

The University of Oxford



Donor recognition

The University is proud to continue its long tradition of celebrating and honouring its most generous benefactors.

Engaging Oxford's supporters

To build on the close relationships between the University and its supporters, major benefactors receive invitations to project-related events, such as special lectures, building tours and opening ceremonies. In the year of their major gift, donors may be invited to join the University's biggest celebration, Encaenia, as well as other important events, including the Oxford v Cambridge Boat Races. In addition, major benefactors may be invited to join one of the recognition societies detailed below, which each have their own programme of communications and events. Those who wish for public acknowledgement may also be recognised in publicity materials, including the annual Philanthropy Report and the Encaenia programme.



The Boat Races between Oxford and Cambridge, on the River Thames

The Vice-Chancellor's Circle

The Vice-Chancellor's Circle recognises 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 and other senior officers of the University, members of the Circle will be invited to an annual reception in Oxford.



The Vice-Chancellor's Guild

The University's newest recognition society celebrates giving at a higher level by individuals, trusts, foundations and corporations. The launch of the Guild in 2023 coincided with the appointment of the new Vice-Chancellor, Professor Irene Tracey. Alongside regular communications from the Vice-Chancellor, members of the Guild will also receive an invitation to an annual dinner in Oxford, as well as to online events which engage benefactors around the world. These activities are facilitated by the Guild Liaison, who offers concierge-style service to members.



The Chancellor's Court of Benefactors

Substantial philanthropic contributions by an individual, company, foundation or other organisation may enable the Chancellor to invite the benefactor to join the Chancellor's Court of Benefactors. Two Court-specific events are held each year: an autumn meeting in Oxford, which includes a formal ceremony of admission; and a second gathering in spring. These occasions provide significant opportunities for an individual donor or representative to engage with the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, heads of colleges, senior academics, and current students; to meet with other members of the Court; and to develop a more personal relationship with the University and the colleges. In addition, there are two dedicated Court Liaisons who offer bespoke support to individuals to make the most of their Court membership.



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

Benefactors that have provided exceptional support may be invited to become **Fellows of the Chancellor's Court of Benefactors.**

Recognising corporate donors

Organisations that make significant donations to the University are invited to nominate a representative to join the Vice-Chancellor's Circle, Vice-Chancellor's Guild or Chancellor's Court of Benefactors, according to the level of their giving. The organisations and their representatives are included in the relevant society's donor lists, and the representatives receive termly e-newsletters. In addition, a special annual event, 'Oxford in the City', will be launched in 2023 for representatives of corporate donors, allowing them the opportunity to network with other leading figures in business, enterprise and philanthropy.



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 and 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, Dame Stephanie Shirley, and Guy and Julia Hands.

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



Dick Makin

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

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 individuals and family trusts whose contributions have made a transformative difference to the life and work of the University. The medal 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 (1667–69), his benefaction supported the construction of the Sheldonian Theatre.



Cyrus Mower

David and Simon Reuben's Sheldon Medals, presented in October 2022

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