



Parliamentary Briefing

What does Oxford University do to widen access?

June 2013

- **The total spend on outreach across the University and colleges is more than £4.5m a year (which is additional to the more than £9m a year spent on bursaries). Last year, members of the collegiate University took part in more than 2,200 outreach activities across the country.**
- **Working with schools: The University has contact with 78% of all schools offering post-16 education.**
- **Nearly 2,000 state school students have attended over the first three years of the UNIQ summer school, and more than 500 have won offers at Oxford. This means that more than one quarter (27%) of all attendees on the summer school will go on to study at Oxford. Of those UNIQ students who applied, more than 40% ended up with places – against an overall success rate for Oxford applicants of around 20%.**
- **Over 900 state school students from across the UK attended the ‘investigating options’ days in November 2012, and more than 500 state school students attended the study day in March 2013.**

Oxford tries hard to ensure that all those with the potential to succeed apply – regardless of background – and devotes more energy and resources to outreach activity than just about any other university in the country.

Outreach work is partly about changing the profile of Oxford’s own students, partly about what might be thought of as ‘corporate social responsibility’. This can be seen in outreach’s three strands:

- **Recruitment**: working to provide all the right information to those considering applying to Oxford, and to tackle any myths. This includes school visits, attendance at higher education fairs, regional conferences, work with teachers, etc.
- **Widening access to Oxford**: working specifically to encourage under-represented groups to apply, for example students who do not come from families that have previously had access to university. This is partly to ensure that Oxford has the broadest range to select from, but some of the work is about encouraging students to aim high in general, not

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specifically come to Oxford. This includes summer schools, targeted school programmes, etc.

- Widening participation (in higher education): raising aspirations generally by encouraging groups who do not traditionally go on to higher education, or do not traditionally go to more academic universities, to aim high. Oxford will not itself reap the rewards in most cases. This includes working with younger pupils right down to primary age, work in local schools, a project for children in care, etc. These are mainly through programmes geared at local schools (ie. Oxfordshire and surrounding areas) and local students.

The admissions team has several areas of activity that are designed to provide opportunities for students from schools with limited support for students looking to apply to higher education to find out more about what Oxford is looking for in candidates. These are designed to encourage those students who might be able to make a competitive application to Oxford but do not have the proper support or information about how to apply and give themselves the best chance:

Working with teachers: The University over the past several years has focussed an enormous amount of effort in working with teachers, allowing Oxford to help many cohorts of students via their teachers rather than individual students in any given year. Activities include:

- A series of annual [regional conferences](#) for teachers plus events in Oxford
- Some colleges run [study weeks for teachers](#)
- A one-day event for Oxford's own PGCE programme (run through Oxford's school of education), which trains new teachers being sent mainly into comprehensive schools
- Similar programmes working with Teach First participants
- The Inspirational Teachers Award, which recognises teachers who have supported successful applicants to Oxford from schools and colleges that have little history of sending successful applicants to the university

Summer schools: Oxford for many years ran summer schools through the Sutton Trust, and in 2010 thanks to a major donation launched a new summer school called UNIQ, which takes students from UK state schools who have strong academic backgrounds and allows them to attend a week-long summer school where they get a chance to study subjects in-depth and learn what living and studying at Oxford is like. Several of the colleges also run summer school and outreach activities in addition to those run centrally.

In 2010, the first UNIQ summer school offered 507 students the opportunity to try one of twenty different subjects. This is a particularly effective way of introducing state school students to subjects they may have never experienced before. The number of students on the summer school will rise each year to reach 1,000 places by 2014. It is anticipated that every undergraduate course will eventually be represented on the summer school.

In addition to the outreach and access activities organised centrally by the Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach team, colleges, departments and faculties also organise a wide range of activities and support the work of the central admissions team.



College regional outreach work:

Regionalisation:

As part of the University of Oxford's ongoing commitment to engage with schools, each Oxford college is linked to a Local Authority to ensure that each school has a first point of contact within the University.

For more:

http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate_courses/events_and_outreach/information_for_teachers_and_advisors/contacts/school_and_college_1.html

The Pathways programme is an initiative coordinated by most of the colleges of the University of Oxford, with support from the Sutton Trust. The programme aims to provide information, advice and guidance on higher education and Oxford to academically able students, and staff members, in non-selective state schools with little history of student progression to Oxford. It runs a series of free events in Oxford throughout the year, including subject-specific study days and a series of 'investigating options' days for students to help them think about choosing A level subjects and university courses.

Pem-Brooke collaboration with Brooke House Sixth Form (BSix), Hackney:

Pembroke has worked closely in recent years with Brooke House (BSix) Sixth Form College in Hackney in its award-winning Raising Aspirations programme, led by Dr Peter Claus. What started as a collaboration in humanities subject teaching between Oxford and BSix called Pem-Brooke has expanded to include 13 subject programmes with a number of universities including Cambridge and Imperial College, London. The programme is a sustained course of academic studies for 30 Year 12 students, including an Easter Study Skills school sponsored by the Henry Drucker Trust and taught by Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates, and a residential summer School at Pembroke College which has been taught by academics, postgraduates and undergraduates.

In 2012 the programme was expanded to include a number of schools in Hackney as well as in the North West of England, where South Cheshire College acts as a hub college for a similar range of activities to those at BSix. Dr Claus was also appointed to the full-time post of Access Fellow (believed to be the first full-time post of its kind at either Oxford or Cambridge).

For more:

<http://www.bsix.ac.uk/bseven/raisingaspirations.htm>

<http://www.bsix.ac.uk/bseven/raisingaspirations/universityofoxfordhumanitiesprogramme.htm>

FE Access Initiative was formed in 1999 as a Widening Participation Initiative with the aim of encouraging applications to the university from the Further Education (FE) sector, shown by statistics to be a particularly under-represented group at Oxford. Mansfield College convened a Consortium of Oxford colleges which offers advice and encouragement to students who have, for far too long, believed that Oxford was not for them and three years ago, with funding from the Sutton Trust, appointed a full time Recruitment Officer.

Activities run centrally through the Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach office:



[The Oxford and Cambridge Students' Conferences](#) provide up-to-date information on the application and admissions procedure at both institutions as well as offering an insight into student life at Oxford. Held in March and April each year, these events provide students with a locally based opportunity to find out more about the two universities. A large number of focused sessions provide information on the admissions process, student life, interviews, student finance and a large number of the different courses offered by each University. Admissions tutors, Admissions Office staff and current undergraduates are all present to provide clear and concise advice about applying to the two universities.

[UCAS HE Fairs](#) give applicants the chance to speak to Oxford staff. Oxford staff attend these fairs and conventions across the UK. They give face-to-face advice about applying to Oxford.

The [Student Ambassador](#) schemes in colleges involve current undergraduate students in outreach events around the UK.

[Open days](#) University-wide open days happen over two days in June/July and one in September, and involve the university's colleges, departments and collections. For 2013 the open days will be held on June 26 & 27 and September 20. Over the June open days around 10,000 extra visitors visit the university and city as part of the event.

[Regional teachers conferences](#) The University organises several Regional Teachers' Conferences across the UK in June and July each year. The aim of the conferences is to equip teachers with the best possible advice for their students on applying to Oxford and to break down any misconceptions that might deter students from applying to the University. Funded by the Helsington Foundation, the programme for the days covers all aspects of the admissions process from identifying candidates to writing references and preparing candidates for admissions tests and interviews.

Other notable outreach and access projects:

For a sample of events being held in Oxford, see:

http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate_courses/open_days_events_and_visiting/uk/events_for_students/in_oxford/index.html

[Target Schools](#) is OUSU's access scheme aimed at debunking myths about Oxford and providing hard facts and real experiences for pupils, so that they are in an informed position to make up their mind about Oxford. Its [Shadowing Scheme](#) enables school students to shadow a current undergraduate for half a day as well as attending workshops organised by Target Schools.

[Subject-specific study days](#) usually take place in colleges or departments.

[Chemistry Connect](#) is the outreach arm of the Chemistry department at Oxford University – the aim is to make science more exciting, understandable and relevant to the general public in an attempt to encourage more people to take an interest.

[Physics Outreach](#)



The Oxford Physics Department works to establish links with schools throughout Oxfordshire and the country as a whole with a dedicated outreach officer. It runs a 'Speakers for Schools' initiative and hosts events for Primary and Secondary school students.

Exploring Oxford days enable students in Years 9, 10 and 11 to experience the University and city of Oxford. 'Exploring Oxford' days allow pupils to come to Oxford, see different parts of the university, meet staff and students and take part in activities which introduce Higher Education and the kinds of study students undertake in Oxford. Activities include meeting current students, activities looking at progression onto HE, an academic taster session, eating in a college hall and visiting the Oxford Botanic Gardens.

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