

Merton College, Oxford

Gender Equality Scheme 2008-2010

1. Introduction

The Equality Act 2006 has introduced new general duties on all public authorities to promote gender equality, following the principles of the Human Rights Act and specific legislation to prevent discrimination of grounds of race, disability, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

This Gender Equality Scheme aims to promote equality of opportunity and treatment for all men and women working and studying at the College or applying to do so and to ensure equality of access to all services provided by the College.

The Scheme aims to foster an environment in which unlawful discrimination and harassment are not tolerated and where all members of the College community are encouraged to achieve their full potential.

The Scheme outlines the current position, identifies certain examples of steps taken to promote gender equality, and gives the College's key objectives, together with plans to promote gender equality over the next three years.

2. Summary of Key Objectives

- (a) The College will build upon existing arrangements to foster gender equality in all aspects of College life and throughout the College community.
- (b) The College will take active steps to establish good gender balance in decision-making processes in all areas of the College's activities.
- (c) The College will continue research into gender gaps in student admissions and progress, and support the University's research into causes of gender gap in final examinations, where required.
- (d) The College will encourage more women to apply for academic posts, both for College appointments and by supporting the University in this objective for joint appointments.

3. The Legal Context

The legal definition of "public authorities" is very wide, including specifically all UK universities receiving public funding from HEFCE. The individual Colleges of Oxford University are separate private charities that carry out teaching and research in such close relationship to the University that they are likely to be public authorities too.

The Equality Act 2006 places a general statutory duty on all public authorities to have due regard to the following needs, when carrying out their functions:

- To promote equality of opportunity between men and women.
- To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment.

Specific Duties

To support progress in delivering the general duty, there are also specific duties imposed on most major public authorities. Although the Colleges of Oxford University have not been designated as subject to the specific duties, the University itself has been so designated and the Colleges wish to endeavour to meet similar standards. The specific duties imposed on each public authority in question include:

- To prepare and publish a gender equality scheme setting out the gender equality objectives and showing how it will meet its general and specific duties.
- In formulating its overall objectives, to consider the need to include objectives to address any causes of any gender gap in pay.
- To gather and use information on the way that its policies and practices affect gender equality both in the workforce and in the delivery of services.
- To consult stakeholders and take account of relevant information in determining the gender equality scheme.
- To assess the impact of its current and proposed policies on gender equality.
- To implement the actions set out in the scheme over three years.
- To report on progress annually and to review the scheme triennially.

4. The College Context

Since the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the College has taken a number of steps to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women (staff, students, and visitors). Specific steps include:

- The College was founded specifically for the education of men and changed its statutes in 1979 to enable it to admit men and women as students and as Fellows.
- As the College forms a constituent part of the University of Oxford, some of its responsibilities are shared and covered by joint arrangements; as a result the College endorses the University's Gender Equality Scheme, see <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/gender/ges.shtml>
- The College publishes its regulations and practices to its members in various forms. These include provision to ensure equality of treatment generally. Students must subscribe to the *College Handbook for Junior Members* as a condition of admission to the College. Non-academic staff must subscribe as a condition of their contract to the *Staff Handbook*. Fellows are bound by the Statutes and Bylaws. Lecturers are provided with the *Lecturers' Handbook*.
- Data are collected and analysed annually on applications for admission, examination results, applications for employment, training courses offered, scholarships and bursaries awarded, staff appointments and promotions. The analysis is considered by a number of Committees including the Warden and Tutors Committee and the Domestic Committee and reported to the Governing Body.
- The College appoints an Adviser for Women and Harassment Officers for students and staff (both male and female) annually. The MCR's Welfare Officers have responsibility for equal opportunities. The JCR appoints an Equal Opportunities Representative and has male and female Welfare Officers.

- Women are not able to benefit from the Bowman hardship fund (as a consequence of a restrictive covenant) but the College is able to ensure equal hardship funding is available to women students in need.
- The gender equality scheme will be overseen by the Warden and Tutors' Committee, which reports to the Governing Body.

5. Key Objectives

(a) Build upon existing arrangements to foster gender equality

The College will review its policies systematically to assess for gender equality impact. The outcomes of these reviews will be reported to the Governing Body. The College will actively encourage its members to undertake specific training that will enable it to meet its responsibilities on equality of opportunity and enable it readily to meet the objectives of this scheme. Such training might include participation in University courses, such as the Springboard programme, as well as in courses offered for particular groups of staff.

(b) Establish good gender balance

The College has a well-established record of involving women in the corporate life of the College at high level. The current senior College Officers, include the following women: the Warden, Senior Tutor, Principal of Postmasters, Librarian, Development Director, and Harmsworth Secretary. The Governing Body comprises 71 Fellows of whom 23 are women.

Both on statutory and on ad hoc committees, the College regards gender balance as an important consideration and strongly prefers to form committees on which men and women are equally represented. The College intends to build on this foundation to ensure that the inclusion of more women in decision-making is embedded in College practices.

(c) Research into gender gaps at admission, in progress, and in final examination results for students

The College has analysed its outcomes on admissions, progress, and final examination results for women and men and compared them to the overall University figures. The College is monitoring key aspects of admission and progress with a view to addressing the issue of gender gaps.

(d) Encourage more women to apply for academic posts

The College is the joint employer with the University for the majority of its permanent academic posts. As such, the University's Gender Equality Scheme (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/gender/ges.shtml>) is supported by the College. The College recognises and supports the research carried out by the UUK Athena project (<http://www.athenaproject.org.uk/>), which established the concept of Career Development Fellowships.

The College has established its own Career Development Fellowships, the Fitzjames Research Fellowships, which are intended to provide a stepping stone to permanent academic employment. Two of the six appointed so far have been women.

The College will consider all proposals made by the Task Force on Academic Employment (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ps/staff/academic/tfnews/index.shtml>) with regard to establishing Career Development Fellowships as part of the formal academic grading structure.

The College will consider undertaking positive steps to encourage women to apply for academic posts at all levels, e.g. the WiSET Initiative, from the Equality Unit of the University of Cambridge (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/personnel/equality/wiseti/cambridge.html>)

Where academic appointments are made, in cases in which the College is the sole employer they will be made with due regard to the College's Equal Opportunities Policy and with regard to the College's overall commitment to equality of opportunity and to diversity. Such consideration will include equal pay for work of equal value.

6. Students and Gender Equality

- (a) The College participates in the Common Framework for Colleges and Faculties (http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/news/common_framework.shtml) and is fully committed to the Code of Practice for Undergraduate Admissions to the Oxford Colleges (<http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/guides/cop.shtml>).
- (b) Graduate Admissions are organised centrally by the University. The College supports the University in its efforts to ensure gender equality in the admission of graduate students, and will support the University in its annual review of Graduate Admissions (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/gender/ges.shtml>).
- (c) The College will continue to support initiatives such as the development of online training by the Oxford Learning Institute for academics involved in the admissions process.
- (d) The College will make all academic provisions (including study skills training and briefing on successful strategies for examinations) with full recognition of gender equality issues.
- (e) The College will continue to support the University's access initiatives and will develop its own activities to ensure that applications are received from the widest possible field with men and women represented equally.
- (f) The College commits to allocating resources for non-academic student activities on a gender-neutral basis.
- (g) The College monitors the experience of all students through Warden's collections, the Director of Studies system and teaching feedback forms. It encourages the participation of all students in all aspects of College life. The College fosters an atmosphere where intolerance on grounds of gender is unacceptable.

7. Staff and Gender Equality

The College acts as a joint employer with the University for a number of academic staff and embraces the University's policies and current work on gender equality. These include the Human Resources Strategy to 2009: Rewarding and Developing People at Oxford (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ps/staff/strategy/hrstrategy2009.pdf>), and the work of the Task Force on Academic Employment and the Contract Research Staff Working Group.

For all other staff, the College has adopted generous family leave arrangements and recognises wider family commitments and caring responsibilities by adopting flexible working arrangements.

The College has undertaken periodic job evaluation to ensure equal pay for work of equal value.

The College contributes to the provision of University Nursery places for staff, operates a salary sacrifice scheme for childcare costs, and allows young children access to the College to facilitate staff attendance at certain activities.

The College publishes its Gender Equality Scheme on its website and in the Staff Handbook(s).

The College has appointed male and female harassment officers, who are Fellows of the College, for both junior members and staff.

Staff are encouraged to undertake training and professional development throughout their career at the College. Such opportunities are available to all members of staff.

The College seeks to ensure gender balance on all selection committees.

8. Monitoring and Reporting

The University monitors and publishes data on student admission and staff numbers, including joint appointments.

The College monitors data on applications for College-only posts. Annual reports are made through the relevant statutory Committees to the Governing Body.

Responses from students, staff and visitors to the College are regularly sought in formal and informal ways. Such responses are audited for gender equality and issues raised in this area are reported to the relevant officers for action.

9. Action Plan

- (a) Carry out an equal pay audit and gender audit and report to the Governing Body by Hilary 2009.
- (b) Review all current College policies to ensure gender equality objectives are being met and report to the Governing Body by Hilary 2009.
- (c) Ensure that statutory committees and other meetings are scheduled with regard for the family and caring responsibilities of the committee members.
- (d) Allocate a training budget to enable the commitments in the plan to be fulfilled.

- (e) Review this Gender Equality Scheme in the context of any review of the University's Gender Equality Scheme.