

Academic Futures

Realising potential and increasing diversity in our graduate student community





Overview

We are committed to offering outstanding students who have overcome often unimaginable obstacles the opportunity to realise their full academic potential here at Oxford. In recent years, high-profile scholarship and access programmes such as Crankstart and UNIQ have successfully helped us diversify our undergraduate population at scale. Through them, we are ensuring that personal or financial circumstances are not an insurmountable bar to studying at Oxford and, crucially, supplying bespoke, ongoing support to these students once they are here.

Our goal now is to establish a similarly ambitious programme of support, Academic Futures, which will enable new cohorts of under-represented students to study at Oxford at graduate level. We are dedicated to providing a welcoming, safe and academically robust environment in which they can flourish and develop.

Academic Futures

The Academic Futures programme will provide full scholarships, covering both course fees and living costs. Scholarships will be supplemented by an extensive series of outreach and engagement activities,

including events, open days and workshops designed to encourage eligible students to apply to Oxford, as well as offering support and ongoing encouragement to scholars while they study with us.

Oxford graduate students have access to some of the best resources and facilities in the world, and collaborate with internationally recognised academics in every discipline. Master's students and doctoral candidates contribute to cutting-edge research across all four academic divisions. Post-Oxford, they are to be found to the fore in sectors as diverse as politics, healthcare, law, business, the arts, industry and academia.

Academic Futures is born from the recognition that, unless we encourage graduate applications from a markedly more diverse pool, we cannot achieve our full potential as a world-leading academic community. The biggest and most pressing challenges of the 21st century will be solved by the brightest minds, with Oxford offering an exceptional environment in which they can study and research. The scholars will come to Oxford from backgrounds that are known to be significantly under-represented both at Oxford and in universities across the UK. They will have shared experiences of obstacles overcome, challenges faced and a common passion for learning.



The first three iterations of Academic Futures offer tailored support for students from the following communities:

Black Academic Futures

Initially launched in 2020 as a stand-alone programme for doctoral students, Black Academic Futures aimed to increase numbers of UK Black and Mixed-Black doctoral students. In its first year of running, the University saw 48% more applications from eligible students, and an initial cohort of 13. The programme has now been expanded to support students studying both taught and research graduate courses, but there remains much to do. Our long-term ambition is that Black Academic Futures will fully address the under-representation of Black British graduates at Oxford which, in turn, will help address their current under-representation as leaders in virtually every area of society.

Refugees

Oxford has a proud history of supporting refugee scholars, alongside developing research and influencing policy in the area of forced migration. In the 1930s, Oxford welcomed scholars expelled from their posts in Nazi-controlled Germany; by the end of 1938, Oxford was supporting more academic refugees than any other university in Britain.¹ This support continued into the post-war years with Isaiah Berlin, who helped Jewish and Russian exiles to study here, and in 1982, the Refugees Study Centre was founded.

Around the world today, war, persecution and displacement continue to cause major disruption to education. In countries as diverse as Syria, South Sudan and Ukraine to name but three, students with exceptional potential are fearing for their future, and are desperately in need of our help and support.

Care-experienced students

Young people with care experience have, on average, significantly poorer educational and life outcomes than the general population, and are under-represented in higher education. Studies have shown that people who have spent time in local authority care face multiple significant barriers to entering and succeeding in a higher education environment, with causes including a lack of positive role models, low expectations from carers and advisers (coupled with low personal aspirations), an absence of information and advice on applying to university, and concerns about affordability.² Oxford is committed to helping break this pattern, and to enabling able students who have experienced care to flourish at Oxford.

Conclusion

We are committed to enabling the very best young minds to realise their academic potential at Oxford. By endowing the Academic Futures programme, we can ensure that countless generations of students will benefit from all that an Oxford graduate education offers.

¹ *Not far from Brideshead: Oxford between the Wars*, Daisy Dunn, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2022

² [Care experienced students and looked after children](#) – Office for Students