



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

University of Oxford Graduate Student Access Strategy

2024-29



1. Introduction

This document, developed through extensive consultation, articulates for the first time an overall vision for graduate access. The Strategy outlines the University of Oxford's commitment to enhancing diversity, fairness and inclusivity in its graduate recruitment and admissions processes. This document provides a comprehensive framework that can inform the University's plans to improve access and representation for students from all backgrounds.

This Strategy is designed to align with and contribute to the University's broader **Strategic Plan**, ensuring that graduate access remains a central focus. Developed in collaboration with divisions, departments and colleges, the Strategy provides a clear vision, identifies objectives and priorities, and outlines an action plan to achieve them.

In order for the University's shared ambitions to be realised, graduate access and widening participation must be fully embedded in the University's activities. Achieving this will require greater proactive engagement from across the institution, ensuring that everyone involved in graduate student recruitment actively supports the vision of this Strategy.

The Strategy will be supported by income from the graduate course application fee, **Crankstart** and other sources of funding ringfenced for graduate access purposes.



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2. Vision

Oxford aims to enhance its research and teaching environments, and the excellence and impact of its research outputs, by fostering a more diverse and inclusive approach to graduate student recruitment, attracting and retaining the highest calibre of candidates from all socio-economic and educational backgrounds, and supporting their success.

Oxford aims to increase the plurality and diversity of its graduate student community, both from the UK and internationally, by strengthening its processes for fair postgraduate taught (PGT) and postgraduate research (PGR) admissions and recruitment processes.

This will be embodied by an approach to PGT and PGR admissions and recruitment that:

1. Achieves a higher standard of excellence by selecting the very best candidates from all backgrounds;
2. Recognises and celebrates the importance of different approaches to learning and a diversity of individuals and ideas, and how this contributes to outstanding knowledge production;
3. Is underpinned by values of fairness and equity;
4. Strives to ensure that education, social and economic differences do not prevent people from accessing graduate study;
5. Establishes reflective, value-driven practice by everyone involved in PGT and PGR admissions so that the wider vision is mirrored in individual actions;
6. Enhances the attractiveness of Oxford PG study to applicants from targeted groups;
7. Enhances the financial support available for successful applicants to join Oxford;
8. Provides the means and environment that will enable students to flourish and achieve their full potential while on course.

3. Objectives

This vision for a fair admissions and recruitment culture must be visible in all stages of the University's graduate recruitment and admissions practices, and is underpinned by the following objectives:

1. The principles and values of the vision statement are reflected in all recruitment, admissions and funding processes;
2. A more diverse student population is recruited, and retained with tailored scholarships and support, increasing the number of graduate students from underrepresented and socio-economically disadvantaged groups both in the UK and internationally to enhance our academic excellence;
3. Departments develop and implement their local strategies and action plans which align with the overall strategy while addressing local needs and priorities;
4. Information and guidance related to graduate admissions and funding are clear and transparent;
5. Every person involved in graduate admissions receives appropriate training and support;
6. A centrally-managed reporting and evaluation process is put in place across the University.



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4. Priorities

The University is committed to enhancing diversity and excellence in its graduate programmes, and to eliminate the barriers to recruitment and access by:

1. Increasing both the availability and level of scholarship funding, including ring-fenced funding for targeted groups and competitive funding packages, to ensure that successful applicants are able to join the University and thrive on course;
2. Providing information and knowledge on postgraduate study, funding and careers;
3. Encouraging students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds to apply to Oxford;
4. Supporting applicants in making a competitive application to Oxford;
5. Addressing the 'deficit model'¹, and ensuring that all candidates who have the potential to thrive as graduate students at Oxford are given the chance to demonstrate that potential through our admissions and funding processes and a more holistic approach which considers potential, contextual information and wider relevant experience.



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¹ A "deficit model" looks for weaknesses in applicants; this approach often ignores the unique strengths, experiences and potential of candidates.

5. Accountability and governance

The Strategy is owned by Education Committee and reviewed by two of its Subcommittees, Graduate Access Subcommittee and Graduate Admissions Committee, supported by Graduate Admissions and Recruitment & Student Fees and Funding.

The Graduate Access Subcommittee is responsible for the detailed monitoring of the Strategy to steer future recruitment and outreach. Regular progress updates are provided to Graduate Admissions Committee and Education Committee.



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6. Related strategies

The University's **Strategic Plan** (2025-30).

The University's **Oxford Excellence Campaign**, in support of the Strategic Plan – Oxford's development campaign, supporting world-leading research, education and innovation to address the world's most complex and urgent challenges and create positive global impact.

The University's **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan** – Everyone belongs (2024-27) sets out how equality, diversity and inclusion are integral to the University of Oxford's mission.



7. Action Plan

The Strategy is supported by a detailed Action Plan that sets out the specific initiatives, activities, responsibilities, timelines and measures that drive its delivery. The Action Plan covers the full graduate applicant and student journey, from outreach and pre-application support through to admissions, funding transition and on-course support. Evaluation is embedded throughout the Action Plan, using agreed measures to assess impact and inform future initiatives. The Action Plan is an internal working document, reviewed and updated regularly, to ensure that activity remains aligned with the Strategy, any emerging needs and evaluation outcomes.





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