Provider name: University of Oxford
UKPRN: 10007774

Executive Summary

1. Institutional context: Oxford is a collegiate university, in which teaching and student support involve close collaboration between University departments and colleges. Our departments are at the forefront of their fields, with world-leading research staff. Each college is a small, inter-disciplinary academic community which fosters a sense of belonging and academic engagement within and beyond the student's own subject. Central to our learning model is the high level of personalised teaching, advice and support offered to students by senior, research-active academic staff.

2. Student experience: Oxford's personalised, collegiate approach, coupled with the excellent learning facilities provided by the central University, including world-leading libraries, museums and research laboratories, offers students an outstanding learning experience. Oxford has no published NSS data since 2017 because of a sustained SU boycott but the extensive survey data cited in this submission shows that students' satisfaction with their learning experience is well above sector comparators in nearly all aspects.

3. Student outcomes: Oxford's continuation, completion and progression data are consistently strong, equalling or exceeding our very high benchmarks both at aggregate level and when analysed by student characteristics.

Provider Context

4. The University's mission is the advancement of learning by teaching and research and its dissemination by every means. Based on a commitment to the personal education of each student, the University provides an outstanding quality of education. The experience of studying at Oxford equips students with the values, skills and intellectual discipline that enables them to make a positive contribution to society.

5. A commitment to excellence in teaching is fundamental to achieving the University's mission, as well as a commitment to ensuring that the structures of the University and its colleges support and promote that excellence in teaching.

6. The University aims to enable students to learn, to mature intellectually, and to develop the key skills that employers seek when recruiting graduates: how best to assimilate information, to think critically and independently, and to communicate clearly with others.

The University's approach to undergraduate learning and teaching

7. Oxford University is made up of subject departments (grouped into four academic divisions) and colleges, working in partnership to teach undergraduate students. Each full-time student is a member both of a department and a college. The colleges are legally independent entities and, in this document, the term 'University' normally refers to the central university and its departments, as distinct from the colleges.

8. The University provides the framework to support excellence in teaching through its departments, by determining the structure and content of all course curricula as well as providing lectures and classes, laboratories and practicals, and by setting and marking all summative assessments.

9. The colleges' key role is to teach full-time undergraduate students in tutorials. Tutorials are an intensive and highly personalised form of teaching that allows tutors to focus on the academic needs and interests of an individual student, optimising academic progression and attainment for each student. The tutorial approach and its benefits are described in more detail in paragraphs 28 to 36 below. Colleges also provide regular formative assessments.

10. Both the University and the colleges provide learning resources. For example, alongside department and college facilities, all students have access to the University's world-class libraries. The University's museums also provide unrivalled access to a wide range of collections across areas as diverse as archaeology, botany and musical instruments.

11. The distinctive structure of departments and colleges means that full-time students have all the support, resources and facilities of a large world-leading international University, while also benefiting from a smaller multi-disciplinary academic community within their college. The college communities provide a sense of belonging and identity that nurtures academic engagement, promotes interdisciplinary dialogue, and encourages learning, both between students and between academic colleagues.

12. Teaching is primarily undertaken by senior members of academic staff (appointed because of their expertise in both teaching and research), many of whom hold 'joint appointments', meaning they are employed both by a college and a department. In this way, the University and the colleges demonstrate their shared commitment to the central importance and value of teaching as a key responsibility for academic staff.

Student population

13. The University's student body is split roughly evenly between undergraduates and postgraduates. On 1 December 2022 there were 13,425 undergraduates on award-bearing programmes: 94% studying full-time courses and 6% studying part-time courses. The student-experience sections of this submission will mainly focus on full-time students who make up the large majority of our undergraduates. Information specific to part-time students is below in paragraphs 130 to 135.

14. Around 3,300 students are admitted each year to full-time courses leading to Bachelors' degrees or integrated Masters' degrees. This intake is made up of very high-performing students. In the 2021 UCAS cycle 77% of UK applicants and 95% of admitted UK students were awarded A*AA or better at A-level.[1]

Student survey data

15. In 2017 Oxford SU, the recognised student union, voted to boycott the NSS. This official boycott has been renewed every year, and has affected response rates, with all years below the 50% response threshold for public reporting. While we understand that NSS metrics have not been presented to the TEF panel, the University will draw on the two most-recent years of NSS results as supporting evidence in this submission. These two years had much higher response rates than previous years (44% in 2021 and 42% in 2022, compared with under 30% in 2017-2020).

16. Oxford's NSS results have been considered alongside the English sector average. As this average covers a very broad range of providers, Oxford has also calculated a benchmark giving the average positive response rate for publishing Russell Group (RG) providers. RG universities are more similar to Oxford than the sector as a whole, in terms of their high-attaining intake and focus on research. The RG benchmarks have been calculated as an average for RG institutions based on their published subject-level returns, weighted by the number of students.

17. Further evidence is provided by the Student Barometer survey. The Barometer surveys all undergraduates, not just the final year students included in the NSS, so the Barometer gives a broader picture of student experience, and has an aggregated 4-year response rate for undergraduates of 24%. The NSS and Barometer both survey full-time and part-time students on award-bearing courses.2

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Student engagement with this submission

18. The SU has been represented on the working group which has written this university-level submission. The SU has been invited to comment on all aspects of the draft, and particularly encouraged to comment on issues of student engagement.

19. The SU has confirmed that they also intend to make their own TEF submission. The University has provided support to the SU including discussing OfS guidance, sharing all available evidence (including NSS and Barometer data), as well as assisting with writing an additional survey conducted by the SU and carrying out the subsequent data analysis. This SU survey had a response rate of 6%. We understand that the SU has also incorporated informal feedback in their submission, though this feedback has not been shared with the University. The University has stressed to the SU that the student submission is completely independent, and that feedback from the University is for the SU's consideration only, with no requirement that it be incorporated.

Response to Covid-19 pandemic

20. Oxford University was able to respond effectively to the demands of the pandemic, partly because of the approach to personal education for each student, and the role of the colleges in academic and welfare support. Teaching, pastoral care, and academic assessment were all moved online when required, and transitioned back to in-person as government restrictions were changed. Results of NSS survey questions about Covid show Oxford achieved higher levels of satisfaction than the sector on the statement that 'I am content with the delivery of learning and teaching of my course during the Covid-19 pandemic'.

21. External examiners' reports also provide positive feedback on the University's flexibility during the pandemic. For example, one examiner commented that, 'procedures for managing the impact of the Covid pandemic have been outstanding, particularly with regard to ensuring no detriment, adjusting the forms of assessment, and in considering mitigating circumstances claims… because of the measures taken, there was little serious impact on the quality of the students' achievements and where there were issues, these were mitigated in such a way that the students' best interests were made central and their strengths recognised.'[3]

Student Experience

Teaching, feedback and assessment

22. A key commitment of the University's Strategic Plan is that we will offer an excellent academic experience to all our students and ensure that Oxford fully equips graduates to excel in whatever they choose to do after they leave university.

23. The University's teaching is designed to enable students to acquire a range of critical skills in testing and judging evidence or propositions within a broad and rigorous understanding of a particular discipline or disciplines. Courses are intended to foster independent work and thought, and teaching is designed to enable students to learn how to think and argue critically. The University's assessment models therefore seek to assess students' capacity to use their knowledge and skills effectively, applying the analytical and critical abilities they have developed, not simply to test what they have been taught.

24. Overall, Oxford undergraduates express very high levels of satisfaction with their experience of teaching and learning. NSS results show an overall level of satisfaction in 2022 of 84%, compared with an England sector average of 76% and a Russell Group average of 75%. NSS results are supported by a high level of satisfaction with teaching and learning in the Barometer, with 93% for both 2021 and for the aggregated score for the last four years.

25. Scale 1 of the NSS shows that 88% of Oxford students are satisfied with the teaching on their course (compared with 80% both at Russell Group providers and the wider English sector), with over 95% finding their course intellectually stimulating (compared with 81% of the sector). This is supported by the Barometer, with 94% expressing satisfaction with the academic content of their courses.

26. The NSS tells us that 88% of students report that staff are good at explaining things and 86% feel staff have made the subject interesting (against sector averages of 84% and 78% respectively). Again, the Barometer supports this, with 98% satisfied with the expertise of their teachers and 89% happy with the teaching ability of academic staff.

27. A 2018 HEPI report found that, compared to other Russell Group students as well as students across all UK universities, students at Oxford and Cambridge have a higher workload (across a range of disciplines), and spend more hours per week studying outside of class. Rather than suggesting the additional hours are a burden, the workload is felt to be a positive experience, since students at Oxford and Cambridge were found to be more satisfied with their courses and less likely to wish they had chosen another course. The HEPI report also found that these students receive more useful feedback; receive that feedback faster; and believe that they are learning more. Part of the reason for this excellence at Oxford is what HEPI describes as 'the strong commitment to the intensive teaching of undergraduates via the Oxford Tutorial'.

Tutorial teaching

28. The distinctiveness and excellence of Oxford's teaching is founded on a collegiate education system which supports students while challenging them to excel. As set out in the 'Policy and Guidance on Undergraduate Learning and Teaching' (PGULT) for full-time undergraduates, the tutorial system is the cornerstone of this approach. All full-time courses contain a substantial tutorial element, alongside lectures, seminars, laboratory work and fieldwork (as appropriate).

29. Departments publish recommended patterns of tutorial teaching for each course for reference by colleges. It is expected that students will typically spend about 40 hours per week on academic work during term time; this includes both scheduled contact time (including tutorials, lectures, classes and practicals) and time spent in private study. The balance between scheduled contact time and independent study varies between subjects.

30. Full-time undergraduates usually have one or two tutorials every week during term time, and these are usually meetings between one member of academic staff, and two or three students. Students report in the Barometer that on average they have one hour a week of individual time with a member of academic staff, and three hours a week in supervised small groups, practical work or tutorials.

31. The tutorial method requires students to engage fully with the development of their own learning. Students are usually expected to spend 15 to 30 hours preparing for each tutorial, usually by writing an essay, preparing solutions to problems, or completing other work in advance. This requires students to undertake significant amounts of guided independent study in addition to scheduled contact time. Students participate actively in their tutorials, by discussing their prepared work and answering questions. Students may also ask questions, seek help in understanding difficult concepts, or develop the discussion in more depth towards their own areas of interest.

32. This two-way interaction between a tutor and their student is an intellectually challenging conversation. This means that tutorials are a much more rigorous, demanding and interactive method of learning than the one-way flow of information in a lecture, and they provide weekly formative assessment for each undergraduate. This very-small-group teaching is highly effective and personalised to the academic needs of each individual student.

33. Our bespoke educational experience is tailored to Oxford's high-achieving students, and challenges them individually because academic staff adapt the work and discussion to each individual student. A student will typically receive up to 8 tutorials in a term with the same tutor. This enables the student to get to know that member of staff and see a coherent approach to a series of related topics. It also allows the member of staff to follow the student's progress, see how they are making use of feedback, and to personalise their teaching to each student's needs.

34. Students also discuss their work with each other during tutorials, guided by the tutor, providing valuable opportunities for peer-to-peer learning. Tutorials develop our students' capacity to think, talk and write in depth about a subject area, to operate with confidence within its methodologies, and to form precise academic arguments.

35. Each college is required to meet a set of agreed standards for teaching and learning, including providing the required tutorials and teaching sessions, study skills support, keeping a full record of each undergraduate's academic progress (as below in paragraph 56), and operating internal quality assurance of their own provision. Colleges are required to confirm their compliance with these standards as part of the University-wide annual quality assurance process.[4]

36. 94% of students completing the Barometer express satisfaction with the quality of tutorials, demonstrating that tutorials are valued by students as well as being a key part of their teaching and learning. When reflecting on their time at Oxford, former students often mention the value of the tutorial system.[5] For example, one reported that, 'When I came to Oxford...I got to be in tutorials where I had the professor's full attention for an hour, along with one or two other students. The tutorial system teaches you critical thinking and the ability to think on your feet in a way that no other form of education can'.[6]

Other teaching

37. The customised, individualised learning experience of tutorials (two or three students) and other small-group teaching (typically six to eight students) complements the wider variety of teaching in each subject. Full-time students engage with core material through expert lectures, seminars and classes. Responses to the 2021 Barometer survey indicated that 87% of Oxford students were happy with the quality of lectures for their course. Students also have extensive opportunities to develop and apply knowledge and skills through practical work in the laboratory or by undertaking fieldwork, research and placements.

38. For example, fieldwork is an important part of the Earth Sciences course, providing practical exercises and field experience in geology and geophysics. Students complete up to 90 days of field training throughout the course, including a four to six week independent mapping project. Archaeology and Anthropology students benefit from artefact-handling sessions in the University's museums and archives, and they study scientific techniques and methods in the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art. They also complete a fieldwork project in the summer after their 1st year, and some undertake additional optional fieldtrips.

Digitally supported teaching and learning

39. Teaching and learning for Oxford's full-time undergraduates primarily takes place in person, supported by a core set of digital education technologies. All students have access to a centrally supported virtual learning environment (Canvas), the Replay service for educational recordings (Panopto) and Oxford Reading Lists Online (ORLO) (Talis Aspire), as well as Microsoft Teams for collaboration and virtual classroom functionality, and Inspera for online exams and assignment submission. These core services are supplemented by additional tools to add functionality such as digital whiteboards, polling and coding and other more discipline-specific online tools.

40. Use of digital education technologies increased significantly in 2020 when the University responded rapidly to the unprecedented demand for online teaching presented by the pandemic. Usage of these tools more than doubled with remote teaching. While usage levels are no longer at the peaks of 2020 and 2021, they remain significantly higher than before the pandemic, so digital education is supplementing the more-traditional forms of teaching rather than replacing them.

41. Our new Digital Education Strategy provides a vision for optimising the use of technology while maintaining the primacy of the in-person residential student experience. The strategy sets out significant ways in which digital tools can enhance our pedagogy, with a strong focus on enabling more inclusive approaches to teaching, to the benefit of all students, and on fostering the use of innovative teaching approaches.

42. To complement the Digital Education Strategy, our Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) has explored the evidence base for digitally supported inclusive teaching, informed by a review of students' experiences of digital learning through the pandemic, and developed a toolkit that will be published in 2023 after further consultation. The CTL also provides pathways and Canvas templates which outline the structure and content for common teaching scenarios such as lectures and tutorials. These encourage a more coherent student experience, especially for those studying joint courses, as well as offering extensive guidance and support to help course teams use digital education technologies more effectively.

43. The IT Learning Centre supports students on all courses to boost their digital fluency, participate fully in their teaching and learning, and graduate with employable digital skills. The centre offers around 150 courses every term including programming, digital media and digital wellness. Students also enjoy free access to a wide variety of self-study materials, including LinkedIn Learning.

44. Departments are encouraged to choose the most-appropriate digital solutions for their disciplinary context. Many departments have their own learning technologists to support local priorities. These are supported by the CTL who provide access to a University-wide community of peers with regular meetings, active support forums and opportunities for professional development, including a supported route to becoming a Certified Member of the Association for Learning Technology.

45. There are many examples of digital education technologies used to support teaching and learning across the University. For example, the Oxford Simulation Teaching and Research facility (OxStaR) has pioneered the use of simulation technology to enhance learning for students and healthcare professionals in Oxford for over a decade. Its most-recent project with the Medical School has been a programme of training using a Virtual Reality Simulation. Students interact with virtual patients, healthcare professionals and clinical environments in a computer-generated environment. This is proving very effective for teaching complex decision-making in the face of uncertainty without risk to patients.

46. The Lab Med app has been developed for students on the Oxford Laboratory Medicine course, an intensive 8-week course for clinical medical students, covering high volume basic science and clinical information across five pathology specialties. The app provides a comprehensive bank of high-quality answers which students can use for learning and exam preparation, as well as questions, answers and explanations produced exclusively by specialists in the field.

47. Another example of excellence in digitally supported learning is the Cabinet project for the Digital Transformation of Teaching through Objects. This makes museum resources more accessible for teaching and research through digitisation, and brings these resources into a single intuitive and interactive interface that is widely used in undergraduate teaching.

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Assessment

48. Undergraduates are assessed and given feedback throughout their studies through regularly submitting and discussing work as part of their tutorials, through contact with academic staff in their tutorials, and informal examinations known as 'collections' at the start of each term. These formative examinations give both examination practice and an opportunity to receive feedback from their college tutors on work produced under examination conditions.

49. The annual quality assurance process for colleges (mentioned above in paragraph 35) includes standards relating to these 'collections', including making their purpose and importance clear to students, marking and returning papers as promptly as possible, and informing students of when and how they will receive feedback.

50. All students take a formal summative assessment early in their course, normally at the end of the first year. Students must pass this in order to progress, but it does not count towards their final degree award. For 3-year Bachelors' degrees (mostly in humanities and social sciences), the degree award is normally based on assessments (including exams, dissertations and extended essays) concentrated into the final year, allowing synoptic evaluation of skills acquired throughout the course. In 4-year integrated Masters' degrees (which predominate in the sciences) the degree award is based on summative assessments (which may include exams, project work, extended essays and other elements) taken in years 2, 3 and 4 of the course.

51. The NSS shows that 72% of Oxford students consider their marking and assessment to have been fair, above the sector benchmark of 69%. The only NSS question on scale 3 where Oxford falls below the sector is on the statement that the criteria used in marking have been clear in advance. The Barometer shows similar results to the NSS, with Oxford performing strongly on all questions relating to assessment and feedback, except the explanation of marking/assessment criteria.

52. Extensive efforts have been made to improve students' understanding of assessment criteria. Detailed information is included in course handbooks and other official course materials such as exam information. The criteria are also emphasised in college teaching and exam preparation. In addition, many departments have undertaken initiatives to improve students' understanding of how their work is marked and what assessors are looking for. For example, the English Faculty run workshops designed to enhance students' understanding of good writing, and ensure clarity of the marking criteria. Undergraduates report that the workshops clarify expectations around exam writing, and increase confidence in the criteria.[7] Biochemistry has run exam essay peer-marking exercises since 2013. Students mark anonymised essays against the exam marking scheme, and then discuss the essays and marks with a member of academic staff.[8] In preparation for summative exams in years 1 to 3, all colleges offer small-group revision classes based around students' attempts at past papers. Classes focus on exam skills such as preparation and time management, as well as helping students to understand the key features of an excellent answer to a question.

53. During the pandemic Oxford replaced many traditional in-person examinations with more flexible and inclusive assessment by coursework or online open-book exams. In a 2022 assessment survey 74% of students who sat an online, open-book exam and 80% who submitted coursework online were satisfied with their experience.[9] The level of satisfaction for online examinations was consistent across departments. One student reported that, 'having an open book exam allowed me to demonstrate more than just my short and long term memory, but rather how I understand the subject in a holistic and critical way. I feel that the skill I have most developed throughout the course has been forming critical, developed arguments in my essays. Open book exams have allowed me to demonstrate both this skill and the knowledge I have learned.'

54. We are learning from the experience of assessment methods used during the pandemic and will continue to transition to a more diverse pattern of assessment. Open-book exams have been retained in many instances, with a return to conventional closed-book exams where this is felt to be necessary, alongside the wider use of other assessment formats. All undergraduate degree programmes offer some elements of non-exam assessment.

Feedback to students

55. An essential strength of the tutorial approach is the opportunity it provides for continuous formative assessment and feedback. Students complete formative work in a variety of discipline-appropriate formats, and have the opportunity to discuss their work, receive face-to-face feedback from their tutor, and ask questions about that feedback. This enables students to build their skills and confidence, in preparation for later summative assessment tasks. As outlined above in paragraphs 30 to 32, students complete at least one or two substantial essays or equivalent pieces of work every week during term and receive detailed feedback on their work.

56. Each student normally receives a written progress report every term from each tutor that has taught them. These reports are shared with the student's supervising tutor, who meets the student to discuss their overall progress at the end of each term. The college Senior Tutor or the Head of College will also hold individual progress review meetings with each student in the college at least annually.

57. The NSS shows that Oxford students are more likely than the sector average to say that feedback on their work has been timely (70% compared with 66% for the sector, and 55% for the Russell Group). Oxford students are also much more likely to report that they have received helpful comments on their work (77% compared with 68% for the sector, and 60% for the Russell Group). This is supported by Barometer results showing 85% of students agree that there has been fair and transparent assessment of their work, and 86% agree that feedback helps to clarify things they do not understand.

Course content and delivery

58. NSS results show Oxford students report very high levels of engagement with their courses, with 95% saying their course is intellectually stimulating, compared with 81% for the sector. 83% of Oxford students say their course has challenged them to achieve their best work, compared with 76% for the sector. As above, these excellent NSS results are supported by the Barometer, with 94% expressing satisfaction with the academic content of their courses.

Delivery model

59. Our full-time undergraduate degrees provide a highly focused and intensive mode of study suitable for undergraduates who live and study in Oxford during their degree programme. Departments set the course content and provide teaching through small classes, laboratories and lectures, as appropriate for the course. Colleges provide individualised teaching in tutorials, as described above in paragraphs 28 to 36, which complements departmental cohort-level teaching. Barometer results show 94% of Oxford students are satisfied with the quality of tutorials, and 97% are satisfied with class sizes.

60. Part-time courses with a different delivery model tailored for a different cohort of students are offered through the Department for Continuing Education, as below in paragraphs 130 to 135.

Personalised curriculum

61. The University's full-time undergraduate degree programmes are designed to enable students to establish the essential knowledge and skills of the relevant subject disciplines in the first

year of the course by following a common core curriculum. Students then have greater opportunity to decide the shape of their own studies in later years. Students are supported in their course decisions by tailored guidance from college tutors who have usually taught the students over a number of terms, and who know them well. Joint degrees allow students to access up-to-date teaching from two or more world-leading departments. For example, students of Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) study all three subjects in year 1, and can then continue with all three subjects or specialise in two.

62. Many departments offer an unusually large range of options. For example, in English Language and Literature students can study literature from 650 to the present day including options like Shakespeare and Austen from the classical canon and also diverse alternatives such as post-colonial African literature. History students can access more than 100 different options, ranging far beyond European and North American history, including papers on China, Central Asia and Africa. Engineering students can choose 5 papers from 15 in the 3rd year, and 6 from 26 in the 4th year, to specialise in one of the branches of Engineering Science, or to maintain some breadth if they prefer.

Course design and review

63. Course design and review is carried out by senior academic research and teaching staff in departments, and so is informed by the current state of research. This helps to ensure that students are stretched academically, and that assessment is designed appropriately and inclusively. The CTL advises academic staff across the University on the development of courses and the design of assessment to ensure that it is rigorous and fair. For example, the CTL offers a consultancy service to support the redesign of summative assessment.

64. The University engages in periodic reviews of academic departments which include detailed scrutiny of courses, teaching, research, environment, buildings and infrastructure, and reviews of student progression and outcome data. These reviews always include a student panel member, involve meetings with numerous students, and bring in subject experts from other institutions, including industry, if relevant, to ensure that teaching remains fresh and challenging for students. For example, the departmental review of Economics in 2020 included colleagues from Barcelona, Cambridge, Harvard and UCL.[10]

Academic experience

World-leading researchers as teachers

65. In the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF) Oxford's submission had the largest volume of world-leading research in the country. The University submitted 3,607 staff (3,405 FTE) across 29 REF Units of Assessment; by FTE-weighted average, 59% of the submission was rated 4* (world-leading) while a further 32% was rated as 3* (internationally excellent).

66. The provision of teaching through Oxford's colleges ensures that students are frequently taught in very small groups by senior staff, most of whom are research-active and holders of joint appointments. The University's Policy and Guidance on Undergraduate Learning and Teaching (PGULT) recommends that, as a minimum, at least half the tutorials received by a student should be delivered by a senior member of academic staff. In fact, colleges' regular monitoring shows that over 70% of college teaching is by senior academics.[11]

67. This college teaching is combined with the delivery of extensive departmental teaching by academic staff, including lectures, seminars, demonstrations and practical classes. This means that undergraduate students have regular and sustained opportunities to interact with, learn from, and be guided by active researchers.

68. Student satisfaction with key elements of the University's provision, particularly the opportunity to engage with experts in their subject, is reflected in the results of the Barometer. 98% of

respondents report satisfaction with the expertise of academic staff, and 87% agreed that they were able to get time from academic staff when needed.

Student exposure to research

69. The opportunity for students to engage as active researchers themselves is integral to the learning experience at Oxford across all disciplines. Science students undertake a range of extended research projects. In some cases, such as Biochemistry, Biology, Chemistry and Materials, these last the entire duration of a student's fourth year. Students are typically embedded within a research group of the department for their project, and perform full-time research. Such projects provide the opportunity to work closely with a research-engaged academic supervisor (often leading to co-authorship of peer-reviewed research publications), and to develop high-level research and employability skills, thereby enabling students to transition effectively to further study or professional scientific careers. Courses with an extended research project lead to an integrated Masters' qualification.

70. The six-year undergraduate Medicine course at Oxford provides the opportunity to undertake a substantial experimental research project in year 3 of the programme. Students work as part of internationally recognised research groups across the Medical Sciences Division and beyond, with a wide range of research project opportunities available. Students acquire the skills required to generate and critically analyse scientific data and test their own hypotheses, join a research community that ranks alongside the top in the world for biomedical sciences, and gain insight into how research underpins modern biomedical science. Students produce an extended essay on their project, and many lead to co-authored publications. As one recent student put it, 'Third year enables you to dive deeper... giving you control over your own learning, and enabling you to become a 'mini expert' in a certain area'.[12]

71. Students in the humanities and social sciences can undertake a detailed and extensive research project through supervised work on a dissertation including learning research methods. The focus of students' projects or dissertations often grows out of material covered by core or optional elements of their course, and therefore provides an opportunity for students to enhance their specialist knowledge in the areas that interest them. These research-based learning opportunities enable students to develop transferable skills in handling diverse sources and forms of evidence, such as archival and documentary analysis, survey design and statistical analysis.

72. The Barometer shows that 92% (4-year average) of our students are satisfied with the level of research activity on their course. Our students' sense of being part of a vibrant academic community engaged in world-leading research is enhanced by an enormous range of extra-curricular seminars, lectures and other academic events taking place across the University's departments, colleges, libraries and museums. Over 150 such events are held each week during term time.[13] Speakers regularly include internationally renowned scholars, artists, writers and political leaders. This gives students exposure to cutting-edge research and debate outside their own subject area.

Developing professionals

73. Many of Oxford's undergraduate courses are endorsed by PSRB accreditation, including Chemistry, Earth Sciences (Geology), Engineering, Law, Law with Law Studies in Europe, Materials Science, Mathematics and Statistics, Medicine, Physics and Psychology. This external validation demonstrates that our courses are rigorous and practically oriented as well as providing the highest level of intellectual challenge.

74. Oxford students are often the recipients of external prizes and awards, which further demonstrates the excellence of their research work. For example, seven Oxford undergraduate

Geography dissertations have won national awards from the Royal Geographical Society in the last three years, as well as one runner up and two special commendations.

75. Another example is from Medical Sciences, where there is a strong record of research publications across the subjects. Over the last five years (2017 to 2021) 4th-year Biochemistry students were named as co-authors in 60 peer-reviewed research papers (including one in Nature, one in Science, and three in Cell) because of their contribution to the work being reported. About one student in seven ends up as a co-author on a paper. Final year Experimental Psychology students undertake a research project over three terms as a component of their work. Over the last 5 years there have been 27 publications with 35 students as authors.

76. External examiners reports also include many comments on the quality of students' work compared to other institutions. For example, 'The level of the exam papers was definitely higher than that of papers at Russell Group Universities with which I am familiar', and 'The academic standards achieved by the students were very high and certainly high in comparison with other higher education institutions'.

Staff professional development

Institutional culture

77. The University of Oxford is committed to innovation and excellence in teaching that provides an equal opportunity for all students to achieve and demonstrate their full academic potential. The institutional culture represented by colleges, by the joint appointment system (in which most academic staff hold a post in both a University department and a college), and by tutorial teaching, demonstrates the University's commitment to the importance and value of teaching. Colleges also foster a culture of interdisciplinary exchange, in which both academics and students take opportunities to share excellent academic practice across disciplinary communities, and to learn from each other.

78. The significance attached to teaching is underlined by the fact that those who teach and work with undergraduate students on a regular basis are those whose academic achievements, research and publications, are also recognised within their department and by the University as a whole. Oxford's institutional structures underline the significance attached to teaching: the joint appointments system embodies its priority; successful completion of the five-year probation period for members of academic staff requires evidence of effective teaching; and staff seeking the rank of Professor must demonstrate 'an ongoing record of effective teaching'.[14]

Professional development and support for teaching staff

79. The University has maintained a centre of excellence to promote quality in undergraduate teaching since the early 2000s. To enhance this focus, the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) was established in 2019, bringing together and supplementing staff in Educational Development and Digital Education. The CTL supports the academic development of teaching and learning in line with agreed institutional priorities, and in partnership with students and colleagues in academic divisions and professional services.

80. The CTL champions the University's commitment to flexible and inclusive teaching. This approach preserves the high quality, personalised education which is our hallmark, whilst recognising and minimising the barriers that can hinder student learning and participation. This approach is integrated within professional development and support for staff, and the CTL offers staff training and resources to tutors including guidance on remote and hybrid teaching, webinars to support flexible and inclusive teaching, and practical Oxford-specific teaching resources.

81. The CTL delivers a one-day induction in September each year for newly appointed academic, teaching and research staff, to introduce them to teaching at Oxford. 488 have attended this event since 2018. For teachers new to Oxford there is the Preparation for Learning and Teaching at Oxford (PLTO) course that is tailored to local requirements and run by departments and divisions. This course is intended for PhD students or postdoctoral researchers who wish to start teaching at Oxford.

82. The CTL also runs professional development programmes for teaching staff, with national recognition for teaching and support of learning in higher education through its accreditation with Advance HE.[15] 115 staff have completed the Post-Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education since its inception in 2018-19. Staff can also engage in teaching development by enrolling in the CTL-accredited Teaching Recognition Scheme (TRS) mapped to the UK Professional Standards Framework; to date, 8 have gained associate fellowship (AFHEA), 29 fellowship (FHEA) and, during a pilot of the senior fellow route in 2020-21, 9 senior fellowships (SFHEA) have been awarded. Senior fellowship recognises educational leadership and management of teaching and learning. In 2021-22 the CTL collaborated with the Chemistry Department to run a route for doctoral students teaching as laboratory demonstrators to gain AFHEAs. The Director of Chemistry Teaching Laboratories said, 'this is great news for students and for the Department's continued commitment to supporting teaching. Thanks to the CTL to enable us to recognise the quality of teaching of Junior Demonstrators in the practical course, and congratulations to all the successful candidates!'

83. From 2018 to 2020 347 participants successfully completed the Developing Learning and Teaching (DLT) course. This course builds on the PLTO, and is for doctoral students with teaching duties, early career academics, and professional services staff who support learners. In 2020 the DLT programme was redesigned into the new Advancing Teaching and Learning (ATL) programme to reflect institutional priorities in relation to flexible and inclusive teaching . To date 225 participants have completed the ATL programme and been awarded Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

84. The CTL develops online courses and resources to support teaching across Oxford. For example, the four online VLE courses (An Introduction to Inclusive Teaching at Oxford, Flexible and Inclusive Teaching, An Introduction to Tutorial Teaching in the Humanities and Social Sciences, and An Introduction to Tutorial Teaching in the Sciences) have over 850 enrolled users. These courses offer toolkits to support teaching, such as the the Racially Inclusive Teaching Toolkit. Staff from across Oxford have shared case-studies of their teaching reflecting their commitment to excellence on topics that range from inclusive teaching practices to digital tools to support teaching and learning.

Celebrating teaching and teaching awards

85. The four academic divisions (groups of departments) all have their own, long-standing teaching awards to recognise outstanding teaching, but also the development of the curriculum and the support of teaching. Project grants are also awarded for the development of new courses and teaching materials. Descriptions of the work of the award recipients are published celebrating examples of excellence, and lessons learnt from projects funded via the award scheme. The Social Sciences Division has Teaching Development and Enhancement Project awards. One recent winner was 'Lab in Your Pocket', a project developed for Geography students to use their smartphones to develop skills in research methods using blended learning and digital education approaches.

86. Excellence in teaching, and in support for teaching, is also recognised at the institutional level through the biennial Vice-Chancellor's Education Awards, first run in 2020. These awards

celebrate high-quality education across the collegiate University, recognising new and innovative approaches to teaching, and to enhancing students' educational experience at Oxford. Winners of the 2022 Education Awards included the Opportunity Oxford bridging programme, designed to give students from disadvantaged backgrounds the best possible preparation for Oxford, and 'Working It Out', a series of workshops to empower first-year Biochemistry students through collaborative problem-solving.

87. In summer 2021 the first Teaching and Learning Showcase was held to celebrate excellent teaching practice and to share learning across Oxford with an emphasis on flexible and inclusive teaching. 227 people from across the collegiate University registered for six live events, which included 20 live presentations with audience Q&A, two interactive panel discussions, and an interactive workshop.

Supportive learning environment

88. Oxford's NSS results on scale 4 for academic support show that Oxford is performing well against the sector, with an overall satisfaction score of 78% compared to 73%. Oxford scores particularly well on 'I have been able to contact staff when I needed to', at 89% compared with under 80% for the sector.

Supporting transitions

89. The University recognises that the transition to university can represent a leap for many students and has dedicated significant resources to addressing this. For example, in 2020 we introduced the Opportunity Oxford programme: this enables around 200 offer-holders to participate in an academic bridging programme which supports them in their transition from school or college to university. Students take an online course with personalised mentoring over the summer, followed by a two-week residential course in September. This ambitious programme explores and develops high-level academic skills that support the success of participants in their further studies. The online component of the programme has also been made available to other students from disadvantaged backgrounds to support their transition to Oxford.

90. There is also a long-standing bridging programme for new undergraduate students in the physical sciences. Students in Physics, Chemistry and Earth Sciences are invited to apply for a residential week before the start of the first term. This offers additional academic content, and has a strong focus on pastoral and broader academic matters, such as the importance of critical thinking and independent learning skills. Priority is given to students whose background indicates that they are most likely to benefit from the programme. All students starting full-time courses in Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Materials Science, Engineering and Physics are encouraged to work through online bridging materials.

91. The University has launched its 'Astrophoria' Foundation Year (AFY), building on the success of the Foundation Year run since 2016 by one of Oxford's colleges. AFY is entirely funded by the University, and is for students who have experienced severe personal disadvantage or disrupted education and who do not have the qualifications to apply directly for an Oxford degree programme. AFY will enable students to reach their academic potential through a supportive and challenging one-year academic course aimed at developing their skills, self-belief and academic confidence.

92. We also provide activities to support and prepare undergraduate offer-holders more generally, helping them to understand expectations relating to, and to prepare for, university study. The University has developed a set of online resources, including podcasts, on managing the transition to university life. These can be accessed through a single, student-facing Oxford Transition Support portal. This is regularly updated and, as of 2022, includes links to relevant resources provided by 14 departments, 6 central services and 33 colleges. The webpages

have been promoted to students and accumulated 934,561 page views between 26 May 2022 and 25 October 2022. Departments and colleges also run induction activities so that students are welcomed into their intellectual and social communities, and guided in making their first academic choices. Both the University and the colleges also provide welfare support, including for students with disabilities and mental health conditions.

93. The School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences has introduced an optional online course in wellbeing[16] to support medical students' transition from pre-clinical studies (which are science-focused) to the very different learning environment of hospital-based clinical studies from year 4 of the 6-year undergraduate Medicine course. Developed initially in response to the pandemic, the course has become a permanent resource for students and has been developed and expanded. It now consists of 12 modules covering a range of areas including imposter syndrome, difficult clinical situations, motivation, disability in medicine, and sleep. This resource has proved extremely popular, with over 800 students accessing the course since its inception in April 2020.

94. Additional transition support is also provided for students with English as an additional language. Specialists in English for Academic Purposes organise a variety of courses and interventions including a Summer Pre-sessional Course in academic English, term-time written and spoken academic communication courses, embedded departmental and college support, and individual writing support.[17]

Oxford as a learning community

95. Oxford students are members of their academic departments, as they would be at other universities, where they meet other students taking the same subjects. Oxford students also have the benefit of being part of a close-knit academic community within their college, where they live and work with undergraduates and graduates studying other subjects. We believe this aspect of the student experience at Oxford contributes to the positive response to the NSS question 'I feel part of a community of staff and students' where the Oxford response of 90% is over 10 percentage points higher than the sector. The Barometer has a similar question which is at 90% for the last 4 years. The NSS also shows that 92% of students reported that they were engaged with their studies (4-year averages). In pandemic years these NSS scores only fell by 1-2%, showing how well the University maintained the sense of being part of a stimulating intellectual community even through the challenges of lockdown.

Individualised academic support

96. Ensuring that students have the opportunity and support to develop as individuals – academically, personally and professionally – and that they are prepared for the diverse range of opportunities available after they graduate is at the centre of the University's strategic aims for its educational provision.

97. Every undergraduate student has at least one tutor in their college who oversees their overall progress. Students meet these college tutors at least termly to discuss their progress, and to review their termly tutorial reports. In addition, Senior Tutors in colleges have responsibility for students' overall progress and provide support to both tutors and students. Each student has the opportunity for an individual meeting with the Head of College and/or Senior Tutor at least annually. This level of individual attention within a supportive college environment is a signature of the Oxford experience, and allows us to identify problems very quickly. This contributes to the very low proportion of students at Oxford who do not complete their undergraduate degree, as illustrated in our better-than-benchmark performance in the TEF continuation metrics.

98. The very small groups in tutorials mean that tutors can provide detailed individual feedback to students on their work and progress, as above in paragraphs 28 to 36. The provision of regular

formative feedback provides students with opportunities to reflect on their progress throughout their course, and for students to receive additional support where required to enable them to succeed at Oxford and beyond. This includes general study skills support as well as specialist academic skills for each particular subject.

Student Welfare Support

99. Each college is close-knit community with welfare officers, trained peer supporters and health professionals. College tutors who meet students on a weekly basis are also alert to any welfare issues. College staff provide first-responder support and also signpost students to other services such as a range of mental health support, including the University's Counselling Service. In the academic year 2020-21 93% of users rated their overall experience of the Counselling Service as good or very good.[18] The University also joined Togetherall in 2020, an online wellbeing platform for students and staff which offers online discussions, self-learning courses and other resources. We also support Oxford Nightline, an independent, out-of-hours listening, support and information service run for and by students of Oxford and Oxford Brookes universities.

100. The University's Disability Advisory Service (DAS) offers personalised support to full-time undergraduates with a disability or long-term health condition. All students who register with DAS are offered contact with a designated disability advisor who can assess their study support requirements and make recommendations for reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment including major course changes. DAS also undertakes a range of outreach activities with prospective applicants, offer holders and students to proactively encourage early engagement so they can gain full benefit from any relevant support and resources.[19] Every college and department has a disability coordinator responsible for liaising with DAS about individual students and their required adjustments.

101. There is evidence that our on-course support for students is effective, as our TEF indicators for continuation, completion and progression equal or exceed our challenging benchmarks. External examiners reports also include positive comments about our support, such as, 'I am pleased to see the University's support for disabled students and those with specific learning differences, and the management of their assessment needs, has become much more transparent and mature. There will always be areas to improve, as every year presents with different challenges, but some changes have happened quickly and to the benefit of all'.

Learning resources/environment

102. The collegiate University offers students a physical and virtual learning environment encompassing iconic teaching and study spaces, state-of-the-art laboratories, wide-ranging museum collections, excellent physical learning resources including unrivalled libraries, as well as online library resources, other digital resources and cutting-edge learning technology. The excellence of learning resources is reflected in better-than-sector results on all questions of the NSS scale 6. The overall score is 88% compared to the sector at 81%. Oxford students report that 'I have been able to access course-specific resources and 'library resources have supported my learning well' with both results at ten percentage points higher than the sector.

Outstanding resources for learning

103. Every college has its own library, fully focussed on providing students with the resources and workspaces that they need, including multiple copies of all the core textbooks, and librarians to help. College libraries are open long hours, and many are open 24/7. Colleges often buy books based on student requests within a couple of days, if they do not already have them in stock, which reduces students' need to buy their own books. Some colleges also provide book grants, targeting support at students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

104.   The University's world-class learning resources are also available to all students through the exceptional collections of the Bodleian Libraries. These libraries include the principal University library (the Bodleian Library, one of the UK's Legal Deposit libraries), major research libraries, and libraries attached to departments and other institutions of the University. The Bodleian Libraries collections include over 13.6 million printed items, 1.5 million e-books and 177,000 electronic journals. The collections are constantly updated to ensure that students have access to the materials they need. Curators in the Bodleian Libraries both teach and offer classes and workshops in the use of objects in special collections to support learning.

105.   Oxford Reading Lists Online (ORLO) is the University's tool for providing online reading lists - linked to full-text resources, audio-visual materials, scanned extracts (within copyright restrictions) and catalogue data in (and outside of) the VLE. The Bodleian Libraries have an e-first policy for reading list provision, and in 2021-22 ORLO provided access to 1,388 undergraduate reading lists for 31 departments, accessed 163,914 times, with 71% of citations accessible online.

106.   The Bodleian Libraries also provide an extensive series of online resources and face-to-face sessions to support students in making effective use of the resources on offer and to develop essential independent study and research skills. In 2021-22 over 5,000 undergraduate participants built on their library induction by attending or viewing 335 information skills sessions and videos, delivered by expert subject librarians and curators and tailored to specific needs. Student feedback on library services and facilities through the NSS and Barometer shows high levels of satisfaction with the provision. The Barometer shows 96% satisfaction with the physical library resources over 4 years, and 94% satisfaction with on-line library resources. Over 90% of responders answered these questions, showing very high levels of engagement.

107.   Fostering and valuing inclusion and diversity across the library service is one of the guiding principles of the Bodleian Libraries Strategy. The libraries are committed to developing and promoting collections that reflect a diverse academic community and breadth of scholarship including previously under-represented areas/voices. A Mellon Foundation-funded project is specifically addressing issues around Empire and equity in the Bodleian's collections. Each library site has a Disability Liaison Librarian to provide support to disabled students, and the Accessible Resources Acquisition and Creation Unit (ARACU) is available to support students with particularly complex needs.

108.   Students at Oxford have access to resources beyond their own subject areas. For example, the Language Centre allows students to develop their language skills, whatever the subject of their degree-level course. The Language Centre offers support in academic English as part of transitional support, as mentioned in paragraph 94 above. It also offers teaching in 11 other Modern Languages. Expert tutors provide a range of teaching from intensive short courses to in-depth three-term programmes. The Language Centre library also has multi-media materials available to borrow in over 200 languages, as well as online resources and space to study. 745 undergraduates students took Language Centre classes in 2021-22, 760 in 2020-21, and 735 in 2019-20.[20]

109.   The University also maintains seven museums and collections which are used to support its teaching and research, as well as the oldest botanic garden in Britain and a 130-acre arboretum. Almost 80% of all Barometer respondents have visited the Botanic Gardens, and over 85% have visited the Ashmolean Museum. Teaching in the Humanities and Social Sciences particularly benefits from the museums and collections of the University. Last year the Ashmolean Museum delivered over 260 core undergraduate teaching sessions involving more than 3,800 objects from its collections. Training in object-handling is also offered to academic tutors so that this expertise is actively being shared.

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Space and equipment for learning

110.   The University has 235 buildings, providing some 590,000m^2 of space, which accommodate its day-to-day activities, including specialist research buildings, world-class teaching laboratories and lecture halls, sports facilities, libraries and museums, administrative and ceremonial buildings. The colleges have their own estates including student accommodation, teaching facilities, lecture theatres and libraries. Over the last four years 84% of Barometer responders were satisfied with the quality of personal study space.

111.   Student feedback shows high levels of satisfaction both with access to specialist facilities (including laboratories) and the quality of general teaching space. NSS data shows 92% of Oxford students agree they have been able to access course-specific resources when they need to, compared with 82% in the sector. This is supported by Barometer data showing satisfaction of 90% for the quality of lecture theatres and classrooms, and 93% for the quality of laboratories.

112.   In 2021/22 the 'Improvements to Hybrid Teaching Facilities Project' achieved the rapid implementation of improved hybrid teaching facilities in 54 rooms across the University. In addition, colleges upgraded the hybrid facilities in their own teaching spaces and provided technology for academic staff to deliver hybrid teaching from their offices. An independent evaluation by the Department of Education found that over 80% of students valued having the option to attend hybrid sessions remotely. The majority also felt that teaching staff used hybrid technologies effectively (75%) and inclusively (69%).[21]

113.   Making Oxford's physical spaces more accessible and ready for the future is a key priority in the Digital Education Strategy 2023-2027. A scoping exercise is underway, to develop a full strategy for upgrading remaining teaching spaces and other student study spaces.

114.   An example of successful hybrid teaching is the hybrid lab initiative launched for 2nd year Biochemistry students in 2021, shortlisted for the Vice-Chancellor's Education Awards.[22] This initiative uses blended learning with a mixture of online material, problems and feedback meshed alongside face-to-face practicals and lectures, to teach molecular biology and genetic techniques. It combines high-quality online materials developed during the pandemic with the benefits of practical learning in the lab. Students performed better when undertaking the blended learning. As one student put it, 'I absolutely love that somebody has thought this through so much. I enjoyed working on the problems, whilst also seeing how that specific problem would be approached in the lab. Together with the mini lectures, questions we could ask the demonstrators, I think of the majority of us benefited from this much more compared to only listening to the lectures two times a week'.

Engagement

115.   Oxford's NSS results are weaker on scale 8 than for other TEF scales, with 53% overall satisfaction for 'Student Voice', compared with 67% for the sector. The University and the Oxford SU are both committed to improving this by continuing to engage students in the development of their educational experience and outcomes. The Policy and Guidance on Student Engagement and Representation (P&G SER) covers student representation at department, division and University level; student engagement in evaluation and feedback; and student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement. Recognising the diversity of the University, the P&G SER provides a flexible framework for student representation. It sets out the broad pattern of representation and policy expectations, allowing local representation structures to be tailored to, and by, the specific student body that they serve.

Student representation

116.   At a departmental level, students are represented by course representatives. These reps sit on both department committees and staff-student committees, usually in the form of Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs). These JCCs are forums for substantive discussion and debate on key areas of the student experience. The SU leads on development for student course reps and divisional reps, offering support, training and resources.[23] Further training and support is offered by colleges and departments.

117.   Students are also represented on the four divisional boards and all the key divisional committees responsible for considering education-related matters have student representatives as members. All divisions also have divisional-level staff-student committees or student forums.

118.   Student representation at University level is through the six directly elected sabbatical officers of Oxford SU. At least one of these sabbatical officers, or another nominee, is a member of every formal University-level committee and panel which has relevance to the student experience. A sabbatical officer has also been a member of the working group which has collaborated to write this TEF submission.

119.   University officers work closely with sabbatical officers. There are regular meetings at a variety of levels (up to and including the Vice-Chancellor), including regular catch-ups between various groupings of the SU's sabbatical officers and key officers in the University administration, and pre-meetings for key committees, as well as the committee meetings themselves.

120.   The SU submits an Annual Quality Report (AQR) to the University. As well as providing a commentary on student representation, the AQR provides a commentary on the student experience for consideration by the University subcommittee responsible for quality assurance matters. The report also comments on points made in previous years' reports, to monitor progress.[24]

121.   Students' engagement in improving the University's provision of services takes a variety of forms. For example, the Disability Advisory Service (DAS) undertakes an annual student survey to understand issues that are important to users of the service. They routinely invite students to leave feedback or submit comments anonymously on an online survey that is advertised in staff email signatures. They also meet regularly with the Chair of the Students' Union Disability Campaign. In July 2021 DAS held a consultation with disabled students about recording lectures. The feedback was used in the creation of a new Educational Recordings Policy launched in 2022. The University's Counselling Service also routinely gathers feedback using a student survey.[18] Recent results have shown strong support for continued choice between online and on-site provision, so the service continues to offer both.

122.   The Centre for Teaching and Learning runs an internship scheme where students work as partners with academics and educational developers on timely projects including remote teaching, improving survey response rates, supporting academic transitions, and race and the curriculum. These projects engage students as partners in developing the Centre's guidance for staff and students, and their reports are influencing practice. A recent external evaluation said the scheme was 'highly commended as a staff-student partnership opportunity'.[25]

123.   Another good example of student engagement was the 2020 teaching and assessment student consultation (TASC)[26] which looked at methods of assessment during the pandemic. This was a University-wide online consultation run by the SU asking students about their preferred methods of assessment while all learning and teaching was online. There was significant engagement from the student body with 6,000 submissions, which influenced the University's policy in this important area.

124. In colleges, students are represented through the committees of the undergraduate student body usually known as the Junior Common Room (JCR). JCRs have representative functions within the college and also form a point of connection with the Oxford SU. Colleges have JCR representatives on their governing bodies and their committees that discuss education and academic policy, welfare, and other issues related to the student experience. Colleges are required to confirm that they comply with agreed arrangements for student representation as part of the quality assurance processes mentioned above in paragraph 35.

125. Colleges use a wide variety of additional mechanisms to engage students in decision-making and to support their student representatives. Senior college officials offer elected student representatives the opportunity to meet regularly to discuss issues affecting undergraduate student members. Colleges also invite individual student feedback, online, in hard copy, or both, to be provided anonymously on a regular basis (at least annually), and report back to students any action that has been taken in response to the feedback received.

Student feedback

126. The University aims to ensure that every student has a chance to provide feedback individually on their learning and wider experience at relevant points in their course of study. The University-wide mechanisms for this are the NSS and Barometer. The results of these are considered locally in departments and divisions, provided through custom dashboards, and also centrally for thematic and cross-institutional overview.[2]

127. In accordance with the procedures for the annual monitoring of courses, departments offer regular opportunities for students to give feedback on their educational experience using local mechanisms, with the consideration of this information dovetailing with the Barometer and NSS where possible and appropriate. The form and timing of this evaluation varies between departments but can include surveys, formal and informal discussions between students and departmental staff.

128. The University's Policy and Guidance on New Courses and Major Changes to Courses requires that students are involved in developing new courses or making major changes to courses. The Oxford SU is represented in every departmental review. As part of the review, each department is required to write a self-evaluation document (SED) including analysis and consideration of student feedback data. Current students are also engaged in the process through meetings with the review panel. For example, the SED from the most-recent review of Experimental Psychology[27] discusses how student feedback led to proposals for changes to the structure and assessment of the course. The department discussed the changes with various stakeholders, including undergraduate representatives, and amended the initial proposals in light of the consultation. Course changes were then approved and implemented. Student feedback on the changes has been very positive, and the department continues to monitor impact and suggestions for future improvements from students.

129. Another example of student-led change comes from Biology, which started offering a four-year integrated Masters' course option in 2019 following student feedback and, in response to further feedback, brought forward implementation to make the four-year course available to existing students as well as new applicants.

Oxford University Department for Continuing Education

130. To reach more students and to further its access mission, the University offers award-bearing courses through the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education (OUDCE). These students study for qualifications below degree level and often are not members of colleges. OUDCE courses attract a wide variety of students, as they are offered on a flexible basis, including part-time, modular, online and distance learning options. Most OUDCE students are mature students, and over 60% are over 40, so they are more likely than school-

leavers to have work or family commitments. The teaching schedule covers all 12 months of the year, and includes evenings, weekends and intensive residential weeks, to accommodate students who cannot study during standard working hours.

131.   OUDCE offers certificates and diplomas in a broad range of subjects which are equivalent to the first and second year of a full undergraduate degree respectively, and advanced diplomas which are equivalent to half the final year. The credit from stand-alone short courses can be imported into the Undergraduate Certificate in Higher Education. Foundation Certificates in English Literature and History are two-year part-time courses designed to prepare students for direct entry to the second year of the relevant full-time degree at Oxford.

132.   The admissions process for OUDCE is different from that of full undergraduate programmes, as a wider range of experience and qualifications may be considered suitable for entry.[28] Teaching sessions are usually in classes of 10-25 students. There are also one-to-one and small-group tutorials for study skills and supervisions for extended essays and dissertations. OUDCE has a strong focus on flexible and inclusive teaching practice, and fosters innovative approaches to teaching and learning. OUDCE has fully embraced digital education, and is an established user of Canvas and Moodle. The Technology-Assisted Lifelong Learning (TALL) team offers a dedicated bespoke service in design, production and delivery of online courses.

133.   There is stringent quality assurance across teaching modes, and each programme is reviewed regularly, including through observation and examiners' reports, as well as course committees. Examiner reports are submitted to the relevant Board of Studies and all exam boards include an external examiner.

134.   OUDCE offers its own library and study space for students, who can also access the other Bodleian libraries. Care of students within the department encompasses pastoral and community support in place of the college welfare provision available to full-time students. Students are represented on all relevant committees.

135.   OUDCE has a dedicated Student Support Office which coordinates advice on welfare, pastoral, finance and disability-related matters. The resourcing of this administration doubled in 2022.

Student Outcomes

Educational gains

136.   The educational gains made by students are articulated in the University's Strategic Plan as 'the values, skills and intellectual discipline that will enable them to make a positive contribution to society'. These gains are detailed in the 'Policy and Guidance on Undergraduate Learning and Teaching', and are as follows (references in brackets are to paragraphs where these attributes have already been discussed): becoming critical and independent learners (23, 31), interdisciplinary thinking (11, 77), research skills (69-72) and digital capabilities (39-47). Promotion of these educational gains is embedded in our teaching, and is particularly promoted and monitored through tutorial teaching, feedback and reporting. Evidence of educational gain is provided by students' outstanding degree results, which are consistently endorsed by external examiners.

137.   The gains which characterise Oxford's graduates are those developed through our distinctive educational approach. The college tutorial system is key to becoming critical and independent learners, as students develop the discipline of producing substantial pieces of independent work each week for their tutorials. The role of the tutorial in developing deep approaches to learning are well established.[29] Students' independent study skills are honed

and tested in final-year assessments which all involve at least one piece of extended research or a dissertation.

138.   Students are expected to gain research skills and experience through high-level engagement from senior academics who use their current research practice to enhance their teaching (65 to 68). The intersection of research and teaching enhances learning by exposing students to current, research-informed teaching as well as providing them with real experience of an authentic research environment. For example, all science courses involve a project working within a research group alongside postgraduate research students and postdocs. As above (69 to 71) many courses involve a substantial research project near the end of the degree.

139.   Interdisciplinary thinking is particularly encouraged through interactions with students and staff from other courses, as part of college life. Course structures enable students to engage in academic learning and discussion beyond their own course through specific interdisciplinary courses (eg PPE, Human Sciences); the many joint courses (eg Maths and Philosophy); inclusion of broader topics within curricula (eg the scientific ethics block within the Biochemistry course); and supplementary subjects that can be taken alongside core courses (eg the supplementary subject in the History and Philosophy of Science, which is delivered by the Humanities division but taken almost exclusively by Chemistry students.) In addition many departmental lectures are open to all students.[30] Departments and colleges host a thriving programme of research seminars and lectures.

140.   Departments further articulate the educational gains specific to their disciplines. Often these are framed by the notion of 'becoming' – thinking and behaving in the ways of the discipline. For example, in the Mathematics course this is about 'thinking mathematically, arguing clearly and concisely as you solve problems'.

141.   Oxford students are also very active outside the curriculum, contributing to these educational gains. According to HighFliers 2021 Research, 73% of Oxford finalists have been an active member of a university society, club or sports team compared with a Russell Group (RG) average of 59%; 62% at Oxford have run a student society or social activity (32% in the RG); 56% have been a senior member of a university society (39% in the RG), and 45% have done charity or voluntary work (34% in the RG).[31]

Continuation and completion

142.   Oxford's continuation and completion rates are extremely high. The University is above benchmark for continuation and completion measures at overall indicator level, and substantially above sector averages. Data for continuation and completion have been analysed by student characteristics and no concerns have been identified regarding performance related to age on entry, disability, ethnicity, sex, deprivation, domicile or subject.[32] Continuation and completion rates are particularly strong for part-time students.

143.   For split indicator types, the largest spreads in terms of statistical uncertainty are for groups of students by characteristics where numbers are very small and the performance of a single student may have a significant impact on the overall indicator value.

144.   These high rates of continuation and completion are a result of the excellence of teaching and engagement with learning at the University. The achievements of our full-degree courses are the result of our highly personalised approach, including the use of very-small-group teaching, tailored support and detailed feedback.

145.   Oxford students are highly likely to achieve a 'good' degree outcome, with 94% achieving a first-class or upper-second-class degree in the last four years.[33] This figure is the same as the 5-year average before the exceptional years of the pandemic.

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Progression

146. Oxford University's progression data is as positive as its results for continuation and completion. At 87.7% Oxford's progression rate is materially above benchmark. This is an outstanding rate of progression against a challenging benchmark based on the high-attainment of Oxford's intake. Oxford's success against this progression metric is partly because of the teaching excellence and personalised academic support, and partly because of the tailored support offered by the University's Careers Service, as set out below.

Employability Skills and Internship Opportunities

147. Students learn and develop their employability skills within the curriculum and tutorial system, and in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The Careers Service has articulated eight employability skills based on the Confederation of British Industry's (CBI) Future Fit report of 2009. These skills are business awareness, communication, creativity, initiative, leadership, planning, self-management and teamwork.

148. The Careers Service website provides students with many examples of how to gain each skill in the short, medium and long term, outside the curriculum. Student events and workshops run by the Careers Service are flagged (and searchable) for which one or more of the employability skills the event seeks to address.

149. The Careers Service regularly surveys recruiters to assess how well they view Oxford students' employability skills, relative to typical student applicants. Employers rate Oxford graduates highly on skills including communication, creativity, initiative, leadership, planning and self-management. They tend to rate Oxford students less well on the areas of business awareness and teamwork, possibly because of the individualised nature of some of Oxford's teaching and learning, and the focus on academic study. This feedback has led the University to look for ways to improve students' skills in these key areas and so the Careers Service offers programmes specifically designed to develop these skills.

150. These programmes include consultancy experience and project-based internships, specifically designed to improve business awareness and teamwork, and to provide valuable examples to discuss at interview. Further details on these programmes and other forms of work-readiness support are given below.

151. The Careers Service's mission is to enable all students to make the best-informed decision about their career choice after they graduate; the Service provides opportunities for students to gain and then demonstrate skills and experiences that are valued by employers. These opportunities are complementary to the employability skills students can acquire in their academic work including self-directed research, analysis and synthesis, and presentation and defence of an argument. They include:

    a. Summer internships across a wide range of organisations. Feedback from a survey[34] sent to 2022 participants shows that 80% believe a summer internship will enhance their CV. 70% of the 147 students who gave feedback agreed that the internship contributed to their academic development, 70% felt the internship contributed to their career development, and over 90% would recommend the programme to a friend.

    b. Micro-internships of 2-5 days run at the end of every term. Over 1,500 exclusive opportunities are offered each year, and they are ideal for students who want to build their work experience and confidence.

    c. Crankstart internships specifically for Crankstart Scholars (from disadvantaged backgrounds). There is also a Crankstart Careers Mentoring Programme.

d. The Oxford Strategy Challenge (TOSCA), trains teams of 5-6 students in consultancy skills, then assigns them to work over 8 days on a real business problem defined by an external business or charity. The Student Consultancy (TSC) allows students to work in teams on a client project for a whole term.

e. Insight into … programmes are short courses focused on specific industries. They comprise 3-6 sessions of workshops, panel discussions and networking.

f. Each year over 7,000 one-to-one careers advice sessions are available. Longer sessions are available with those specially trained advisers for students with disabilities.

152. All of these exclusive programmes supplement the many open internships and training posts offered by employers that are posted on the University's CareerConnect platform, as well as other career development opportunities such as those offered by colleges and departments. Students can also use CareerConnect to search for employment opportunities advertised free by recruiters: over 8,000 vacancies are advertised each year.

Work Readiness

153. The Careers Service also supports work readiness in all its activities. At the start of each academic year, almost all students provide information on their frame of mind about their career, the industry or industries in which they are interested in working (including 'start-up'), and the languages they speak. These data are used to adapt the Careers Service provision, and to enable the University and employers to send targeted information of relevance to students.

154. Registration data reveal that between the start of their first and final year, over half of Oxford students change their careers frame of mind positively, for example from postponing career planning to exploring options or even focusing on specific jobs. Student engagement levels are monitored regularly, for example in the attendance levels at the ten careers fairs, and the open rate of the weekly newsletter sent to almost all students (the average rate is around 65%).

155. In the Student Barometer students rate 'How well has your experience prepared you for your career goals' at 61%, 'Learning that will help me get a good job' at 74%, and 'Development of my communications skills as a result of my course' at 82%. The four-year Barometer average for user satisfaction with the Oxford Careers Service is 89%.

Progression outcomes

156. Progression rates in the TEF indicators are high and above benchmark across almost all split indicators, with small numbers of students in a category again likely to result in a wider spread of statistical uncertainty. No concerns have been identified regarding performance related to age on entry, disability, ethnicity, sex, deprivation, domicile, subject, or geography of employment. Progression rates for part-time students are generally at benchmark, though with an older student population than the full-time cohort, it might be expected that some are studying for reasons other than career progression.

157. Oxford graduates are highly valued by employers. The University was ranked 8th in the world in the Global Employability University Survey 2021, based on the perceptions of global graduate recruiters and managing directors of international companies. In November 2022 Times Higher Education ranked Oxford 6th in world for graduate employability based on feedback from a sub-set of recruiters. In the Complete University Guide for 2023, Oxford is ranked 1st overall, and 4th on 'Graduate Prospects' and was the highest-ranked broad-based university, with only a few narrowly focused specialist institutions ranking higher.

158.   The Graduate Outcome Survey (GOS) has been analysed in conjunction with University Admission and academic results data, for the three years 2018-2020.[35] There were 5,281 responses received from respondents who completed an undergraduate degree at Oxford between 2018 and 2020, approximately 53% of the eligible population.

159.   For the three-year period analysed, the majority of graduates were either in employment (54%) or further study (25%) 15 months after graduating. Less than 5% were unemployed and looking for work. There is some evidence that during the pandemic years graduates were slightly more likely to be in further study or looking for work (as opposed to being in employment). Just under half of respondents (48%) were still in their first job.

160.   90% of graduates in employment were in a highly skilled-job. Social background (as measured by admission flags, school type, and ethnicity) has no statistically significant impact on the chances of an Oxford student being employed or unemployed 15 months after graduation, nor on the likelihood of them being in a highly skilled job. Ethnicity has a small influence, with 94% of BME Oxford graduates progressing to a highly skilled job, compared with 89% of white graduates.

161.   The median salary reported by Oxford graduates was £30,327, 11% above the benchmark. After adjusting for subject studied and employment sector, there was no statistically significant difference between the salaries of students flagged as widening participation candidates during the admissions process and those that were not flagged. Those who had been to state schools had a salary £1,600 lower than their independent school counterparts, and the white/BME pay gap was negligible. Overall the results suggest that an Oxford degree leads to consistently strong and equal graduate employment outcomes across nearly all demographics.

162.   Overall 83% of students stated that their current work was 'meaningful and important to me'. This varied depending on the broad subject area studied: from 78% of Humanities graduates to 95% of Medical Sciences graduates.

163.   For 2019/20, the Graduate Outcome Survey (GOS) reports on 1,655 of graduates from Oxford. 92% had a positive outcome (defined as high skilled employment/self-employment or further study including interim study), 6 percentage points higher than the benchmark Russell Group. Of those working graduates, 92% were in high skilled employment (8 percentage points above benchmark). For those with known outcomes, 26% were in further study (5 percentage points above benchmark) – 78% of them in full-time further study. Finally, 5% of all respondents reported being unemployed and seeking work (1 percentage point below benchmark).

164.   61% of respondents agreed that they are using what they learned in their studies, and 83% agreed that their current activity fits with their future plans. Both results are the same as benchmark.

Provider name: University of Oxford
UKPRN: 10007774

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