



OXFORD  
**BROOKES**  
UNIVERSITY

Case study

# Oxford Brookes University

Addressing menstrual  
equity in the workplace



# Overview

Originally formed within Oxford Brookes University's (OBU) Faculty of Health and Life Sciences as part of the Athena Swan initiative for gender equality, The Menstrual Equity and Menopause Group aims to support staff, students and the wider OBU community with issues related to menstrual health and menopause in the workplace.

Developed in collaboration with OBU, BSI's standard, BS 30416 Menstruation, menstrual health and menopause in the workplace was launched in 2023 to offer organizations practical guidance for supporting employees experiencing menstruation, menstrual health and menopause. The standard has supported the group's initiatives to raise awareness of menstrual health and implement practical strategies and adjustments for those it impacts.





## Background

Prior to adopting BS 30416, OBU had already taken significant steps to raise awareness of menopause in the workplace. This included hosting faculty and cross-university events, creating a good practice guide for employers and launching an online support forum for OBU staff experiencing menopause symptoms.

In early 2023, BSI became aware of OBU's Menopause in the Workplace Conference - and contacted OBU to ask if they would consider getting involved as part of the committee to develop a new, related standard. This inspired OBU to adopt the standard itself and expand its focus beyond menopause to address menstrual equity more broadly.

With this in mind, OBU's key objectives in implementing the standard were; to break taboos and end stigma surrounding menstruation and menstrual health, to raise awareness about the challenges related to accessing menstrual products and to mobilize funding for large-scale action across its campuses.

## The challenge

A key challenge of this new approach was the need to conduct a detailed audit of the entire organization to understand how staff and students experiencing menstrual health and menopause could be better supported. This would need to begin with an assessment of the work already being carried out by OBU's Student Union, who were supporting the cause but had limited information on how effective their initiatives had been to date.

The group also needed to ensure that any initiatives or communications aligned with the university's core values - i.e., that they considered sustainability and maintained an inclusive language style. This was crucial for gaining stakeholder support and demonstrating that investment in The Menstrual Equity and Menopause Group was in the best interests of the OBU community.

# The solution: BS 30416

A small menopause subgroup, comprising 11 OBU staff members from diverse backgrounds, departments and experiences, had already been formed to ensure an inclusive approach to addressing menopause issues across the organization. As OBU started to broaden its scope of workplace health initiatives to include menstrual health, the group expanded to include members from the Student Union, allowing them to offer a more comprehensive perspective of menstrual health.

The implementation of BS 30416 began with the subgroup conducting a self-assessment of OBU's menopause initiatives. By collecting evidence of the wider impact and outcomes of previous events on staff, students and the wider community, they were able to prepare summary reports which could inform their menstrual health strategy moving forward.

The next step was to secure support from stakeholders. To do this, the organization engaged with BSI to speak at several awareness-raising events, resulting in successful support from members of OBU's Vice Chancellor's Group. This allowed the organization to commit to 5.2 of the BS 30416 standard (which refers to the physical aspects of work), and create several key initiatives in support of menstrual equity:

- Continuing to plan and hold menstrual health events for OBU staff and students.
- Collaborating with Time of the Month (TOTM), a market leading ethical period care charity in the UK, to distribute sustainable menstrual products across OBU campuses.
- Working with the All Yours Period Box CIC to create a donation system where staff, students and the wider OBU community can donate period products to be redistributed locally.
- Distributing branded Menstrual Equity stickers, lanyards, pens and badges to raise awareness of the project.
- Developing a period product collection point map, which allows students and staff to locate their nearest available period products.
- Creating a Menstrual Equity website to provide additional information and resources.



Staff and students at Oxford Brookes University's Menstrual Equity launch earlier this year

# Outcomes and benefits

The adoption of BS 30416 at OBU has significantly contributed to raising awareness and changing attitudinal approaches towards menstrual health and menopause within the OBU community and beyond. The standard also allowed OBU to define its focus for the project over the next 12 months: to embed the BSI standard more visibly across the institution, expand access to free period products and continue to foster a culture where staff and students feel validated and empowered when discussing menstrual health and menstrual equity.

By aligning with defined best practice, the group has been able to structure its events and produce work that adheres to recognized guidelines, ensuring consistency and credibility in its initiatives.

Future steps to support these goals include exploring reasonable adjustment plans for people experiencing menstrual difficulties or menopausal symptoms, as well as a partnership with All Yours - a menstrual health charity dedicated to donating excess period products to the local community.

# Why BSI

Engaging with BSI not only allowed OBU to provide valuable contributions to the standard development process, but also initiated its process to successfully adopt the standard when it became available. This dual involvement ensured that OBU was following best practices to address menstrual health and menopause in the workplace – and setting an example for other businesses to follow.

The standard provided reassurance that OBU's initiative was meeting its targets and aligning with industry standards, enhancing its reputation as a progressive, responsible organization that cares about the wellbeing of its staff and students.

**Support your employees' menstrual and menopausal health today. [Download BS 30416](#) to find out more.**

Quote from an attendee at an OBU-led menstrual health event in April 2023

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I thought OBU's sessions were very informative and were very useful. It was good to know about the toolkits for managers and it provided confidence that there is support out there for managers too... Overall, I thought the sessions were very good and the expertise and passion were also fantastic.



Electra Dottin, Executive Office Assistant at OBU and Alumni

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Reflecting on my time at Oxford Brookes University, I graduated in 2021 with little awareness of menstrual equity. Today, in 2024, witnessing the university's proactive steps in addressing menstrual health and promoting equity among its staff and students is truly inspiring. It's a testament to OBU's commitment to evolving and creating an inclusive environment for all.





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BSI Group  
389 Chiswick High Road  
London, W4 4AL  
United Kingdom  
+44 345 080 9000  
[bsigroup.com](http://bsigroup.com)