

# Oxford SU Policy Book – Updated 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025

## List of Active Motions

### Education & Digital Inclusion

- **Motion to renew and update policy on college inequalities**  
*Passed:* Trinity Term 2022  
*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2025
  - **Send the motion ‘Improve Access to Educational Technology’ to NUS**  
*Passed:* Hilary Term 2023  
*Expires:* End of Hilary Term 2026
  - **Motion to mandate action on the future of undergraduate admissions testing**  
*Passed:* Trinity Term 2025  
*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2028
  - **Oxford Overseas Fee Increases**  
*Passed:* Trinity Term 2025  
*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2028
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### Industrial Relations

- **Renewal of UCU Strikes Policy**  
*Passed:* Hilary Term 2023  
*Expires:* End of Hilary Term 2026
  - **Campus Unions**  
*Passed:* Michaelmas Term 2023  
*Expires:* End of Michaelmas Term 2026
  - **Minimum Service Levels Act (Opposition to)**  
*Passed:* Michaelmas Term 2023  
*Expires:* End of Michaelmas Term 2026
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### Governance

- **Independence from OLDUT and Oxford Union Society**  
*Passed:* Trinity Term 2023  
*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2026
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### Activism & Student Voice

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- **Keep Campsfield Closed**  
*Passed:* Hilary Term 2023  
*Expires:* End of Hilary Term 2026
  - **Support of student-led action**  
*Passed:* Trinity Term 2023  
*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2026
  - **EIRRS Position**  
*Passed:* Trinity Term 2025  
*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2028
  - **Dark Skies**  
*Passed:* Trinity Term 2025  
*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2028
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## Inclusion & Accessibility

- **Gender Neutral & Accessible Toilets**  
*Passed:* Michaelmas Term 2023  
*Expires:* End of Michaelmas Term 2026
- **Organising a Second-Hand Sub Fusc Scheme**  
*Passed:* Hilary Term 2024  
*Expires:* End of Hilary Term 2027
- **Supreme Court Ruling**  
*Passed:* Trinity Term 2025  
*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2028

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## Motion to renew and update policy on college inequalities

*Passed:* Trinity Term 2022

*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2025

### Council Notes

1. In light of the recent news that St Benet's Hall, due to financial considerations, was denied a license by the University Council to continue to operate as a Permanent Private Hall (PPH),
2. And that these financial constraints are common across PPHs and low-endowment colleges, and cause significant discrepancies in college experience and in some cases lead to a serious disruption in academic experience,
3. And that significant harm is caused to students by eventual financial instabilities and potential closure of their college or PPH due to financial considerations,
4. And, that the College Contribution Scheme continues to exclude PPHs from membership and access to its resources,
5. And that the University has failed to provide PPHs with the same financial support that it provides colleges, thereby creating an inherent inequality in resources and experience between colleges and PPHs,

### Council Believes

1. Colleges and PPHs are individually unique and valuable members of the University community.
2. Oxford students should have a broadly comparable experience at this University, regardless of their college or PPH.
3. PPHs should, without delay, be granted access to the College Contribution Scheme.
4. The College Contribution Scheme should be used to achieve Believes 2.
5. All student members of Oxford SU should have the same opportunities to succeed academically and have a positive student experience.
6. Students from all colleges and PPHs are equal as University members.
7. Many poorer colleges and PPHs were originally established to cater for students who were traditionally excluded from more established colleges.
8. All students have an interest in equality between college experiences, both from inter-collegiate solidarity and because college choice is often outside students' control.

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9. Every student should be able to request accommodation if they are estranged or a care leaver regardless of their college's ability to fund this.
10. That a lack of endowment is a prohibitive factor behind poorer colleges and PPHs becoming more financially stable and thus being able to add value to students' college experience, increase their size, and expand their independent access and outreach efforts, as evidenced by the experience of St Benet's Hall.
11. That Common Room Presidents should advocate to their heads of house for the inclusion of PPHs in the College Contribution Scheme.

### **Council Notes**

1. To make the above "Student Council Believes" policy,
2. That it will advocate for full membership for PPHs in the College Contribution Scheme to ensure that every member of the University, regardless of college affiliation, has access to a broadly comparable experience at this University, and to ensure that the University's failure to provide assistance to St Benet's Hall does not occur again.
3. The SU President shall notify the Chair of the Conference of Colleges of the SU's decision in writing within ten (10) days of the passing of this resolution.

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## Send the motion 'Improve Access to Educational Technology' to NUS

*Passed:* Hilary Term 2023

*Expires:* End of Hilary Term 2026

### Council Notes

1. The Oxford SU is entitled to send one motion to the National Union of Students conference and one for its liberation conference.
2. The SU has not submitted a motion to NUS in recent years.
3. There is an increasing disparity in access to educational resources among students.

### Council Believes

1. Educational resources should be accessible to all students.
2. The SU should support the efforts of campaigns within and outside of Oxford that share this goal.
3. By submitting this motion to NUS, the SU has the opportunity to raise awareness about the issue of technological disadvantage on a national level

### Council Resolves

1. To send the motion "Improve Access to Educational Technology" to the National Union of Students conference
  - 1.1. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GOJ88inU-Pr2MX3TLT7i7KPaad5RAYP5BZCXTKky\\_o/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GOJ88inU-Pr2MX3TLT7i7KPaad5RAYP5BZCXTKky_o/edit?usp=sharing)
2. To allow the SU sabbatical officers, NUS delegates, SU campaigns and student council members to contribute to the next steps of the process.

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## Renewal of UCU Strikes Policy

*Passed:* Hilary Term 2023

*Expires:* End of Hilary Term 2026

### Council Notes:

1. Oxford UCU has voted to strike over pay and working conditions for 13 days of term (and 5 days outside term) between 1st February and 2nd March 2023.
2. The SU supported previous UCU strike action over pensions in Hilary 2018, Michaelmas 2019, Hilary 2022 and Michaelmas 2022.
3. UCU represents over 120,000 academic, academic-related, and professional staff in the UK, including researchers, postgraduate researchers, teaching staff, and permanent lecturers.
4. Previous Council policy passed in Hilary 2018, affirming Oxford SU's support for and solidarity with strike action taken over pensions, and setting out Oxford SU's default position on future UCU strikes. This policy was then updated again in Michaelmas 2019.
5. Many graduate students are members of both UCU and Oxford SU. UCU membership for students is free.
6. Policy passed in Trinity 2017, which states Oxford SU's commitment to fair working conditions for graduate students who work, includes a commitment to working with UCU to best represent and support these students.

### Council Believes

1. That we have a responsibility to support this upcoming strike over issues of pay and working conditions.
2. The demands being made by Oxford UCU will be of benefit to graduate students who work, and who are some of the most exploited workers in the collegiate University.
3. That people should be paid enough to live decently, and that properly remunerated staff with secure and stable jobs are better placed to provide the excellence that the University of Oxford claims to promote. Fair pay and conditions for staff are non-negotiable.
4. In the principle of solidarity across unions, and that an injury to one is an injury to all.
5. Good working conditions creates good teaching conditions.

### Council Resolves

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For future potential strikes with UCU, Oxford SU will take the following as the default policy and action of solidarity:

1. To support the cause and organisation of the strike action and communicate this to the University.
2. To release a statement in full support of the UCU strike action.
3. To email all graduate students to encourage membership of UCU.
4. Liaise with UCU representatives.
5. To encourage students to respect the strike by not crossing the picket lines and not attending classes over this period except in the case of compulsory assessments. This could include, but is not limited to, producing materials including posters and leaflets to help explain to students what is happening and why our staff needs support.
6. To encourage students to participate in solidarity action as requested by UCU's Oxford branch including standing on picket lines and excluding non-attendance at compulsory assessment.

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## Campus Unions

*Passed:* Michaelmas Term Week 7 2023

*Expires:* End of Michaelmas Term 2026

Council Notes:

1. It is current SU Policy to support striking UCU staff members
2. Non-academic staff at the University and colleges are represented by other unions including Unite and Unison

Council Believes:

1. The SU should provide the same solidarity it does to non-academic staff as it does to academic staff
2. The SU should encourage all students to join a trade union if applicable

Council Resolves:

1. To make Appendix Eight Council Policy

Appendix Eight – Policy on Campus Unions

- 1) To mandate the President, VP Undergraduate Education and Access and VP Postgraduate Education and Access to coordinate a meeting at least once a term between themselves; any other relevant sabbatical officers; at least one representative each from Oxford UCU, Oxford University Unite and Oxford University & Colleges Unison; and any other representatives from any other unions representing staff in the university or its colleges to discuss how the SU can best support staff. b. For any strike action by any union representing staff (henceforth referred to as "the union") of the University or College(s) to take the following positions as default:
  - i) To support the cause and organisation of the strike action and communicate this to the University and/or College(s) and to students
  - ii) To release a statement in full support of the union's strike action
  - iii) To email all students encouraging membership of relevant trade unions (in both roles working for the University and/or College(s) and other employers), especially suggesting that graduate students join the UCU if possible
  - iv) Liaise with the union's representatives
  - v) To encourage students to respect the strike by not crossing the picket lines and not attending classes over this period except in the case of compulsory assessments. This could include, but is not limited to, producing materials including posters and leaflets to help explain to students what is happening and why our staff needs support, and should include emailing students to encourage them not to cross picket lines. vi. To encourage students to participate in



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solidarity action as requested by the union including standing on picket lines and excluding nonattendance at compulsory assessment.

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## Minimum Service Levels Act (Opposition to)

*Passed:* Michaelmas Term Week 7 2023

*Expires:* End of Michaelmas Term 2026

### Council Notes:

1. The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 (henceforth "The Act") gained royal assent in July 2023
2. The Act allows employers in certain sectors, including education, to enforce minimum service levels during strikes by demanding certain striking workers attend their workplaces
3. Employers are not legally required to do this
4. The TUC has described the Act as "draconian, unnecessary and unworkable" [1]
5. The UCU has also opposed the Act [2]

[1] <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/minimum-service-levels-issuing-work-notices>

[2] <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13212/Tory-minimum-service-levels-consultation-a-spitefulattack-on-workers-everywhere>

### Council Believes:

1. The Act is a draconian crackdown on worker's rights and must be opposed
2. Students should stand in solidarity with university strikes
3. Crackdowns on workers rights affect students as lecturer's working conditions are our learning conditions, and students will in the future make up the workforce

### Council Resolves:

1. To make SU policy to publicly oppose the Act, including publishing a statement criticising the Act
2. To make SU policy that: "The SU will publicly oppose any attempt of the University to enforce minimum service levels by giving work notices to any trade union during industrial action"
3. To mandate the SU President, SU VP Undergraduate Education & Access and SU VP Graduate Education & Access to lobby the University to publicly commit to not giving work notices to any trade union under any circumstance

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## Independence from OLDUT and Oxford Union Society

*Passed:* Trinity Term 2023

*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2026

### **Council Believes**

1. The Oxford Union Society is a Private Members' Club that does not fall under the jurisdiction of the University
2. The Oxford Union passed a motion in MT22 to ensure its independence from Oxford SU
3. The Oxford Union Governing Body Members can influence Oxford SU, whereas Oxford SU is not able to influence the Oxford Union. This has resulted in students unable to properly check Oxford Union matters related to bullying, sexual harassment, environmental impact and data privacy breaches via the SU.
4. This is currently an asymmetrical relationship.

### **Council Notes**

1. Oxford SU should promote organisations which have adequate provisions to protect all of its members

### **Council Resolves**

1. Mandate the SU to review its relationship with the Oxford Union, particularly with regard to its presence at Freshers' Fair

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## Keep Campsfield Closed

*Passed:* Hilary Term 2023

*Expires:* End of Hilary Term 2026

### **Council Notes:**

1. The government plans to reopen Campsfield House detention centre adjacent to Oxford University Science Park, Kidlington, contravening the commitment made by the Conservative government in 2016 to detain fewer people under immigration law for shorter periods and to pursue alternatives to detention.
2. That Campsfield House, along with three other detention centres, was closed down in the years following 2016. Pilot 'alternatives to detention' were run.
3. That the planned reopening of Campsfield House forms part of the government's plans to expand detention facilities, contradicting its 2016 commitment as above. These include: a. the use of military barracks to house asylum seekers; b. the opening of the 80-bed women-only Hassockfield/Derwentside detention centre in Durham in November 2021; c. the expansion of short-term holding facilities (STHFs) at Manston, Kent to detain asylum seekers and other migrants; d. deportation flights to Rwanda (currently suspended); e. the 2022 Nationality and Borders Act further criminalising people seeking asylum.
4. That the plans to reopen Campsfield have already met with significant political and civil opposition in the local area, including from Layla Moran MP; Oxford City Council; the Coalition to Keep Campsfield Closed.
5. That immigration detention has been widely condemned by reputable organisations as extremely damaging in terms of mental health, human rights and re-traumatisation.
6. That the site plans recently shared by the Home Office show a significant expansion of the site from its 2018 footprint with accommodation for 400 detainees.

### **Council Believes:**

1. That it is vital for students at Oxford University to engage with sociopolitical events taking place locally in Oxfordshire, and for student bodies to facilitate such community engagement.
2. That such engagement is necessary to recognise Oxford as a city where immense privilege and deprivation exist side-by-side.
3. That expanding the immigration detention estate, both locally and nationally, is not the answer to either regular or irregular migration, and that viable alternatives should continue to be explored.

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## Council Resolves

1. To mandate the relevant full-time officer(s) to actively work with student groups affiliated with the campaign to ensure that Union work is linked up with grassroots campaigners. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - a) Facilitating educational activity around the issues raised in this motion amongst students.
  - b) Sending a Union representative to the monthly meetings of the Coalition to Keep Campsfield closed.
2. To call on local and national government to reverse the decision to reopen Campsfield House detention centre. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - a) Disseminating an open letter addressed to the government, through Oxford University networks in collaboration with other local student groups.
  - b) Supporting and publicising public protests and petitions against the planned reopening.
3. To raise the demands in this motion with the NUS national executive and ask that these be added to their agenda.
4. To become a named member organisation of the Coalition to Keep Campsfield Closed.

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## Support of student-led action

*Passed:* Trinity Term 2023

*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2026

### **Council Notes:**

1. Some Colleges charge some students in excess of £7,500.00 per year for rent for just 27 weeks of housing. This housing is frequently of poor quality, with some students at Exeter College complaining of cockroach infestations.
2. Students in the University of Manchester successfully used rent strikes and occupations to secure a 30% cut in their rent. In addition, in recent years there have been successful rent strikes at UCL, Cambridge, Sheffield and elsewhere.
3. Following a student occupation, Cambridge University renamed their BP institute to the Institute for Energy and Environmental Flows.
4. The SU has several extant policies that directly or indirectly urge the university and colleges to perform actions they have not currently performed. This includes, but is not limited to: preventing the use of NDAs against victims in sexual violence cases; the abolition of continuation fees and the severance of ties between the university and the arms trade.

### **Council Believes:**

1. Rent strikes, boycotts, occupations and other forms of direct action are historically successful ways of getting universities to accept student demands.
2. When students take direct action it is often without the full backing of the Students Union.
3. Statements of support from the Students Union would allow the actions to reach more students. It would break the stigma that only radical and politically engaged students can partake in these actions and will make actions more accessible. Support from the Students Union will encourage more students to get involved, ultimately resulting in a higher chance of winning the action taken by students.
4. Furthermore, universities often respond unfairly to legitimate actions taken by students, the official support of the Students Union can reduce the chances of this happening.
5. Additionally, support for actions like these will allow the student body, in turn, to better support our sabbatical officers going into negotiations with the university.

### **Council Resolves:**

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1. To make the following policy: 'Any rent strike action, boycott of university or college services, demonstration, occupation/sit-in action, or other similar action taken by students to encourage the University or any of its constituent Colleges to better the state of housing, or a campaign the Students Union has signed a letter in favour of, required sabbatical officers to advocate for, has a policy in support of or otherwise democratically decided (which need not involve a formal vote or motion to that effect) to be in favour of, shall be supported by the Students Union.'
2. This should come in the form of, but would not be limited to, supporting students through the action with kind words and advice, publicly stating that the Student Union supports the action by advertising it, releasing official statements of support and providing any students who face disciplinary action for their involvement in such actions with support to the best of their ability-including public support if the students in question wish for this - during that disciplinary process.'
3. The SU should continue to provide rent negotiation support to all JCRs and MCRs, and provide public support to renters unions.
4. To mandate the President-elect and VP-elect (Activities and Community) to further consider this policy, its implementation and any appropriate future amendments

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## Gender Neutral & Accessible Toilets

*Passed:* Michaelmas Term 2023

*Expires:* End of Michaelmas Term 2026

### **Council Notes:**

1. Toilets in the SU and some, but not all, College and University buildings are gender neutral
2. Gender neutral toilets allow trans, non-binary and gender-non-conforming students and staff to feel safe and comfortable in using the toilet and in spaces more broadly
3. Where gender neutral toilets are not available, trans, non-binary and gender-non-conforming students may not be able to safely attend an event
4. Where gender neutral toilets are available, but there are additional barriers to their access (such as having to ask someone for a key) trans, non-binary and gender-non-conforming students may not feel comfortable attending an event
5. Where disabled toilets are available, but there are additional barriers to their access (such as having to ask someone for a key or such toilets requiring a RADAR key) disabled students may not feel comfortable attending an event
6. Where gender-neutral toilets are available but alongside gendered toilets, trans, non-binary and gender-non-conforming students may feel uncomfortable in having to, to some extent, out themselves, by using gender-neutral toilets. Furthermore such toilets are frequently further away than other toilets owing to there being less of them.

### **Council Believes:**

1. That disabled students and trans, non-binary and gender-non-conforming students deserve to feel safe and comfortable
2. That the SU should seek to provide disabled without additional barriers to access (such as having to ask someone for a key or such toilets requiring a RADAR key) at all events
3. That the SU should seek to provide gender-neutral toilets without additional barriers to access (such as having to ask someone for a key) at all events
4. That the SU should attempt to make as many toilets as possible gender-neutral

### **Council Resolves:**

1. To make the following SU Policy:



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- a) Every event the SU, a campaign, or a sabbatical officer holds should, if possible, be held in a venue with disabled and gender-neutral toilets (separately) that do not have additional barriers to access (such as having to ask someone for a key or such toilets requiring a RADAR key). Ideally all toilets in such venues should be gender neutral.
- b) If an event is held in a venue without disabled and gender-neutral toilets that do not have additional barriers to access, a written record of the reasons why providing such toilets was not possible should be published on the SU website
- c) If the SU hires out a whole building for an event, the SU should affix signs reading "gender neutral toilets" to all toilets accessible to event guests, with the potential to indicate some toilets as being disabled toilets and some toilets having urinals available if relevant
- d) The SU, and the VP Undergraduate Education and Access and VP Postgraduate Education and Access in particular, should lobby the University and Colleges to provide disabled and gender-neutral toilets (separately) that do not have additional barriers to access (such as having to ask someone for a key or such toilets requiring a RADAR key), and further to convert all toilets to gender neutral toilets
- e) That the SU, and the VP Undergraduate Education and Access and VP Postgraduate Education and Access in particular, should proactively work with JCRs and MCRs to lobby Colleges to make the changes outlined in (d), including but not limited to the creation and distribution of example motions

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## Organising a Second-Hand Sub Fusc Scheme

*Passed:* Hilary Term Week 3 2024

*Expires:* End of Hilary Term 2027

### Council Notes

1. Due to the withdrawal of various partnership organisations, the second-hand subfusc scheme for first year, disadvantaged students was discontinued this year.
2. The VP UG Education and Access, The Crankstart Council and Class Act worked to quickly implement a form of substitute, however demand was extremely high and supplies quickly ran out.
3. The scale and demands of such a full replacement scheme are difficult for a single committee of volunteer students to complete themselves
4. The SU has organised many clothes swaps and charity collections over the past few years.

### Student Council Believes

1. Sub-fusc presents an additional cost, and confusing cultural barrier for many disadvantaged students
2. Second hand clothing schemes reduce consumption and waste, and hence have environmental barriers
3. A second-hand subfusc scheme presents a chance to reduce the university's class barriers and environmental footprint, and is exactly the kind of project the SU should be running given its position as a central organising body between colleges.

### Student Council Resolves

1. Mandates the VP UG Education and Access and the VP Activities and Community to, and makes policy that the SU should:
  - a. Organise a scheme for disadvantaged students to collect free, second hand subfusc at the beginning of the academic year
  - b. Coordinate and work with the Class Act Campaign, and Crankstart Scholars Council to organise such.
  - c. Work with JCR committees across all colleges to collect donations of subfusc from finalist students following their final exams in Trinity Term
  - d. Obtain funding to purchase second-hand subfusc at a low cost from sources such as charity shops. Coordinate and partner with local businesses to obtain such.
  - e. Ensure that this is well publicised to freshers via social media, JCR Committees, partnership organisations and through any other means appropriate.

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- f. Ensure the scheme is publicised sufficiently to OppOx students in summer, as many buy their subfusc before they are aware of such scheme

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## Undergraduate Admissions Testing

*Passed:* Trinity Term 2025

*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2028

This Conference notes that colleges have recently been surveyed on the prospect of charging applicants to sit Oxford-only admissions tests following the expiration of a 2-year contract for admissions testing with Pearson VUE at the end of the coming admissions cycle.

Colleges have been asked whether they would in principle approve charging applicants for Oxford-only tests (based on rough estimates of the probable cost per applicant, with responsibility of fee waiver structures sitting under Admissions Committee) The SU VP for Undergraduates sits on AdCom and has therefore already been involved in the discussions so far around this issue.

This motion seeks to establish a collective position, so that the SU can negotiate with the support of CCR and seek outcomes that will support the university's access goals, without imposing infeasible costs on individual colleges.

This Conference therefore mandates the SU to:

- Advocate for other, more cost-effective alternatives to Oxford-only testing, including collaboration with other similarly selective universities;
- Ensure that any testing structure decided gives applicants access to a range of free and accessible resources to independently prepare for admissions tests (such as past papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports);
- Oppose placing the whole cost burden of testing onto colleges, since this would exacerbate college disparities and disincentivise open offers;
- In the event that charging applicants is found to be absolutely necessary in order to continue effective testing, uphold the requirement for a fee waiver system. Such a system must be generous, inclusive and administratively simple for applicants (ideally automatic), to prevent the psychological barriers to Oxford applications from becoming any higher than they already are and to uphold the University's responsibility to follow its access policies and meet targets;
- Put pressure on divisions and departments to collect data on the efficacy of specific admissions tests, and reconsider the need for such tests where the data shows that the tests are neither useful predictors of degree performance, necessary for shortlisting nor positive contributors to access and inclusion targets.

## Oxford Overseas Fee Increases

*Passed:* Trinity Term 2025

*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2028

### **We note that:**

After signing a Financial Declaration which stated that annual fee increases “will not exceed 6%<sup>1</sup> each year, or Consumer Price Index (CPI) if higher”, second-year overseas students were surprised to find their 2024–2025 fees raised by 9.9%. (This meant, for instance, that lab science students were charged an annual fee of £48,620 instead of £46,894.) A check revealed that CPI rates over the same period ranged from 4.7% to 1.7%.

Concerned with the unexpected rise in fees, second-year lab science students from University College contacted the university fees and funding team asking them to explain the discrepancy. The university responded that it used the annual CPI rate from August 2022, i.e. two years prior to the payment date, covering the period from September 2021 to August 2022. This was particularly suspect given that the increase was not factored into the estimated fees in the Financial Declaration forms, which were sent to students in March 2023.

After sustained correspondence with the Oxford administration, including with support from the Student Union, overseas students were pleased to receive a letter on February 27th, 2025 from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education. It stated that they had been overcharged for the 2024–2025 fees and would receive a reimbursement (as part of the 2025 TT battels)<sup>2</sup>. We believe that this reimbursement has been given to all continuing overseas students (i.e. 2nd to 4th year students).

Though this specific issue has now been addressed, the case has led us to assess the policies and practices around overseas tuition fees (including by comparing with those at Cambridge University). We are particularly concerned with the question of fee increases for continuing students, i.e. increases in fees during the course of study.

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### **We believe that:**

- 1. When speaking about increases in student fees, it is important to differentiate increases in entry fees for incoming students from year to year from annual fee increases on already enrolled students.**

The fact that Oxford has granted itself not only the possibility to raise fees on incoming students but also a wide latitude to raise fees for students who are mid-stream in their studies is extremely problematic. It should be a priority to end the variable annual fee increases for continuing students so that students entering the programme will already know the financial commitment they are making for their

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entire tenure. It is also essential information when choosing a university. (*NOTE: Cambridge fixes fees at the moment of entry.*)

### 2. **The current overseas fee system is only loosely linked to the actual cost of educating these students.**

Unlike home-fees students, overseas students are no longer beneficiaries of government largesse but are now consumers in a profit-driven system.

Not only is it clear that overseas students are now subsidising home students (by tens of thousands of GBP per student per year), but it has also become evident that fee increases and differences in fees between courses are no longer linked to course costs. These are instead driven by perceptions of what the market will bear. As such, overseas students deserve the full protections granted to other consumers in the UK, including: a clear contractual basis for the relationship; sound and transparent administrative practice in carrying out the contract; and clear communication of important information through appropriate channels.

### 3. **In the longer term, the status of overseas undergraduate students in the UK should be reevaluated.**

This is particularly true as overseas undergraduates are now substantial contributors to UK higher education, subsidising the system far beyond the cost of their own education. As such, overseas students paying into the UK undergraduate system should be given a real path to further study and work in the UK, more in line with British students (e.g. the possibility of funding for graduate studies and expanded opportunities for work visas).

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#### **We propose that:**

##### 1. **With regard to overseas students entering in the future...**

- Entry fees can be freely set by the administration through its regular consultation process, but fees should remain fixed after entry (as at Cambridge), i.e. the annual fee rises for continuing students should be scrapped.<sup>3</sup>
- As a transitional measure, fee increases for continuing students may continue, but these must be capped at a maximum of 4% each year (returning to previous practice and safely above CPI).
- Importantly, CPI should no longer be used to determine fee rises as it is variable and the university has shown itself unable to use up-to-date rates due to the constraints of its fee setting procedure.

##### 2. **Financial Declaration contracts sent to entering students should contain all relevant legal and administrative information on fees and fee increases** (without recourse to

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external websites or documents). Financial Declaration contracts should also explicitly state the full fees for the 3 or 4 years of study.

- 3. Information about fees and fee increases, previously communicated through Students News or buried in websites, should be communicated directly to overseas students**, according to standard administrative and financial practice.

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To conclude, we ask that more fair, transparent, and predictable fee setting policies and practices be put in place for future students. We think it important for the SU to represent these positions in the relevant committee meetings and bilateral discussions with the Oxford Administration. In the longer term, it is also important for the SU to set up regular channels to consult and involve overseas students in order to better represent them in the annual fee setting cycle.

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<sup>1</sup> In earlier years, increases never went beyond 3% until 2019 and 4% from 2020 through 2023.

<sup>2</sup> On February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the university committed to reimbursing students the fees paid in 2024 over and above a 6.7% increase for that year. (6.7% was the CPI from September 2023, when the 2024 fees were published online.)

<sup>3</sup> Note that the university is still able to make up any shortfall in funding through increases in entry fees.

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## EIRRS Position

*Passed:* Trinity Term 2025

*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2028

### Mandate for Ethical Investment Reform Based on Student Consultation

#### Policy Statement

Oxford SU conducted a student consultation in Hilary Term 2025 to inform its official submission to the University's Ethical Investment Representations Review Subcommittee (EIRRS), which is reviewing the University's ban on investing in companies that manufacture illegal arms.

The consultation included:

- An open online submission form (3–24 February 2025)
- A webinar with EIRRS and OUem representatives (17 February 2025)

The aim was to gather a range of student perspectives on whether current arms investment restrictions should be retained, expanded, or revised. The consultation is now closed, and the SU's final submission — based entirely on student input — has been sent to EIRRS. (The final SU submission can be found below the line.)

#### Policy Beliefs

- The University must take an ethical, student-informed stance on investment, consistent with its global leadership and social responsibility.
- Restrictions on 'direct investment' alone are insufficient, as most investment is indirect.
- Transparency and accessible reporting on investments are essential.
- Students must be meaningfully engaged in all investment-related decisions.

#### Summary of Key Themes from Student Submissions

- **Call for Full Arms Divestment:** Many students support complete divestment from arms companies, citing ethics and Oxford's global influence.
- **Criticism of Current Policy Wording:** The current narrow prohibition is seen as ineffective due to a focus on "direct" investments.
- **Support for Expanded Restrictions:** Some students advocated extending bans to firms linked to illegal settlements or certain regimes.
- **Moral Use of Funds:** There is strong concern that student tuition should not support the arms trade.
- **Transparency:** Students want more accessible, detailed reporting on University investments.
- **Broader Ethical Concerns:** Submissions also called for avoidance of investments linked to fossil fuels, forced labour, and environmental degradation.



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## Policy Mandates

In response to the University's review of its Investment Policy regarding arms investments, and following extensive consultation with students, Oxford SU and its Sabbatical Officers are mandated to advocate for the following core policy changes as a minimum standard for divestment:

### 1. Expansion from Direct to Indirect Divestment

In answering the question (presented by the EIRRS consultation), "Which of the principles set out in the previous debate no longer apply and why?" Oxford SU argues that the principle of limiting the investment restriction only to direct holdings is outdated and ineffective.

- The University does not typically hold direct investments, making the existing policy largely symbolic.
- To ensure meaningful ethical investment, Oxford SU will push for the current prohibition on direct investments in illegal arms companies to be extended to include indirect investments — such as funds or portfolios that include such companies.
- This step is essential to align the University's actions with its stated ethical values and to ensure the university is not complicit in supporting harmful industries.

### 2. Broader Definition of 'Controversial Weapons'

In response to the question, "What should be considered a 'controversial weapon' beyond those already banned under UK law?" Oxford SU argues there are significant limitations relying solely on UK law, which may not fully reflect international human rights or humanitarian concerns.

- Student submissions strongly supported extending the definition of "controversial" to include weapons not currently illegal under UK law but widely condemned — such as white phosphorus.
- Additionally, Oxford SU will advocate for the University to consider ethical divestment from companies complicit in activity which has been deemed to have violated international human rights.

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## Dark Skies

*Passed:* Trinity Term 2025

*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2028

### **Mandate for Oxford SU to Oppose Street Lighting Reductions and Campaign for Safer Night-Time Conditions**

#### **Policy Statement**

Oxford SU strongly opposes Oxfordshire County Council's proposed reductions to street lighting between 11:30pm–5:30am in rural areas and midnight–5:30am in urban areas. These reductions pose serious safety, accessibility, and wellbeing risks to students living, studying, and working across Oxford and surrounding areas.

Oxford SU and Oxford Brookes Union have raised concerns about the lack of meaningful student consultation and reject the Equality Impact Assessment's claim that such changes would have "no impact" on protected groups — a conclusion that is unsubstantiated and deeply concerning. While we welcome the deferral of this decision and the commitment to further review, Oxford SU maintains that no change should be made without full student engagement and safeguarding of night-time safety.

#### **Policy Beliefs**

- Street lighting is essential for student safety, particularly in residential areas and routes to hospitals, schools, and workplaces.
- Reductions in lighting will negatively impact Oxford's night-time economy and students' access to it.
- Students commuting late at night or early in the morning — including those on placements — are at increased risk in poorly lit environments.
- The Council failed to adequately consult student communities, who are particularly vulnerable to such changes.
- The Equality Impact Assessment does not sufficiently recognise the disproportionate effects on women, disabled students, and trans students.
- Given that changes will be implemented upon community request, students must be equipped and empowered to prevent lighting reductions locally.

#### **Policy Mandates**

Oxford SU and its Sabbatical Officers are mandated to:

- Campaign against all proposed reductions to street lighting in areas affecting students and advocate for maintaining current provision.
- Issue a public joint statement with Oxford Brookes Union restating student concerns and demanding prioritisation of safety.
- Attend all relevant Oxfordshire County Council meetings and consultations to represent

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student interests.

- Collaborate with Common Rooms and campaigns to identify at-risk areas (e.g. Cowley, South Park, hospital routes) and secure exemptions from any Part Night Lighting (PNL) schemes.
- Launch a student-facing campaign ahead of the May 2025 consultation, including:
  - Guidance on consultation participation
  - Information on writing to local councillors
  - Engagement events and awareness materials
- Lobby for a revised Equality Impact Assessment that fully reflects student safety needs, including those of women, disabled, and trans students.
- Monitor and report on local-level lighting proposals and support student efforts to oppose reductions through campaigning and training.

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## Supreme Court Ruling

*Passed:* Trinity Term 2025

*Expires:* End of Trinity Term 2028

### **Mandate to Reaffirm Support for Trans Rights and Oppose Regressive Legal Interpretations**

#### **Policy Statement**

Oxford SU reaffirms its full commitment to the rights, safety, dignity, and health and wellbeing of trans, non-binary, and intersex students across the University. In light of the UK Supreme Court's recent ruling on the Equality Act 2010 — which upholds the legality of excluding individuals from gender-segregated spaces on the basis of sex assigned at birth — Oxford SU expresses deep concern about the ruling's implications for trans and intersex inclusion, student welfare, and institutional values. Transphobia, and any kind of discrimination, remains unacceptable.

This ruling does not mandate the exclusion of trans people, nor does it require institutions to discriminate. If a university chooses to implement policies that restrict student access to facilities based on sex assigned at birth, this is an active and discretionary decision — not currently a legal requirement. The University must take ownership of such choices and the harm they cause, rather than passively attributing them to legal constraint.

Oxford SU is alarmed by the lack of clear statements from many UK universities, including Oxford, which has illustrated a pattern of risk aversion over principled support for its own students and staff. As a globally influential institution, Oxford has a duty not only to lead the higher education sector in equity and student wellbeing, but also to uphold academic integrity by engaging critically with the legal and scientific claims underpinning this ruling.

The British Medical Association (BMA) has already challenged the biological essentialism underpinning recent policy and legal discourse. The BMA has emphasised that biological sex is not a binary, immutable concept, and policies grounded in such assumptions lack both medical and scientific credibility. Oxford, as a centre of academic excellence, must reflect these realities in its institutional responses and policy frameworks.

Furthermore, the ruling has direct consequences for the intersex community, who may not be easily categorised within binary sex classifications. Exclusionary interpretations based solely on birth sex risk reinforcing harmful practices such as sex assignment without consent and institutional erasure of intersex experiences. Oxford must resist any policies that rely on rigid sex definitions, which actively undermine the rights and dignity of intersex individuals.

#### **Policy Beliefs**

- Trans and intersex students are at heightened risk of discrimination, mental health challenges, and institutional exclusion.

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- The University must lead the sector in trans- and intersex-inclusive practices, not merely comply with legal minimums.
- Trans students must continue to be able to safely access toilets, accommodation, and services aligned with their gender identity.
- The availability of gender-neutral toilets is a basic matter of dignity, accessibility, and inclusion.
- Gender-neutral facilities should be widely available as a default, not an afterthought, and we must critically reflect on how spatial design upholds or challenges normative gender boundaries. The Supreme Court ruling does not compel exclusion or discrimination; institutions must take responsibility for how they choose to interpret and implement it.
- Oxford SU has a responsibility to challenge any structural change that undermines the rights and wellbeing of trans and intersex students.
- Oxford must be a leader in academic integrity and evidence-based policy, aligning with medical bodies, such as the BMA, in rejecting reductive and scientifically inaccurate definitions of sex.

### Policy Mandates

Oxford SU and its Sabbatical Officers are mandated to:

- Campaign across central and college levels for the protection and expansion of trans- and intersex-inclusive policies and practices.
- Engage Common Rooms, governing bodies, and senior leadership to:
  - Ensure explicit protection of trans and intersex students' rights
  - Expand and signpost gender-neutral toilets across the University
  - Coordinate a University-wide campaign clarifying that Oxford will not adopt exclusionary interpretations of the Equality Act
- Work with the Equality and Diversity Unit, LGBTQ+ Society, and relevant University offices to:
  - Strengthen policy frameworks
  - Ensure guidance explicitly protects access to gender-appropriate and gender-neutral facilities
- Report regularly to the Conference of Common Rooms on mandate progress with timelines and deliverables
- Embed trans and intersex rights in all lobbying, policy work, and strategic planning
- Publicly and internally oppose any attempt by colleges or departments to regress on current protections

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- Hold the University accountable for choices that compromise the safety, dignity, or inclusion of its students.