



**MERTON COLLEGE
EQUALITY REPORT
2019-20**

This report describes some of the actions Merton undertook to promote equality in 2019-20.

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 "Perspectives on trans intersectionality". The speakers were materials scientist Dr Clara Barker and writer and broadcaster Freddy McConnell. Further details and a recording can be found here: <https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/event/merton-equality-conversation-2020-perspectives-trans-intersectionality>

JCR Equality Forum

The JCR officers with a brief for equality (Access & Equality Rep, Gender Equality Rep, Disability Rep, International Students Rep, Ethnic Minorities Rep, LGBTQ+ rep, and Welfare Reps) continue to meet and pass on matters of concern to the College Equality Forum.

Diversity in College portraiture

The Pictures & Chattels Committee commissioned artists to produce the portraits of Prof Tillmann and of Stuart Hall. Other aspects of this initiative were put on hold due to the pandemic.

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. New advertising strategies have been trialled for staff vacancies to improve the diversity of the applicant pool.

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 2019-20 has included an audit of the College website and intranet to ensure it meets the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations. An accessibility statement for the website has been created (see www.merton.ox.ac.uk/accessibility-statement-merton-college-website) and a programme of work is underway to replace older PDFs that do not meet the standard with providing accessible HTML pages as an alternative means of accessing the same information.

The Equality Forum reviewed the recommendations of the Conference of Colleges Disability Sub-Group Report to ensure that the College was following recommended practice.

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/>. 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/>).

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. In Trinity Term 2020 the JCR Disability Rep initiated a disability mentoring scheme which aimed to link disabled freshers with on-course students would could support and advise them.

The College organised events to coincide with University Mental Health day on 5 March. Writing from the Shadows was led by Professor Kirsty Gunn, Hilary term's Visiting Research Fellow in the Creative Arts. The workshop provided participants with an opportunity to explore their fears and worries and to use these thoughts as a source of inspiration for creative writing without the pressure of having to write about them personally. Seeing the Light was led by Kieran Stiles, artist and former Visiting Research Fellow in the Creative Arts. The workshop focus was to draw connections between creativity and psychological wellbeing through colours and shapes; helping participants to unlock their creativity.

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 profiles of and talks by Mertonian women, and refreshing the portraiture in Hall.

At the suggestion of the JCR LGBTQ+ rep, a gender expression fund was created to provide financial support for students who are transitioning. The fund, which is confidentially administered by the Student Support Administrator, can be used to purchase items such as chest binders.

Gender neutral washrooms were completed in the Fitzjames staircase. The washrooms are also level access and wheelchair accessible.

Race

Merton students created a Black Writing Matters reading group in response to the Black Lives Matter movement.

LGBTQ+

Both JCR and MCR have an LGBTQ+ officer to provide better representation of the student body.

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

Governing Body voted to allow Civil Marriages in College and the practical arrangements are now underway to facilitate this.

Sexual Consent

Non-mandatory workshops on sexual consent for freshers have been included in the MCR and JCR Freshers' Week programmes for the last seven 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.

During the lockdown, the Chapel team launched 'Socially isolated, spiritually connected', a programme of online services and resources to encourage the College community to connect with one another.

Following a recommendation from the Conference of Colleges PSED Self-Assessment Framework, there was clearer signposting of different religious provision during Freshers' Week.

Library

A new collection of c.50 titles has been created on the theme of equality and diversity. All protected characteristics are covered, including a number of intersectional works.

Academic Registrar & Senior Tutor
November 2020