



Donor recognition

Over the centuries, major benefactors to the University have traditionally been honoured and recognised in many ways.

Engaging Oxford's benefactors

Oxford enjoys maintaining ongoing relationships with its benefactors, whose continuing involvement in the life of the University may include taking part in a variety of important and stimulating events. Major benefactors will receive invitations to project-related events, such as special lectures and opening ceremonies. In the year of their major benefaction, it is hoped that donors may join the University at its biggest celebration Encaenia, as well as other important Oxford events, including the annual Oxford v Cambridge Boat Races.

Naming and recognition

The University of Oxford has a long history of public acknowledgement of its benefactors. One way in which this can be achieved is through naming opportunities on buildings, libraries, chairs, scholarships, plaques and rolls of honour. The Ashmolean Museum and the Bodleian Library were both named in honour of benefactors whose generosity lives on at Oxford.

Each donor has a unique relationship with the University and some benefactors may wish their philanthropy to be anonymous. However, we are happy to discuss the possibility of the naming of schools, institutes, posts or scholarship programmes where appropriate. Naming opportunities are not restricted to the benefactor's name; the benefactor may also choose to honour others.

Benefactors who are happy for us to do so may be recognised in publicity material and websites. These include the Annual Philanthropy Report and the Encaenia programme. Significant benefactors will be mentioned in the Creweian Oration at Encaenia, the ceremony held by the University to commemorate its donors and to award honorary degrees to distinguished men and women.

The Vice-Chancellor's Circle

The Vice-Chancellor's Circle was launched in 2009 to recognise those individual, foundation and corporate benefactors who have provided generous support to the University and the colleges. In addition to receiving regular communications from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Louise Richardson, and other senior officers, members will be invited to special meetings of the Vice-Chancellor's Circle. These occasions showcase the breadth of intellectual talent at Oxford and the significant contribution to society of alumni and friends. The Circle engages members in the diverse, ever-vibrant life and work of the collegiate University.



The Varsity Boat Races between Oxford and Cambridge take place on the Thames in London



Encaenia celebration held at All Souls College after the ceremony at the Sheldonian Theatre

John Cairns



The Vice-Chancellor's Circle logo, inspired by the original embroidery design of the Vice-Chancellor's robe

The Chancellor's Court of Benefactors

Substantial philanthropic contributions by an individual, or by a company, foundation or other organisation, once received in full, may enable the Chancellor, The Rt Hon the Lord Patten of Barnes CH, to invite the benefactor to join the Chancellor's Court of Benefactors. Two Court-specific events are held each year: the annual meeting in Oxford, which includes a formal ceremony of admission; and a second gathering in London.

These occasions provide significant opportunities for an individual benefactor or representative to engage with the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, heads of colleges and senior academics, to meet with other members of the Court and to develop a more personal relationship with the University and the colleges. Benefactors that have provided exceptional support are known as **CCB Fellows**.

The Clarendon Arch

The names of some of the University's most outstanding philanthropists are engraved on the slate tablets under the Clarendon Arch, near the Bodleian Libraries. These include important historical figures, such as Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, and some closely associated with Oxford's history: Sir Thomas Bodley, John Radcliffe. These sit alongside individuals and organisations that have supported the University in more recent times, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Dickson Poon, and Guy and Julia Hands.

Today, this distinction is reserved for members of the Chancellor's Court of Benefactors, and is made on the recommendation of the University Council.

The Sheldon Medal

The highest mark of distinction that the University of Oxford can bestow on a benefactor is the Sheldon Medal. This recognition is reserved for a member of the Chancellor's Court of Benefactors whose contributions have made a transformative, strategic difference to the life and work of the University. The medal may only be awarded to one benefactor each academic year. It is named after one of Oxford's early benefactors, Gilbert Sheldon, who graduated from Trinity College in 1620. During his tenure as Chancellor of Oxford (1667–9), his benefaction supported the construction of the Sheldonian Theatre.

Contact details

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John Cairns

Members of the Chancellor's Court of Benefactors with the Chancellor at the Ceremony of Admission



Dick Makins

Engraved names in the Clarendon Arch, at the centre of the Clarendon Building



John Cairns

Dr Marcy McCall MacBain and John McCall MacBain O.C. at their Sheldon Medal presentation in October 2017