



MERTON COLLEGE
SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME
2024-27

Aim of the Single Equality Scheme

Merton College aims to provide an inclusive environment which promotes equality, values diversity, and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its Fellows, staff and students are respected to assist them in reaching their full potential. The College will work to remove any barriers which might deter people of the highest potential and ability from applying to study or work at Merton College.

Our aim is to embed equality in the culture and systems of the College by ensuring that policy making, service delivery and employment practice are all equality oriented.

The Single Equality Scheme, which supersedes previous Equal Opportunities Policies, sets out the specific objectives the College has set to promote equality, and reports progress against these objectives. It is published on the College website and is incorporated into the Staff Handbook; Fellows and Lecturers' Handbook; and the College Handbook for Junior Members.

About Merton College

Merton College, the first fully self-governing College in the University, was founded in 1264 by Walter de Merton. Today it is one of the 39 independent, self-governing colleges of the University of Oxford. It is also a Registered Charity, under the Charity Commission.

From the initial foundation of twenty male fellows, Merton has expanded over the years to a diverse community which today comprises 320 undergraduates, 280 postgraduates, 54 Governing Body Fellows, 50 Lecturers across a range of academic disciplines supported by over 100 non-academic staff.

The College's aims for the public benefit include achieving the highest outcomes in education, learning and research at national and international level. This in turn requires a firm commitment to equality of opportunity, so that the College considers every possible source of talent.

College Governance and the Single Equality Scheme

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to provide the mechanisms and resources through which the College's strategic objectives for equality and diversity can be delivered. To support this work, the College established an Equality Forum in June 2011. The duties of the Equality Forum are given by the College Bylaws as (i) to make recommendations to the Governing Body or to any College Board for the purpose of ensuring that the College fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people and (ii) to provide to the Governing Body and publish annually relevant and proportionate information showing the College's compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. In practice, therefore, its remit is to:

- consider all existing and emerging equality legislation with a view to identifying relevant issues, which are then translated into key College policies for approval by the Governing Body;
- facilitate consultation with specific groups of staff and students;
- identify equality-related training needs of specific groups of staff and students;
- provide monitoring of key strategic issues; and
- draft publications for approval by the Governing Body as appropriate.

The Equality Forum is chaired by the Warden and convened by the Academic Registrar with the following other members: the Domestic Bursar, the Senior Tutor, the Chaplain, the Equality Adviser, a member of the Governing Body, one College Lecturer or Julia de Lacy Mann Fellow in Categories B or C, four Junior members (of whom two shall be nominated by the President of the Middle Common Room and two by the President of the Junior Common Room), the Head of Welfare, the Human Resources Manager, the Academic Registrar, the Schools Liaison and Access Officer, the Student Support Administrator, two non-academic employees of the College from different departments who are also not members of the Governing Body, and one external member. It meets at least once per term and reports to the Governing Body to which it makes a formal report once a year.

All College Committees are responsible for ensuring that this Scheme is embedded in their duties and functions in relation to both students, staff and visitors.

The Senior Tutor (with respect to academic matters) and the Domestic Bursar (with respect to non-academic matters) are responsible for the day-to-day implementation and delivery of the College's strategic objectives for equality and diversity in accordance with the guidance attached to this policy.

The Domestic Bursar also has primary responsibility for facilitating the accessibility of the College's buildings for those with disabilities.

The Harassment Advisors may provide informal advice in the first instance to any member of staff or student prior to bringing any complaint or grievance about harassment.

Publication and Dissemination of the Single Equality Scheme

The Single Equality Scheme is published on the College website and is incorporated into the Staff Handbook; Fellows and Lecturers' Handbook; and the *College Handbook for Junior Members*.

Merton's approach to equality is outlined to new members of College as part of induction. For Junior Members, this means that equality awareness is included in Freshers' talks and events. Line managers are responsible for covering equality within induction for non-academic staff.

Other areas within the College that need to take account of the College's Single Equality Scheme include:

- Partnership arrangements, where the College will make clear to partner organisations its duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- Procurement, where the College will be expected to ensure that procurement processes take account of the requirements of this Scheme, and that contractors/suppliers understand and comply with the duties required of the College.
- Communications, including the way that the College communicates to Fellows, students and staff, and potential applicants to study or work at Merton College (e.g. in hard copy, electronic media) in such a way that complies with the spirit of this scheme.
- Managers and supervisors will be expected to be familiar with the provisions of the Scheme and its implications for the areas that they manage or supervise.

Single Equality Scheme: Legal Context

The Equality Act came into force in October 2010 and has two main purposes – to harmonise discrimination law and to strengthen the law to support progress on equality. Discrimination law protects people on the basis of the following eight protected characteristics: (in alphabetical order)

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race, including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

It also applies to marriage and civil partnerships, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination in employment. Merton College is subject to the Equality Act 2010 as an education provider, employer and provider of goods, facilities and services.

In providing a public function, the College has a *general duty* to:

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

To address point 1 – that is to eliminate discrimination and other prohibited conduct – the College needs to give advance consideration to issues of discrimination before making any policy decision and that it should actively examine its current and proposed policies and practices to ensure that they are not discriminatory or otherwise unlawful under the Equality act 2010.

To address point 2 – that is, to advance equality of opportunity – the College must have due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different to the needs of the persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

To address point 3 – that is, to foster good relations – the College must have due regard to the need to:

- Tackle prejudice and
- Promote understanding

by encouraging the development or growth of ideas and attitudes which result in good or improved relations between the individuals in different groups, and encouraging the maintenance or improvement of already good relations between individuals in the different groups.

As Merton College is part of the University of Oxford, it is important that this document should be read in conjunction with the University's approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion which is described at <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategic-implementation-plan>.

Equality Objectives

The College identifies and publishes equality objectives. Please see Appendix 1 for an overview of the College's equality objectives.

Equality Information

The College publishes information to show how it complies with the public equality sector duty in the exercise of its public functions.

Further Information

Further information about the College's approach to equality for current or prospective staff can be obtained from the Head of Human Resources.

Further information about provisions for students can be obtained from the Academic Office.

Review

The Single Equality Scheme is reviewed annually, and updated every three years.

Adopted 2012; updated 2015, 2018, 2021 and 2024

Appendix 1 Merton College Equality Objectives – revised Michaelmas Term 2024

Current Objectives

Objective	Actions required	Equality Strands	Lead Responsibility	Start Date	Target Completion Date	Specific outcomes and outputs
College Nursery Provision	Establish and promote nursery provision for use by College members	Pregnancy and maternity	HR Manager / Domestic Bursar	TT21	Merton members have priority access to five sponsored places at the University nurseries between 2023-2025. Provision will need reviewing in 2025 or before, if appropriate	Ensure that adequate nursery provision exists for members of the College
Encourage more undergraduate applications to Oxford from Black and Minority Ethnic candidates, and provide support for on-course BAME students	Develop new outreach activities to diversify the student body, including to encourage more applications from students from BAME backgrounds	Race	Senior Tutor	TT21	Ongoing. The College is now in its third year of working with the SMF, and is part of the University's South West outreach consortium	Continued participation in Social Mobility Foundation (SMF) work, including bringing a report on SMF activities to this meeting. Consideration of metrics and comparisons to measure progress.

Objective	Actions required	Equality Strands	Lead Responsibility	Start Date	Target Completion Date	Specific outcomes and outputs
					which includes diverse areas such as Bristol. It can be difficult to assess impact.	
Achieve Web Content Accessibility Guidelines AA accessibility status on the College website and other media	Compliance and testing against WCAG 2.2 level AA guidelines.	Disability	Web and Media Officer	MT24	MT25 with completion of new website project	Ensure College media complies with WCAG 2.2 level AA guidelines.
Improve diversity of academic and non-academic staff	Consider recruitment strategies and processes for different groups of employees Regularly review recruitment monitoring statistics	All	HR Manager/ Senior Tutor	TT21	Ongoing: the data is very fluid. Comparison with other parts of the collegiate university may be helpful but challenging to obtain.	Consideration of metrics and comparisons to measure progress.
Improved integration of equality matters and the Single Equality Scheme into the College	Annual standing item at the termly Staff meeting regarding the Single Equality	All	Senior Tutor / Domestic Bursar / HR Manager /	October 2016	Ongoing. Website material by MT25	Bring the SES to the termly staff meeting on an annual basis

Objective	Actions required	Equality Strands	Lead Responsibility	Start Date	Target Completion Date	Specific outcomes and outputs
community and the College's online presence.	<p>Scheme and the current year's objective(s).</p> <p>MCR and JCR to develop clear routes for feeding back to Junior Members on Equality Forum discussions and related equality issues</p> <p>Consider how to include the SES in the new website, and internal communications.</p>		Student reps/Web and Media Officer			Improved communications on College website and in internal communications
Enhance the identification and provision of equality training for academic and non-academic staff	<p>To develop provision of unconscious bias and/or equality training suitable for different groups (students, support staff and academics)</p> <p>To continue provision of transgender awareness training for support staff</p>	All	Domestic Bursar / Senior Tutor	Ongoing	Ongoing review.	<p>Identify training courses / briefing suitable for staff, students and fellows</p> <p>Offer Trans Awareness training for staff on an annual basis from 2025</p>

Objective	Actions required	Equality Strands	Lead Responsibility	Start Date	Target Completion Date	Specific outcomes and outputs
Take steps to understand and help address the "gender gap" in Finals and at FPE.	<p>Ongoing review of student progress and examination results at Warden & Tutors' Committee and Governing Body.</p> <p>Ongoing discussions with Tutors and with Junior Members.</p> <p>Awareness of and engagement with Divisional work in this area</p>	Gender	Senior Tutor	October 2013	Progress reviewed in in HT 2025.	
Take steps to increase diversity in portraiture	Ongoing consideration of ways to diversify portraiture, including by the Pictures & Chattels Sub-Committee.	All	Librarian (Chair of Pictures & Chattels Sub-Committee)	November 2016	Ongoing. Newly commissioned portraits hung in Hall in TT23.	
To consider opportunities to diversify the nomenclature of rooms and Fellowships	Consider diversity wherever opportunities arise to name rooms and Fellowships	All (in particular gender)	Domestic Bursar/Development Director	MT 2024	Ongoing. Review MT26	
Improve accessibility of the MCR	Improve physical access to MCR facilities for disabled students	Disability	Estates Bursar and Domestic Bursar	November 2018	TT 2027 Planning proposals for lift access to the MCR completed	The MCR will be fully accessible to wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility.

Objective	Actions required	Equality Strands	Lead Responsibility	Start Date	Target Completion Date	Specific outcomes and outputs
					MT 24 and a meeting with the Planning Officer has taken place.	
Improve accessibility of main College site	Building on work to address access via North Lodge and Mure Arch (completed MT24), install lighting behind Fellows' Quad and reduce weight of Fellows' Garden gate to improve flat access around site.	Disability	Estates Bursar and Domestic Bursar	TT2024	Fellows' Quad lighting installed by MT25. Replacement of Fellows' Garden gate by MT25.	Main College site, especially TSE Eliot Theatre, more easily accessible to wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility. Improved flat access across the main site for wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility.
Gender Pay Gap	Continue to monitor gender pay gap data at Equality Forum	Gender	HR Manager	Ongoing		
Encourage applications for funding to support equality and diversity related events and projects.	Advertise the University's Diversity Fund and the College's Equality and Diversity Grant, with regular reminders about availability of support and funding.	All	Equality Advisor, Student Support Administrator	MT24	Ongoing	
Support access to and progression in Higher Education among under represented groups.	Continue to review opportunities to extend access work in	All (in particular race)	Development Director/Senior Tutor	MT24		Involvement with schemes/scholarships to address under-

Objective	Actions required	Equality Strands	Lead Responsibility	Start Date	Target Completion Date	Specific outcomes and outputs
	support of under represented groups.					representation in the study body.
Update parental leave policy for Junior Members	Review, update and seek committee approval for a new parental leave policy	Gender	Senior Tutor	HT25	MT25	Revised policy agreed and promoted
To request and review equality data for Merton staff (Academic and Non-Academic Staff), and students	Set up a process to regularly survey Fellows, staff and students, to better understand diversity within the Merton community.	All	Academic Registrar/HR Manager	HT26	MT26	Recent and accurate data on the characteristics of the Merton community.

Completed/Achieved Objectives

Objective	Equality Strands	Lead Responsibility	Start Date	Completion Date	Specific outcomes and outputs
Civil marriages and partnerships	Sexual orientation, Religion	Chaplain/ Domestic Bursar	TT21	Completed MT22. The College is listed on the Country Council website as an approved venue. Most enquiries to date have come from alumni.	A room licensed for use
Multi-faith prayer room / quiet room	Religion, Disability	Chaplain/ Domestic Bursar	TT21	Completed HT22. The	A room available for use

Objective	Equality Strands	Lead Responsibility	Start Date	Completion Date	Specific outcomes and outputs
				room has also been used by students from Corpus, and those attending the social mobility foundation residenceials.	
Develop a College maternity leave policy for junior members.	Gender	Senior Tutor	May 2012	June 2012	Formal policy in place documenting the College's support for junior members during pregnancy and maternity leave.
Encourage more undergraduate applications to Oxford from Black and Minority Ethnic candidates through the KICC outreach project.	Race	Schools Liaison and Access Officer	January 2012	September 2013	Activity in 2012-13 included contribution to a major conference and a follow up programme of visits.
Ensure Merton's graphic identity guidelines comply with RNIB standards.	Disability	Development Director	October 2012	June 2013	Merton's graphic identity is compliant with RNIB standards.
Provide level access to Rose Lane 5.	Disability	Estates Bursar	October 2013	October 2013	Level access to Rose Lane 5 provided.
Promote awareness of Merton's adapted suite in Grove and in Holywell.	Disability	Senior Tutor	October 2011	October 2015	Awareness promoted via University networks, College publications, and social media.

Objective	Equality Strands	Lead Responsibility	Start Date	Completion Date	Specific outcomes and outputs
Set up a high-profile annual event on Equality at Merton.	All	Senior Tutor/ Equality Adviser	October 2013	February 2014	The Merton Equality Conversation has taken place annually since 2014. Speakers and themes have included: Dame Athene Donald speaking on gender; Sir Trevor Philips speaking on race; Peter Tatchell speaking on sexual orientation; Lord Puttnam on a duty of care; and a panel discussion on Muslim women's identities in Britain today.
Provide services of thanksgiving and blessing after civil marriages and civil partnerships	Sexual orientation	Chaplain	2013	2015	The College offers services of thanksgiving and blessing after civil marriages and civil partnerships: http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/alumni-information
Develop the effectiveness of the College Equality Forum established in Trinity Term 2011, thereby meeting the College's specific duty under the Equality Act 2010 to publish relevant, proportionate information that demonstrates the College's progress towards its equality objectives.	All	Senior Tutor/ Domestic Bursar	May 2015	May 2016	Formal staff, JCR, and MCR reports added to the agenda as standing items at each termly meeting of the Equality Forum. Formal mechanism established for reporting equality-related considerations from other College committees. One of the two Student Harassment Advisors now a member of the Forum.

Objective	Equality Strands	Lead Responsibility	Start Date	Completion Date	Specific outcomes and outputs
					Standing item added to the agenda of the Michaelmas Term meeting of the Equality Forum to review Equality Objectives and associated actions.
Establish a Girls' Choir	Gender	Chaplain and Director of Music	2015	September 2016	Provision to girls of the same opportunities for singing within a collegiate setting as have previously only been available to boys.
Raise awareness of Merton's equality work amongst non-academic staff	All	HR Manager / Domestic Bursar	May 2016	October 2016	Equality incorporated into the HR Manager's induction programme.
Install a ramp between the Ante-Chapel and the Chapel	Disability	Estates Bursar	2015	November 2016	Provision of wheelchair access to the Chapel via permanent ramp.
Consider development of a parental leave policy for fixed-term academic Fellows.	Pregnancy Maternity	Senior Tutor and Sub Warden	October 2015	April 2017	Amendment to Bylaw.
Enable access to the Hall and SCR via lift in Patey's Quad.	Disability	Estates Bursar	January 2016	July 2017	Installation of lift in Patey's Quad.
Provision of access to the Academic Office	Disability	Estates Bursar and Domestic Bursar	2017	Summer 2018	Provision of wheelchair access to the Academic Office via permanent ramp.
Take steps to increase support for BAME students at Merton	Race	Equality Advisor	May 2016	October 2018	Participation in Conference of Colleges BME focus group.

Objective	Equality Strands	Lead Responsibility	Start Date	Completion Date	Specific outcomes and outputs
					Participation in tri-College collaboration. Funding agreed for events organised by tri-College network.
Create provision for gender-neutral toilets in College	Gender	Domestic Bursar	October 2015	November 2019	Mob 2 and Fitzjames facilities re-designated 'all gender'
Improved accessibility of main college site by reducing the weight of the North Lodge gate and automating Mure Arch access.	Disability	Estates Bursar and Domestic Bursar	TT2024	MT24	Improved access for wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility to the main site, particularly the TS Eliot Lecture Theatre