



EQUALITY REPORT 2023/4

St John's College, Oxford

1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the activities of St John's College in support of equality, diversity and inclusion during the academic year 2023/24 and fulfils its reporting requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The report includes: information on relevant college policies; a statement and review of agreed equality objectives; an overview of other relevant initiatives undertaken in 2023/24; a summary of key staff and student data.

2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

The Equality Act 2010 places all public bodies under an active duty to promote equality, which includes:

- Having due regard to the aims of the General Equality Duty in the exercise of their functions;
- Carrying out equality analysis;
- Setting at least one equality objective;
- Publishing information and data to demonstrate their compliance with the Equality Duty.

The General Equality Duty requires the College to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

3. GOVERNANCE AND POLICIES

- The Governing Body of the College has due regard for the Public Sector Equality Duty. At the start of each year Trustees, College Officers and all members of committees that report to Governing Body are circulated a copy of the Public Sector Equality Duty and reminded of the need to have due regard.
- The Governing Body actively monitors statistics relating to protected characteristics in its recruitment of academic and professional staff, in student admissions to the College, and in student attainment.
- The Equality Committee of the College, which has representation from all members of the College (students, academic and professional staff), leads a proactive approach to eliminating discrimination, advancing equal opportunities and fostering good relations in the College. This committee reports directly to the Governing Body.
- The Governing Body appoints a Fellow for Equality who oversees the implementation of matters relating to Equality, as well as a Fellow for Women and a Fellow for Ethnic Minorities. The Fellow for Equality is also the Disability Lead for the College. From 2024/25, these will be replaced by a single Fellow for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.
- The College's Equality Policy, Public Sector Equality Duty Policy and Harassment Policy can be found at <https://www.sjc.ox.ac.uk/discover/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>. The Public Sector Equality Duty Policy in particular gives further details on the college's ongoing procedures and activities through which it fulfils the Public Sector Equality Duty.

4. SPECIFIC EQUALITY OBJECTIVES 2021-2025: PROGRESS REVIEW

The College adopted new specific equality objectives in Michaelmas term 2021. Progress against each of these objectives by the end of 2023/24 is reviewed below. In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the College will adopt new objectives in 2025.

A. Increasing Diversity (Staff)

- a) Implement a robust process for monitoring and reviewing staff diversity statistics.

Progress to date: The new HR Information System was implemented in June 2023. Staff were asked to complete the equality data, but there is still limited data available. A recruitment module was added in 2024 and gathering equality data will now be part of the recruitment process. However, there are still limitations to the granularity of this data due to large proportions of candidates opting for "I prefer not to say" or not answering questions if they are optional.

- b) Explore ways to increase the diversity of professional staff, including working with experienced local employers to identify best practice and running an open day for the local community.

Progress to date: The college has joined the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership. Part of the charter is to offer opportunities into work, supporting those furthest from the labour market. The Head of HR held discussions with the HMP New Futures network project and Aspire on how we can work with them to support people getting back into work. As of Sept 2024, the next step is to review safeguarding.

- c) As part of the ECR working group remit, consider how the job structure, recruitment process and communication may impact on diversity in recruitment to College-only academic posts.

Progress to date: Design of the new Career Development Research Fellow and College Lecturer posts was completed in 2022-3 and the first appointments were made in 2024. Equality concerns were part of the discussion at each stage. The aim was to create attractive posts which have appeal to a wider pool of applicants, supported by appropriately targeted advertising. Mentoring of CDRFs has been identified as an area of development to further support Equality objectives.

B. Increasing diversity (Students)

- a) Seek to participate in the University's Black Academic Futures programme by undertaking to finance either one full, or two 50%, scholarships.

Progress to date: The College is currently financing a full scholarship and is exploring future options for this or other scholarships that support a diversity aim.

- b) Explore future funding possibilities to facilitate and support access to graduate study for under-represented groups.

Progress to date: The shortfall in graduate funding remains the main barrier and was considered under the 2020-21 "Size and Shape" Review. The College has broadened its scholarship scheme to offer a total of 16 UKRI funding council partnership scholarships, enabling a larger number of funded places. We have continued to support Uniq+ and other graduate access initiatives and in 2023-4 agreed a favourable charging basis for doing so going forward. We have also continued our support for a Ukrainian graduate student by finding DPhil funding, and continue to work with the Alumni office on further possible avenues of support.

- c) Support the University's target to eliminate the offer gap to Asian applicants by ensuring tutors are made aware of the gap and monitoring outcomes.

Progress to date: Tutors were alerted to the offer gap in Admissions Committee, Hilary Term 2022, and were reminded in the annual admissions letter. The University has now met this target and is no longer monitoring the gap and so the College is no longer highlighting this information. Since the 2022 admissions round, college outcomes by ethnicity are reviewed annually at the February Admissions Committee meeting.

- d) Ensure all tutors participating in admissions have completed the relevant training, including training on Equality considerations.

Progress to date: 96% of those taking part in admissions interviews completed the required training for the 2023-4 admissions round. This is the highest level since the College has been actively monitoring completion. Tutors are reminded of the necessary training each year.

C. Teaching and student progression

- a) Work with external providers to develop tailored training for tutors and advisors, to help them become more anti-racist in their tutorial teaching, graduate advising, and pastoral support of students.

Progress to date: Anti-racism workshops for academic staff were delivered at least annually by an external facilitator between Nov 2021 and Oct 2024. Members of the Governing Body with significant teaching or management responsibilities in College are required to participate and, as of Oct 2024, 86% have now done so. The workshops will continue to run at the start of each academic year and members who have not yet participated will be reminded of the requirement.

- b) Evaluate the level of interest in a BAME alumni network and student mentoring scheme aimed at supporting BAME students' progression.

After discussion with the Director of Development and Alumni Relations and student representatives it was agreed that the Alumni Office would help facilitate student-led events that involve alumni and encourage an informal network to develop. In 2023-4 this initiative was put on hold due to lack of interest from the current JCR and MCR.

- c) Review the process of providing academic support for students with Specific Learning Difficulties and ensure it is fit for purpose.

The Fellow for Equality carried out a College survey and produced a report for Equality Committee in HT 2024. As a result, the information available to students was reviewed

and improved. No other immediate actions were recommended, but particular aspects of the process will be kept under close review.

D. Welfare and well-being

- a) Complete a review of welfare provision in the College, including particular reference to the recent recommendations of the University of Oxford Mental Health Task Force.

Progress to date: External and internal reviews were completed by 2023. This led to the appointment of a full-time Head of Student Wellbeing for 2023-4 and since then Governing Body has agreed to the creation of four Student Welfare Officers with responsibilities both inside and outside of term time. This improvement in welfare provision is likely to protect disadvantaged groups.

A specific recommendation from the external review to improve equality was to increase the diversity of counsellor provision. From Sept 2023 the College provided access to a new helpline for students, allowing them to request counsellors with different characteristics. A new piece of work is underway in 2024 to produce communications for students clarifying their options around requesting counsellors with different characteristics from the University Counselling Service as well as raising awareness of that service.

- b) Implement an anonymous harassment recording system to allow all members of College to record any incidents of concern.

Progress to date: an online system was introduced in Hilary Term 2022. In Hilary Term 2023 and 2024 it was decided to continue with the system, subject to further review. In order to increase awareness, information is now being circulated at the start of each term.

E. Values and Culture

- a) Adopt and publish a College anti-racism statement

Progress to date: An anti-racism statement by the Governing Body of the College was published on the College webpage in September 2021.

- b) Pilot new ways to engage all members of staff in discussions about the College's values, including race equality, in order to create an inclusive culture, and share and extend good practice.

Progress to date: A new Environmental, Social and Governance Policy was agreed in 2022/3, including the social aim that the College should make a positive impact on

everyone working and studying here. As part of this, a set of shared College values was developed through staff group discussions. The values are being embedded through annual performance reviews and staff recognition. The College went through an Investors in People application in April 2024. Although accreditation was not given, we developed a clear action plan and, if followed, this should lead to accreditation in 2025. One of the action areas is a mandatory training programme, including anti-racism training.

- c) Embed diversity and anti-racism education in the life of the College by offering relevant events to students throughout their time in College, not just Welcome Week.

Progress to date: In 2021 the College arranged a workshop for continuing undergraduates on “Understanding and Confronting Racism” but this was cancelled due to lack of interest. Celebrations of festivals such as Diwali, Eid and Lunar New Year have been very popular and have an educational aspect in a broader sense. The Fellow for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion will continue to explore ways of achieving this objective.

- d) Organise a photographic exhibition to celebrate current and former BAME members of the College community, including students, alumni, academic and non-academic members of staff.

Progress to date: The “Celebrating Diversity” portrait exhibition was held in January 2022 and the portraits are now displayed around College.

F. Accessibility of Facilities

- a) Incorporate planning for access improvements into the Works and Accommodation team’s ten to fifteen-year Master Plan, to address current challenges identified in the recent accessibility audit. *Progress to date: The Master Planning process is still ongoing. The Master Plan includes creating accessible JCR spaces (currently none are accessible) and adding accessible rooms to undergraduate accommodation in Thomas White building, meaning 1st years with disabilities can be housed along with the rest of their cohort.*

- b) Improve accessibility of the College sportsground.

Progress to date: This work is now complete. An automated gate has been installed, Salto access to the pavilion has been provided, and access to the accessible toilet has been improved.

- c) Install two lifts in the existing College library to improve accessibility.

Progress to date: This work is now complete.

d) Complete an audit of assistive technology in College.

Not yet progressed.

5. OTHER INITIATIVES TO HELP FULFIL THE EQUALITY DUTY IN 2023-4

The College has due regard for the Public Sector Equality Duty in all its decision making on an ongoing basis. In addition, a range of activities and events are organized throughout the year to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion, some of which are described on the College's [EDI Pages](#). This section highlights some specific new steps taken in 2023/24 to pro-actively help to eliminate discrimination, advance equal opportunities and foster good relations between groups with different protected characteristics, in addition to those already covered by the specific equality objectives 2021-25 described above.

Harassment and Sexual Violence

A number of steps were taken to improve the safety and confidence of students with regard to harassment and sexual violence. The process began with a collaborative discussion between members of the JCR, MCR and staff and the resulting actions included the following:

- The College harassment policy was revised to clarify the roles of the Head of Student Wellbeing and Harassment Advisors.
- It was agreed that the role of harassment advisor (for students) should no longer be allocated to tutors involved in undergraduate teaching or holding significant college officerships.
- A group of staff and students worked with a graphic designer to create a poster/online campaign depicting unwanted behaviours and the help available in College. These will be displayed in October 2024.
- The Fellow for Equality delivered a training session on harassment as part of an induction day for the new JCR/MCR committees.
- Welcome week consent training provision was reviewed and adapted in collaboration with the JCR to become Consent and Expected behaviours. Expected behaviours covers addressing explicit and implicit harassment, racism and any unwelcome behaviours. The new training will be delivered by Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre.
- St John's College Peer Supporters were trained in supporting students who disclose incidents of sexual harassment/violence to access effective and timely support. The training was delivered by the University's Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service.

Fellow for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Governing Body agreed to create a Fellow for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This College officer will replace three existing officers: Fellow for Equality, Fellow for Women and Fellow for Ethnic Minorities. The new role will facilitate a more inclusive and consistent approach to EDI issues, spanning all groups with protected characteristics. A planned increase in the amount of professional staff time allocated to EDI matters will ensure that the overall level of resourcing is at least maintained.

Support for students with disabilities

The College considered how to make better use of the Higby Will Trust, which provides funding to support students with declared disabilities at St John's. As a result, the College introduced the Higby Will Trust Study Support Grant in 2023-24. This grant contributes to costs incurred by students as a result of their disability, in order to help them to pursue their course of study. In addition, funds from the Trust have been earmarked to pay for a number of building projects that will significantly improve accessibility in College, particularly accessible student accommodation.

Multi-faith prayer room provision

An initial proposal for creation of a multi-faith prayer room provision was discussed in Equality Committee and a possible location was identified. The College is now looking further at the nature of demand for such a space and the best way to meet those needs.

Associate Fellows nomination process

Governing Body agreed a new process for nominating and electing Associate Fellows (previously known as Supernumerary Fellows). The annual process will now include a call for nominations, review of a gathered field by Associations Committee, and a clearer set of selection criteria. One aim of the new process is to achieve greater equity in considering potential Fellows and to potentially draw from a wider and more diverse pool.

Physical Accessibility of College Buildings

In addition to the equality objectives described in Section 4 above, the following steps were taken to improve the physical accessibility of College Buildings during 2023/24.

- The Dolphin Art Gallery was made accessible by raising the floor and creating a ramp.
- The College has begun a programme of works to upgrade fire alarms to visual beacons for those with hearing impairments.
- Works started on the refurbishment of 19-21 St John Street and will provide accessibility via a ramp to the rear of the building/common room, and improvements to stairs and landings.
- Pusey Lane redevelopment began in Summer 2024. Works will include accessible kitchens, access lifts, refuge points, accessible bathrooms, powered doors and accessible landscaping.

6. STAFF RECRUITMENT DATA

Gender and ethnicity information is available only for those candidates who returned the equality monitoring forms. Under the new HR Information System, equality data will be captured electronically as part of the application process and it is hoped that this will eventually increase return rates; for example, 100% of applicants for the first round of CDRFs returned such a form, though the large proportions of people opting for “I prefer not to say” and some questions not being compulsory mean there are still limitations to the available information.

6.1 Academic Staff

Recruitment data for academic staff are only available for College appointments i.e., where the College is the only or primary employer. Therefore, some joint appointments are excluded.

The difference between the number of male and female applicants in 2022/3 was largely driven by the candidates for the Supernumerary Teaching Fellowship in Maths.

The large numbers of applicants in 2023/24 were due to the recruitment of the first round of CDRFs, which had 727 applicants. The proportion of forms returned was much higher for academic applicants in 2023/4 than for previous years because 100% of CDRF applicants returned them, as they are now an integral step of the online application process. However, a much larger proportion of applicants than usual (26%) chose “I prefer not to say” in response to the question on gender, which was compulsory. The question on ethnicity, which was optional, was only answered by 62% of

applicants. As a result the data yield for appointed applicants was disappointing and not much more informative than in the past.

	2020/21 Applicants		2021/22 Applicants		2022/23 Applicants		2023/24 Applicants	
	All	Appointed	All	Appointed	All	Appointed	All	Appointed
Total Number	527	13	316	6	556	8	991	18
Responses	336	7	204	4	229	4	745	9
% returned	64%	54%	65%	67%	41%	50%	75%	50%
Male	202 (62%)	3 (43%)	118 (58%)	1 (25%)	149 (65%)	2 (50%)	313 (42%)	5 (56%)
Female	122 (37%)	4 (57%)	85 (42%)	3 (75%)	75 (33%)	2 (50%)	241 (32%)	4 (44%)
Prefer not to say	2 (1%)	0	1 (<1%)	0	5 (2%)	0	191 (26%)	0
White	250 (75%)	6 (86%)	143 (70%)	2 (50%)	133 (58%)	1 (25%)	293 (54%)	1 (11%)
BME	69 (21%)	1 (14%)	46 (23%)	2 (50%)	57 (25%)	2 (50%)	227 (42%)	1 (11%)
Prefer not to say	13 (4%)	0	15 (7%)	0	39 (17%)	1 (25%)	20 (4%)	7 (78%)

6.2 Professional Staff

The College receives more applications from female than male candidates. This difference is driven by the applications to administrative posts. A large number of male applicants to Works and Domestic posts in 2023-24 proved an exception to this trend.

	2020/21 Applicants		2021/22 Applicants		2022/23 Applicants		2023/24 Applicants	
	All	Appointed	All	Appointed	All	Appointed	All	Appointed
Total Number	468	33	448	522	33	37	538	45
Responses	186	10	158	129	12	14	101	7
% returned	40%	30%	35%	25%	36%	38%	18%	15%
Male	74 (40%)	4 (40%)	67 (42%)	43 (33%)	4 (33%)	4 (29%)	53 (52%)	2 (29%)
Female	112 (60%)	6 (60%)	88 (56%)	85 (66%)	8 (67%)	10 (71%)	48 (48%)	5 (71%)
Prefer not to say	0	0	3 (2%)	1 (1%)	0	0	0	0
White	155 (83%)	8 (80%)	118	90 (70%)	8	13 (93%)	72 (71%)	6
BME	30 (16%)	2 (20%)	36	32 (25%)	4	1 (7%)	23 (23%)	0 (0%)
Prefer not to say	1 (1%)	0	4	7 (5%)	0	0	6 (6%)	1

7 TOTAL STUDENTS ON COURSE

Data are from the Student Statistics Snapshot for December of each year. Equivalent University percentages are given in brackets for comparison.

7.1 Number and % of all Students on course by gender and course type

There was a slight fall in the proportion of female undergraduate students in both 2022-3 and 2023-4. However, there was an increase over this period in the proportion of female graduate students. The proportion of female undergraduates remains slightly below the University average.

	2021		2022		2023	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Undergraduate	210 50.2%	208 49.8%	221 52.7%	198 47.3%	224 53.7%	193 46.3%
(University)	(47.4%)	(52.6%)	(47.2%)	(52.8%)	(48.0%)	(52.0%)
Postgraduate Research	117 53.4%	102 46.6%	119 55.3%	96 44.7%	112 50.0%	112 50.0%
(University)	(55.3%)	(44.7%)	(53.9%)	(46.1%)	(52.2%)	(47.8%)
Postgraduate Taught	22 57.9%	16 42.1%	10 32.3%	21 67.7%	14 48.3%	15 51.7%
(University)	(49.0%)	(51.0%)	(48.2%)	(51.8%)	(48.8%)	(51.2%)

7.2 Number and % of UK Students on course by ethnicity and course type

The proportion of UK undergraduate students who were BME increased slightly again this year, in line with University trends.

	2021			2022			2023		
	White	BME	Not Known	White	BME	Not known	White	BME	Not known
Undergrad.	240 74.8%	73 22.7%	8 2.5%	236 73%	76 24%	11 3%	234 72%	81 25%	9 3%
(University)	(75.3%)	(22.4%)	(2.3%)	(73%)	(24%)	(2%)	(72%)	(25%)	(2%)
Postgrad. Research	74 74.7%	21 21.2%	4 4.0%	62 69%	23 26%	5 6%	62 72%	19 22%	5 6%
(University)	(77.5%)	(17.2%)	(5.3%)	(76%)	(19%)	(5%)	(74%)	(21%)	(5%)
Postgrad. Taught	7 77.8%	1 11.1%	1 11.1%	4 80%	1 20%	0 0%	7 100%	0 0%	0 0%
(University)	(70.4%)	(25.0%)	(4.6%)	(67%)	(28%)	(5%)	(65%)	(31%)	(4%)

7.3 Number and % of International Students on course by ethnicity and course type

	2021			2022			2023		
	White	BME	Not known	White	BME	Not Known	White	BME	Not Known

Undergrad.	51 52.6%	44 45.4%	2 2.1%	41 43%	51 53%	4 4%	36 39%	53 57%	4 4%
(University)	(42.2%)	(52.4%)	(5.4%)	(37%)	(56%)	(7%)	(34%)	(59%)	(8%)
Postgrad. Research	61 51.0%	55 45.8%	4 3.3%	54 43%	64 51%	7 6%	58 42%	73 53%	7 5%
(University)	(43.2%)	(51.0%)	(5.8%)	(41%)	(52%)	(6%)	(39%)	(55%)	(6%)
Postgrad. Taught	10 34.5%	17 58.6%	2 6.9%	13 50%	11 42%	2 8%	9 41%	12 55%	1 5%
(University)	(42.6%)	(52.9%)	(4.5%)	(41%)	(55%)	(4%)	(40%)	(56%)	(4%)

8 UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS DATA¹

“Applications” refers to all applications specifying St John’s as the first choice college. “Acceptances” refers to all final acceptances of those applications by St John’s and does not include acceptances by other Colleges. The stated years are the year of matriculation. Ethnicity information is not available for non-UK applicants.

8.1 Undergraduate application numbers and acceptance rates by gender

The College consistently receives a lower proportion of female applicants than the University as a whole. This has been true for the last 10 years but the gap has recently increased. Further analysis could be done to identify whether this is a subject composition effect.

	2021		2022		2023	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Applications	688 53%	605 47%	614 56%	482 44%	591 55%	489 45%
(University)	(49%)	(51%)	(50%)	(50%)	(50%)	(50%)
Acceptances	55 47%	62 53%	71 59%	49 41%	68 55%	56 45%
(University)	(46%)	(54%)	(48%)	(52%)	(50%)	(50%)
Accept Rate	8.0%	10.2%	11.6%	10.2%	11.5%	11.5%
(University)	(12.8%)	(14.3%)	(13.3%)	(14.1%)	(14.0%)	(13.7%)

8.1 Undergraduate application numbers and acceptance rates by ethnicity (UK only)

The proportion of UK applicants and acceptances who are BME grew in 2023 and continues to be slightly higher than for the University. Like the University, the College has a lower acceptance rate for BME applicants. Analysis of University data by UCAS suggests that this difference can be

¹ Data for the 2023-24 admissions cycle will be added when it is made available by UCAS/University.

explained by differences in course choice and predicted grades for the Black ethnic group but not for the Asian ethnic group.²

	2021			2022			2023		
	White	BME	Not Known	White	BME	Not Known	White	BME	Not Known
Applications	465 64% (65%)	225 31% (30%)	40 5% (5%)	396 60% (63%)	221 34% (32%)	38 6% (6%)	445 61% (62%)	250 35% (34%)	29 4% (4%)
Acceptances	67 73% (65%)	24 26% (30%)	1 1% (5%)	66 73% (71%)	22 24% (27%)	2 2% (2%)	62 65% (70%)	30 32% (28%)	3 3% (2%)
Accept Rate	14.4%	10.7%	2.5%	16.7%	10.0%	5.3%	13.9%	12.0%	10.3%
(University)	(21.1%)	(15.2%)	(7.6%)	(20%)	(15%)	(6%)	(19.7%)	(14.5%)	(9.1%)

² [UCAS Undergraduate Data Release Archive | Undergraduate | UCAS](#)

9 UNDERGRADUATE FINAL DEGREE CLASSIFICATIONS³

There remains a gender classification gap and a ethnicity classification gap, as in the University. The College ethnicity classification gap was somewhat higher in 2023 than in previous years, but the numbers are small.

9.1 Final degree classifications by gender

	2021		2022		2023	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
First	23 52%	24 46%	22 45%	21 39%	20 43%	20 36%
(University)	(42%)	(39%)	(40%)	(34%)	(41%)	(32%)
2.1 or lower	21 48%	28 54%	27 55%	33 61%	27 57%	34 64%
(University)	(58%)	(61%)	(60%)	(66%)	(59%)	(68%)

9.2 Final degree classifications by ethnicity

	2021		2022		2023	
	White	BME	White	BME	White	BME
First	38 50%	9 45%	31 42%	10 34%	29 43%	8 28%
(University)	(42%)	(35%)	(39%)	(32%)	(38%)	(30%)
2.1 or lower	38 50%	11 55%	42 58%	19 66%	39 57%	21 62%
(University)	(58%)	(65%)	(61%)	(68%)	(62%)	(70%)

³ Data for FHS 2024 will be added when it is made available by the University