This report describes some of the actions Merton undertook to promote equality in 2018-19.

**Equality Adviser**
Dr Bassel Tarbush (Fellow and Tutor in Economics) took on the role of Equality Adviser in Michaelmas Term 2017.

The brief of the role is to:
- Assist with the progression of Merton’s equality objectives for the whole range of protected characteristics.
- Advocate on equality and diversity matters; promote their consideration in College committees; and maintain an awareness of the University’s work in this area.
- Advise and contribute to papers and relevant processes.
- Work with staff and student equality representatives.
- Convene equalities-related events including the annual Equality Conversation.
- Attend the termly Equality Forum.
- Attend the termly Welfare Forum, if wished.

The Equality Adviser also oversees the allocation of funding to student events under the Tri-College Equality and Diversity grants scheme.

**Equality Forum**
The College Equality Forum continues to meet on a termly basis. Details of events or activities (either past or forthcoming) of potential interest to the group and the wider Merton community are included on the agenda. Forum members are also sent the termly Equality and Diversity Newsletter, compiled by the University’s Equality and Diversity Unit.

**Equality Conversation**
The sixth annual Merton Equality Conversation took the theme “Disability in Academia”. The speakers were Elizabeth Frood, Associate Professor of Egyptology at Oxford; Kojiro Hirose, Associate Professor of Cultural Research at the Japanese National Museum of Ethnography; and Marie Tidball, Research Associate at the Centre for Criminology, Oxford. Further details and a recording can be found here: [https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/event/merton-equality-conversation-2019-disability-academia](https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/event/merton-equality-conversation-2019-disability-academia)

**JCR Equality Forum**

**Diversity in College portraiture**
A working group has been convened to discuss the issue of equality and diversity in relation to portraiture at Merton. The final nominations for new portraits in Hall were confirmed as Professor Ulrike Tillman and the late Professor Stuart Hall. Former artist in residence Rebecca Fortnum has produced portraits of three women JRFs, which have been gifted to the JCR. Photographic portraits of JRFs
and the twenty most senior Fellows are also underway. Other initiatives are ongoing.

Merton hosted an event in May 2019 which asked three established contemporary artists with a commitment to diversity, Dr Felicity Allen, Othello De’Souza-Hartley and Åsa Johannesson, how they approach portraiture. The event was devised by Professor Rebecca Fortnum (former Visiting Research Fellow in Creative Arts at Merton & Professor of Fine Art, Royal College of Art), Ellen Sharman (JCR Arts rep) and Diego Berdeja Suárez (MCR Arts Rep) for Merton Arts Week.

**HR Manager and HR Committee**
The Human Resources Manager, Fiona Lawrence, continues to strengthen the College’s practice in areas including recruitment and selection; induction of new staff; parental leave; and staff communication and engagement. The HR Committee continues to meet on a termly basis to discuss general issues pertaining to policy and practice and future legislative changes. In 2018-19 a staff survey was carried out which included questions on equality and diversity in the College; the results are being analysed and will be taken forward in 2019-20. The Committee has also given significant attention to the gender pay gap.

**Complaints and Feedback**
The Equality Forum has continued its practice of reviewing complaints and feedback on equality matters (College officers and chairs and convenors of committees are asked for details before each term’s meeting).

**Disability and Access**
The College continues its programme of work to increase accessibility which in 2018-19 has included the introduction of a book delivery service for students unable to physically access the library. Signposting of support for disabled students has been improved by including a copy of the disability ‘FAQ’ leaflet in all freshers’ packs.

The College organised two welfare seminars for students and staff on the theme of mental health. The first, “How Can We Fly if We Cannot Fall: the interrelation of mental health, financial security, and creativity” was led by Dan Holloway who spoke about his own experience of debt and poor mental health within academia, and his eventual journey into start-up culture as founder of Rogue Interrobang, a company dedicated to helping those working on the world’s wicked problems to be more creative. The second was titled “Mental Health: How to support yourself and others” and was delivered by Restore, an Oxfordshire based mental health charity.

Merton is one of only six Oxford colleges to have a full entry in the University’s Access Guide: [http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/access/colleges/merton/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/access/colleges/merton/). The Access Guide is a useful resource for any and all visitors to the College, as well as new staff members and students (see [http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/access/colleges/merton/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/access/colleges/merton/)).

Both the JCR and MCR now have Disability Reps who raises concern with the Disability Coordinator and provide advice and support to all disabled students. The MCR signed the Accessibility Pledge organised by Oxford SU’s Disabilities
Campaign, to reflect a commitment to improving accessibility for people with disabilities. The pledge includes list of 5 action points as well as a list of guidelines that the MCR consider when planning events or circulating materials.

**Gender and Transgender**

The 2020 Working Group is developing a number of ideas for the celebrations to mark the 40th anniversary of the College’s admission of women students. These include a lunch for the first women at Merton, a tea party for women students and their families, profiles of Mertonian women, refreshing the portraiture in Hall, and introducing a nursery with priority for parents with a link to the College.

“Say something back: an event exploring feminist artistic research” was an event organised by Merton Visiting Fellow Rebecca Fortnum in February 2019. The afternoon featured presentations from six artists, all of whom foreground research processes that use re-creations, re-enactments or suggest a possibility of entering into dialogue with the past. This conjuring forth of unknown or unseen lives and practices, as a kind of seance or act of ventriloquism, extracts women’s voice from archives or texts, leading to the possibility of a recalibration of value.

**Race**

Stuart Hall Foundation scholar Ruth Ramsden-Karelse organised a colloquium on queer black performance on 21-23 February, supported by the College. Caetano Santos, who is reading for a DPhil in Music, started as the second Stuart Hall Foundation scholar in Michaelmas Term 2019.

The College hosted the first ever BAME student leadership conference organised by OxSU. The event was aimed at empowering current and aspiring leaders to be effective in their role and covered topics such as being confident as the only BME person in the room, managing conflict and using your position to create change.

The MCR has created a BAME student representative position and have held a number of events including a BAME film night and book group.

**LGBTQ+**

The MCR Freshers’ Week programme has been expanded to include an identity workshop alongside the existing sexual consent workshop.

The MCR now has an LGBTQ+ officer to provide better representation of the student body.

A leaflet on ‘Information for new LGBT+ staff’, published by the University, was included in the induction packs for new fellows and lecturers.

**Sexual Consent**

Non-mandatory workshops on sexual consent for freshers have been included in the MCR and JCR Freshers’ Week programmes for the last six years. Both JCR and MCR now use the same format for the workshops to encourage attendance.
Faith
Halal and kosher meals continue to be available to order in Hall.

Each year, the Chapel organises a number of talks as part of the ongoing series, Merton Conversations in Faith and Culture. These talks seek to foster dialogue about life’s biggest issues and questions by providing an opportunity for people to engage with leading experts in a relaxed environment. In Hilary Term 2019 Dr Michael Burdett (University of Nottingham) spoke on the topic: 'Being Human in an Age of Technology: The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence'.

Academic Registrar & Senior Tutor
November 2019