

# Public Sector Equality Duty

New College is committed to providing an open and safe environment which both values and promotes diversity and equality of opportunity, encouraging all our staff and students to fulfil their potential. This approach forms a vital part of all our policies, procedures, practices and plans.

This section provides information about the specific ways in which we are endeavouring to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## 1. Legal Context

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the concept of the public sector equality duty which came into force in April 2011. The equality duty covers all the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act, with the exception of marriage and civil partnership:

- age,
- disability,
- gender reassignment,
- pregnancy and maternity,
- race,
- religion or belief,
- sex, and
- sexual orientation.

The general duty requires the College to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different protected groups, including:
  - Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
  - Meeting the needs of people with protected characteristics
  - Encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate in areas where their representation is low.
- Foster good relations between people from different protected groups, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The above are also known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Having 'due regard' means consciously considering the three aims listed above as part of decision-making processes and when reviewing or developing policies.

Due regard for 'advancing equality' involves removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics; taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

'Fostering good relations' involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups.

The legislation allows for the more favourable of treatment of some people ('positive action'), but only where the more favourable treatment can be objectively justified as a proportionate means of fulfilling the public sector equality duty.

## 2. College Context

New College's primary purpose is to educate our students, and to support the research of our academic staff. These functions are assisted by a body of administrative and support staff with a wide range of roles.

Since we exist within the wider Oxford University framework, in matters of Equal Opportunities the College endeavours to follow [the policies of the Collegiate University](#).

## 3. How we identify and monitor equality issues

The College currently has mechanisms and procedures in place in order to identify and monitor equality issues relating to students and staff at the point of selection and recruitment of students and staff, and while in education and employment. We currently:

1. Set standards and develop policies addressing protected characteristics, which are reviewed regularly and designed not to be discriminatory. Our policy documents are published on [the College website](#).
2. Produce statistical data on:
  - Undergraduate admissions,
  - Undergraduate examination results,
  - Academic staff at the point of recruitment,
3. Use the above statistical data to inform our decision-making and reviews, as measured in relation to College policies and relevant Government legislation.
4. Commission audits: e.g. on physical access to College buildings.
5. Have specific individuals as points of contact and conduits for identifying issues that may arise (please see sections 4.1.3., 4.2.4. and 4.3.4. for specific details).

The Equality and Diversity Committee of the College which has representation from all members of the College (students, academic and non-academic staff) leads a proactive approach to equal opportunities in the College. This is a free-standing committee which reports directly to the Governing Body.

We recently implemented a new College IT system which has improved procedures for collecting statistical data, and enabled us to expand the data that we collect.

Oxford University publishes high level data covering all students and all staff employed by University, which includes joint employment with colleges. Please see the University's [Equality and Diversity Unit web pages](#).

## 4. Steps taken to have due regard

Steps taken to have due regard are outlined below in relation to our members: students, academic staff, and non-academic staff.

### 4.1. Students

#### 4.1.1. Student recruitment and admissions

New College is committed to the admission of students on the basis of strictly academic criteria, regardless of national, social or any other characteristics. Please see [Oxford University Undergraduate Admissions](#).

At the stage of shortlisting undergraduate applicants for interview, University departments take into account [contextual data](#), but this does not influence our decisions about which shortlisted candidates are finally offered places.

The College is actively involved, through our [Outreach Initiative](#), in reaching out to encourage applications from students from groups that are currently under-represented at Oxford University.

At interviews, we make every reasonable effort to meet the needs of applicants with disabilities, encouraging all candidates to tell us if they have a disability beforehand so that suitable arrangements can be made.

#### 4.1.2. Conduct and discipline

We set clear standards of accepted behaviour through our [Equality and Harassment policies](#), and [the Dean's Handbook](#). Any unlawful discriminatory behaviour, including harassment or bullying by individuals or groups, is unacceptable, and is regarded extremely seriously. It can form grounds for disciplinary action, which may include expulsion.

#### 4.1.3. Student Support & Welfare

Student well-being is at the core of the values of the College. We have an extensive welfare support network for students from academic and non-academic staff, as well as within the student body. College Tutors (for undergraduates) and College Advisers (for graduates) provide support in relation to academic work. A dedicated and experienced [Welfare Team](#) is here to deal with day-to-day practical issues; two of the team members, the Cox and Salvesen Junior Fellows, live on the college site and spend a significant portion of their time assisting students with pastoral concerns and running events to bring together the college community (see 4.1.4.). The team undertake regular training and are especially sensitive to matters relating to protected characteristics.

It is the tradition of the College that in the student body the Junior Common Room (JCR) and Medium Common Room (MCR) Committees have designated Officers to engage with protected characteristics issues. In the JCR, these are: Vice President for Communications, Welfare and Equality; Access & Outreach; LGBTQ+; International & Overseas; Ethnic Minorities; Women's; Disabilities. In the MCR these are: Equality and Diversity ; Women's; LGBTQ+.

#### **4.1.4. Awareness raising, and fostering good relations**

The College strives to foster good relationships between people from different groups. The Welfare Team (please see 4.1.3.) work to make New College an open and inclusive environment, and to raise the profile of matters relating to protected characteristics within our community. The Cox and Salvesen Junior Fellowships have a social aspect, in addition to their welfare function, which is to make all students feel at home in the College, and to encourage them to interact with other senior members as well as with their tutors. They, together with the relevant JCR and MCR Officers, work to be inclusive of all and encourage communities such as minorities and parents to take part in all aspects of College life. In 2015 sessions on Race Equality and Sexual Consent were included in the freshers' week timetable for the first time; these have become a standing feature, alongside LGBTQ+ events during freshers' week.

The MCR and JCR Officers bring protected characteristics matters to their respective Committees, which in turn represent the student community in all major College committees.

## **4.2. Academic staff**

### **4.2.1. Recruitment**

It is the policy of the College that, subject to statutory provisions, no applicant or member of staff will be treated less favourably than another because of their age, sex, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, racial group, ethnicity, religion or belief, or disability. In all cases, ability to perform the job is the primary consideration. Please see our [Equality policy](#).

The College invites all candidates for all appointments to complete an equal opportunities monitoring form, and the results are analysed and monitored. All selection committees have at least one woman member.

### **4.2.2. Conduct and discipline**

We set clear standards of accepted behaviour through our [Equality and Harassment policies](#) (the latter was updated in 2018). Any unlawful discriminatory behaviour, including harassment, victimisation or bullying by individuals or groups, is unacceptable, and is regarded extremely seriously. It can form grounds for disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

### **4.2.3. Training and awareness raising, fostering good relations**

Members of academic staff are regularly informed about relevant courses run by the University. College tutors are required to take specific courses relevant to their roles (e.g. course for undergraduate admissions tutors.)

### **4.2.4. Support & Welfare**

Support for academic staff in College is provided through the Warden and the College Officers. In addition, junior academic staff at the start of their career (Junior Research Fellows and stipendiary lecturers on contracts of one year or longer) are assigned mentors from within the Fellowship in a related subject area. Academic

staff with joint University appointments are designated mentors within their University department.

### **4.3. Non-academic staff**

#### **4.3.1. Recruitment**

As in academic staff recruitment, it is the policy of the College that, subject to statutory provisions, no applicant or member of staff will be treated less favourably than another because of their age, sex, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, racial group, ethnicity, religion or belief, or disability. In all cases, ability to perform the job is the primary consideration. Please see our [Equality policy](#).

The College monitors equal opportunities (section 3.) on all permanent appointments, and from 2019 all selection committees will include at least one woman.

Most non-academic posts are advertised locally, and we ensure that we advertise in local papers, at the Job Centre, and sometimes in Newsagents' windows in the local area, in order to try to reach the majority of the local population.

#### **4.3.2. Conduct and discipline**

We set clear standards of accepted behaviour through our [Equality and Harassment policies](#). Staff handbooks contain the major terms and conditions for staff; these are reviewed (and amended as necessary) to ensure they take into account any changes in legislation. Any unlawful discriminatory behaviour, including harassment, victimisation or bullying by individuals or groups, is unacceptable, and is regarded extremely seriously. It can form grounds for disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

#### **4.3.3. Training and awareness raising & fostering good relations**

The College aims to eliminate discrimination by providing extensive training to all staff in order to raise awareness of issues pertaining to protected characteristics and to promote positive working practices and foster good relations, such as 'Dignity at Work' training sessions highlighting the importance of equal opportunities and run by Progressive Training in-house for the College. Progressive Training also provided one-to-one training in cultural awareness and dignity at work for the HR Officer in 2011. Furthermore, many staff have attended the Oxford Bursars' Training seminar Disability Awareness, and they are also encouraged to attend events such as Disability Awareness Week (run by the Disability Advice Service in Michaelmas Term). Members of staff are made aware of the staff LGBT network and the events run by it including the annual lecture.

#### **4.3.4. Support & Welfare**

The College aims to provide a supportive working environment for all the staff. A number of specific initiatives are in place to assist those with different protected characteristics.

The HR Officer runs a Nursery Voucher scheme, and we operate a bus pass loan scheme to enable people to buy annual bus passes so that they can travel from wherever they live in the Oxford area at a reduced rate.

Support for staff mental health is provided through our subscription to the University's Occupational Health Service (OUOHS). The College has also implemented the Health Assured Employee Assistance Programme, which can provide up to six counselling sessions. All staff may attend 'stress in the workplace' training sessions and seminars such as 'dealing with difficult people'. Where necessary, the College provides for one-to-one mentoring as a means of supporting staff in their work.

The physical health of the staff is also taken care of by OUOHS, and by the College Doctors who undertake some occupational health consultations for the College on an ad hoc basis.

The Equality and Diversity Committee in College continually seeks to examine and improve the equality of provision in all aspects of our work.

*January 2020*