Head of Welfare
Merton College, University of Oxford

Merton College, University of Oxford, is seeking to appoint a Head of Welfare.

Merton College was founded in 1264 by Walter de Merton, and is one of the oldest colleges in Oxford. It was the first fully self-governing college in the University of Oxford and was originally founded for twenty fellows, with undergraduates being formally admitted in the early 1380s. Over the centuries, many eminent scholars and cultural leaders have called Merton home including three Nobel Prize winners and an Abel Prize winner. Merton College has a strong commitment to excellence in teaching and research across a range of subjects in the Humanities, Social Sciences and the Sciences.

The College community currently comprises around 590 students (320 undergraduates and 270 postgraduates), and over 220 staff and Fellows (mainly academic staff). The College provides accommodation for all of its undergraduates for the duration of their degrees, whether three- or four years in duration. Although most first-year postgraduates live in college-owned accommodation many, particularly in the latter years of their degrees, live independently in the city.

The College is a charity whose objects are, for the public benefit, to advance education, learning, research, and religion through the provision of a college. The College strives to create a diverse, welcoming, inclusive and supportive community in which its students, staff and fellows can thrive.

I. Introduction to the role

This is an exciting opportunity for an enthusiastic and experienced welfare professional to join the Merton team in a role supporting the College’s work to provide a positive student experience. They will play a key role in helping to shape and deliver the provision of welfare and wellbeing support for students and in overseeing and promoting wider community-building activities and initiatives within the College. The postholder will have responsibility for all aspects of student welfare, including developing strategic frameworks and policies for the College, informed by best practice. They will take the lead role in the development and implementation of welfare and wellbeing processes and practices, will have overall line management responsibility for the welfare team, and will act as the College’s Designated Safeguarding Lead. They will also provide support to individual students, as well as being available for discrete consultancy by college staff on matters related to student welfare, safety and conduct.
This is a new full-time post. Responsibility for overseeing and delivering the College's welfare provision has until now been a responsibility of the Chaplain, who is leaving to take up a new position. The new Head of Welfare will have an important role in helping to progress the review of the College’s welfare provision, which was temporarily paused following the resignation of the Chaplain. The appointee will be responsible for implementing any agreed changes arising from this process, as well as for keeping Merton’s welfare support systems and structures under ongoing review.

The Head of Welfare will work day-to-day with and have overall management responsibility for the welfare team in College (the Senior Welfare Adviser, the College Nurse, the Junior Deans for Welfare who are postgraduates residing in college for the purposes of providing welfare activities and support on a rota basis), undergraduate and postgraduates who are trained as peer supporters, and student Welfare and Equality representatives). There will be frequent contact with colleagues in other colleges, with the College’s linked GP surgery, and with the University’s central administration, especially the Student Welfare and Support Services (including the Counselling Service and Disability Advisory Service). The Head of Welfare will be supported administratively by the Welfare and Disability Administrator. In the day-to-day delivery of their duties they will also interact with College Officers (including the Harassment Advisers to Junior Members and Harassment Advisers to Staff, the Equality Adviser, the Senior Tutor, and the Chaplain), and other administrative and academic contacts as required.

II. Main Duties of the Role

(i) Oversight of welfare support provision

The Head of Welfare will be responsible for:

- the review, development and effective implementation of strategies and practices to support student welfare and wellbeing, and to promote wellbeing of the College community more generally, in line with best practice (in particular in Higher Education), working with the welfare team, College Officers and relevant committees;
- acting as the College’s Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- having overall responsibility for ensuring that those within the College’s welfare structures are appropriately trained and, as appropriate, devising and delivery training to complement and enhance existing provision;
- developing and maintaining rigorous systems for managing sensitive personal data within their area of responsibility, having confidence and integrity applying the Caldicott Principles in relation to data sharing, while promoting a culture of openness, accessibility and the pro-active co-ordination of welfare, as appropriate;
- ensuring, in liaison with the Dean and Keeper of the Statutes, the welfare team’s compliance with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (and any subsequent legislation) and the College’s Bylaws,
regulations and policies;

- handling individual student casework, where it relates to a welfare matter;
- responding to, and appropriately managing, concerns about students raised by third parties, which may include parents, statutory services, and university services or departments;
- convening and attending the termly College Welfare Forum and the Student Support Sub-Committee (the committee responsible for disbursing student support funds) and attending the Warden and Tutors’ Committee meetings (the body responsible for matters relating to the College’s academic, welfare and disciplinary provision, which meets 4-5 times a term);
- ensuring that the College is represented at relevant University and inter-collegiate meetings and reporting back as needed;
- attending and/or contributing to institutional (and sector-wide) workshops, panels, and task groups on welfare and wellbeing issues;
- having overall management responsibility for the welfare team and line managing the Senior Welfare Adviser and College Nurse;
- developing and maintaining a closely collaborative relationship with the College GP, College Nurse, and others in the broader College and University welfare community;
- liaising with the Porters (reception/security staff) in relation to welfare incidents (some of which may present as behavioural/disciplinary incidents), and managing and monitoring an incident reporting system;
- keeping up-to-date with all appropriate legislation, sector-wide developments and relevant University policies and procedures and maintaining professional accreditations where relevant;
- developing contacts and working closely and collaboratively with relevant University’s central administration (including the Counselling Service, Disability Advisory Service and Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service);
- managing the College’s welfare budget, including appropriate allocation and authorisation of funding to the different aspects of activity; and
- evaluating, monitoring and reporting on welfare matters (including budgetary) relating to all activities covered above.

(ii) Welfare support for students

The Head of Welfare will establish themselves as a familiar and accessible figure around the College, being available for students with welfare issues or personal, emotional, health, or disability-related challenges, offering advice and assurance to members of the College, including:

- promoting good mental health and wellbeing by leading on, developing, and helping implement activities to support students’ welfare, resilience, and wellbeing in the College, in line with best practice;
• meeting with students for confidential discussions about a range of personal, health, disability and academic-related concerns and challenges, including to help identify any appropriate resources or services;

• managing complex cases and, where appropriate, advising on and co-ordinating welfare or medical care within or outside of the University to those experiencing difficulties, including to enable prompt access to specialist mental health support, when required;

• responding to disclosures by students of harassment or sexual violence;

• responding to and managing critical incidents, conducting risk assessments and safety and response planning with students and staff;

• participating in the College’s Fitness to Study procedures and supporting students in other college procedures (e.g. relating to harassment or complaints), as appropriate;

• taking part in student events/meals to be a visible presence around the College;

• ensuring that clear information about welfare provision, wellbeing and resilience is effectively disseminated within the College and available on the intranet; and

• liaising with student welfare representatives.

The Head of Welfare will participate in the College’s out-of-hours welfare rota and they may be contacted out-of-hours in exceptional emergency situations.

(iii) Support for students with disabilities

The Head of Welfare will work closely with the College’s designated Disability Coordinator and Disability Lead to provide support to students with disabilities, as appropriate including:

• assisting with consideration of reasonable adjustments in the light of the Anticipatory Duty guidance, including to ensure integrated student support;

• helping to review funding requests for disability-related support;

• assisting with processes relating to assessments, for example providing individual student support and/or advising on mitigating circumstances procedures.

III. Person Specification

(i) Essential requirements

The post-holder will possess:

1. A professional qualification relevant to the role (e.g. qualification as a medical practitioner, or in mental health nursing, social work, clinical psychology or counselling) or extensive equivalent professional experience of dealing with a range of emotional, psychological, and practical problems
as a health, social care or welfare professional. Applicants in professional roles should evidence that they hold the necessary professional body registration and/or accreditation, which indicate continuing professional practice, further training etc;

2. Evidence of, or ability for, strategic leadership, including design and development of policies, in a welfare context;

3. Demonstrable experience of managing a team, ideally in a welfare context, and the ability to build relationships of trust and accountability with colleagues, students and members of the College and University;

4. Excellent interpersonal skills with an ability to put people at their ease, including strong listening skills and the ability to empathise with others;

5. Strong oral and written communication skills;

6. A high level of discretion and integrity, and the ability to maintain confidentiality in line with professional expectations and GDPR, and an ability to ensure that record keeping is accurate and appropriate;

7. An ability to remain calm under pressure, to juggle multiple demands, and to perform beyond the immediate needs of the situation;

8. A good understanding of university life and students’ challenges and concerns;

9. Sensitivity to the equality, diversity and inclusion aims of the College and to the current concerns of the student population in this regard, along with an understanding of unconscious bias and discrimination issues;

10. Excellent organisational skills, administrative ability and experience, and good knowledge of the use of Microsoft Office;

11. Excellent personal initiative, and a considerable amount of emotional maturity and resilience with appropriate professional boundaries; and

12. A willingness to take a proactive and flexible approach to the role and be available out of hours, as required.

(ii) Desirable requirements

The post-holder will ideally also have:

1. Familiarity with health, mental health and disability-related issues in a higher education context.

IV. Conditions of employment

Salary: The salary will be £45,000 - £55,000 p.a. depending on qualifications and experience.

Hours of Work: The hours of work are full-time, 37.5 hours per week 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday with an unpaid lunch break. Due to the nature and seniority of this post, you will be expected to work such additional hours as may be necessary to deliver the duties of the post. It is expected that the successful
candidate will normally be present during term time (weeks 0 to 9 of the University terms) and take their annual leave outside of the university term.

**Notice**: The appointment will be subject to a probationary period of twelve months, during which time the appointment may be terminated by either party on four weeks’ notice. Thereafter the required notice period will be three months on either side.

**Holiday**: The postholder will be entitled to 38 days’ paid holiday a year which should normally be taken outside Term. This entitlement is inclusive of public holidays in England and Wales. Public holidays falling within Term will be regarded as ordinary working days.

**Benefits**: The post holder is eligible for membership of the University of Oxford Staff Pension Scheme (OSPS), which is a contributory scheme, and free medical insurance (which is assessable as a taxable benefit). The Head of Welfare will be a member of the Senior Common Room and benefit from free meals when the kitchen is open. The College provides free car parking, cycle to work and electric car schemes and loans for the purchase of seasonal travel passes. The College has a gym, which is free to use for staff and there are a number of organised activities such as yoga and circuit training that are also free for staff.

This appointment will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

The successful candidate will be expected to attend supervision and meet requirements of ongoing professional accreditation, in accordance with professional body requirements, as appropriate.

The College is undertaking a review of its welfare structures. Currently the College has designated the Chaplain as the College Officer who will line manage the Head of Welfare.

V. Procedure for Applications

Those wishing to apply for this post should complete the online application form at [http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/about-merton/vacancies](http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/about-merton/vacancies) and upload the following as a single PDF document in the named format ‘Last Name First Name Application’ by **09:00 on Friday 2 August 2024**:

(i) A letter of application detailing how their skills, experiences and qualifications equip them for this role, with reference to the selection criteria;

(ii) A curriculum vitae to include details of professional body registration and/or accreditation and relevant continuing professional practice and training, as appropriate;

(iii) Details of three referees, indicating whether they may be contacted without your knowledge (see below). References will only be requested for candidates invited for interview. One referee should be a current or recent direct line manager. For those in clinical roles
(e.g. psychology, counselling etc), one referee should be a clinical supervisor.

References
You should contact your referees before applying, to ensure they are aware of your application and the requirements for the post, and that they would be content to write a reference for you for this role, if asked to do so. In your application, please include for each referee their name, position, relationship to you, email address, and whether you give permission for us to contact them. The College will assume that it may approach your referees at any stage unless your application specifies otherwise. Therefore, if you would prefer them to be approached only with your specific permission, then please specify this in your application. You should name three referees in your application even if you do not wish them to be contacted yet.

Applicants are also requested to inform their referees that, under the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 and the Data Protection Act 2018, the references they provide will be regarded as disclosable to the subject of the reference unless it is clear that the reference has been given in confidence. The College asks that a reference given in confidence should be marked “strictly confidential” on the letter of reference itself. Referees should also be asked to note that even where a reference is marked “strictly confidential” it could still be disclosed to the subject of the reference if that subject so requested and the College’s Data Protection Officer deemed it appropriate.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to return the Recruitment Monitoring form (available for download from the College website - http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/about-merton/vacancies). The information collected on the equal opportunities recruitment monitoring form does not form part of the selection process and will not be circulated to the selection panel. It will be used solely to monitor the effectiveness of the College’s equality policy which is published at https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/college-policies.

It is anticipated that interviews will be held at Merton College in late August / early September 2024. Reasonable interview expenses will be reimbursed.

Any enquiries related to these Further Particulars should be directed in the first instance to the HR team at vacancies@merton.ox.ac.uk.

VI. Equal Opportunities
The policy and practice of Merton College require that all staff are afforded equal opportunities within employment. Entry into employment with the College and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and the application of criteria which are related to the duties of each particular post and the relevant salary structure. In all cases, ability to perform the job will be the primary consideration. Subject to statutory provisions, no applicant or member of staff will be treated less favourably than another because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
VII. Privacy Notice
To view our Privacy notice please see here
https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/privacy-notices-and-ropas.