable in your context.
- Identify any further support or workplace adjustments the employee may need.
- Agree on next steps and a timeline for review or follow-up.

Seeking Further Guidance

In a complex situation, the manager might find it helpful to discuss the report with HR. They can provide guidance on interpreting the report and aligning the recommendations with company policies and procedures.

Before you meet with the employee you can contact the Confidential Care Manager Adviceline to talk through your approach in a neutral space **0800 085 3805** Monday to Friday between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm or [email](#).

You can also contact the EDIC to discuss the implementation and recording of workplace adjustments in line with University procedures.

Where recommendations include a stress risk assessment this is the responsibility of the line manager. Employees have access to a self-assessment questionnaire to help them understand the issues however this does not constitute the risk assessment which should be led by the line manager using the suggested online template. <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/resilience-and-stress/taking-control-of-workplace-stressors-tool/>

ⁱ <https://www.fom.ac.uk/publications-policy-consultations/ethics-guidance-for-occupational-health-practice>