

ST. HUGH'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

Date Policy Ratified by Governing Body: 4 November 2026

Responsible Committee: EDI Committee

Date to be reviewed by: 4 November 2027

St Hugh's College
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2026–2031

This Strategy has been developed to operate in accordance with, and is subordinate to, the College's EDI Policy.

Introduction

Since its foundation, St Hugh's College has had a clear mission: to extend educational opportunity to those for whom it had historically been out of reach. Established in 1886 to educate women whose families were unable to afford an Oxford education, the College was founded as an academic institution with a socially transformative purpose.

That founding mission remains deeply relevant today. Although the College and its context have evolved, inequalities persist across many dimensions of society. The College's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is therefore not a departure from its history, but a continuation and expansion of its original mission.

Our EDI strategy builds on this legacy by recognising that excellence in teaching, learning and research is strengthened by a community that draws on different experiences and perspectives. We aim to create an environment in which everyone has fair access to opportunity and can thrive academically, professionally and personally. This requires us both to remove barriers and to foster a strong community within which people are treated courteously and supported.

Context

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination, harassment and victimisation in employment, education and the provision of services. It protects people from discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

As a public authority for these purposes, the College must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The College is also a registered charity. In developing and governing its EDI work, it will take into account both the Charity Governance Code and the legal responsibilities of its Governing Body of Trustees.

Our ambition goes beyond mere legal compliance. Insofar as it can be consistent with the College's legal obligations, it also includes circumstances and identities not expressly or fully captured by the statutory protected characteristics, including (but not limited to) socioeconomic disadvantage, neurodivergence, caring responsibilities and estrangement -- factors that affect staff and students alike. The College also values diversity of thought and

wants to build an environment in which all members of the college feel able to express themselves and their opinions freely.

What we mean by EDI

Equality means fair treatment and equality of opportunity, ensuring that people are not disadvantaged by unfair treatment, structures or practices. Equality does not always mean treating everyone identically: it may require the removal of barriers and proportionate action to meet different needs.

Diversity means embracing the range of human differences, identities and backgrounds within our community. These include, but are not limited to, the protected characteristics, the wider circumstances identified above, and our thoughts and opinions. We value diversity, including viewpoint diversity, because we value the experiences and perspectives that people from different backgrounds bring to our organisation.

Inclusion means creating an environment in which people are treated courteously, can participate fully, have fair access to resources and opportunities, and are supported to contribute as themselves.

Our EDI vision

Our vision is for St Hugh's to be an equal, diverse, and inclusive academic community in which students, staff and fellows are treated courteously, have fair access to opportunity, feel able to participate, and are supported to achieve their potential on their own terms.

In pursuing this vision, the College will listen to its members and use proportionate quantitative and qualitative evidence; recognise that identities and circumstances intersect; respect academic freedom and lawful freedom of speech; protect confidentiality and personal data; and be transparent about priorities, progress and areas requiring further work.

Our strategic objectives

Our EDI strategy is focused on achieving the following four objectives:

Our students: remove unjustified barriers to access, participation and progression for underrepresented and less advantaged groups, and ensure that students can find and use the academic, financial, disability and welfare support that they need to thrive.

Our staff and fellows: recruit, retain, develop and support a diverse workforce through fair access to opportunity and progression, accessible working practices, and an inclusive environment.

Our community: build a welcoming College culture that values diversity, strengthens participation and mutual toleration, and responds effectively to discrimination, bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.

Our governance and leadership: embed equality considerations, and clear accountability in governance, decision making, policy development and resource allocation.

Our delivery model: Act Now and Build the Data

This Strategy will be delivered through two complementary tracks. The College will act immediately where needs are already evident, where action follows from its legal duties. At the same time, it will build a reliable evidence base to refine its priorities, set meaningful measures, and evaluate impact.

'Track 1 — Act Now' begins justified improvements from the outset and monitors their implementation. 'Track 2 — Build the Data' maps existing information, establishes baselines, listens to its people, identifies gaps, and evaluates whether interventions work.

This Strategy sets the enduring mission, principles, objectives, governance practices, and intended outcomes for 2026–31. A separate annual EDI Delivery Plan will bring the two tracks together by specifying actions, owners, timescales, and resources, allowing implementation to be adapted in response to evidence and experience without reopening the Strategy each year.

Track 1 — Act Now

During Year 1, the College will begin the following work without waiting for completion of the baseline exercise. These priorities are already justified by legal duties, known needs or established good practice, and will be translated into a Delivery Plan with named owners, timescales, resources and measures.

Our students

Goal: Ensure that students can find and use the academic, financial, disability and welfare support they need, and that known barriers in College-controlled processes are addressed; ensure that future students are aware of potential College assistance in order to increase the inflow of direct applicants based on academic merit alone; further celebrate diversity.
Initial Focus: Awareness and ease of accessibility of resources as reported by students; use of resources identified from the Support Database; timeliness and effectiveness of any reasonable adjustments which are introduced or remain in place, identified through audit; qualitative feedback on participation and inclusion; and quantitative feedback on attendance at EDI-related events (such as themed formal hall dinners).
Actions:

- Make information about academic, financial, disability and welfare support accessible, easy to find, and clearly signposted for both current and future students.
- Improve the timeliness, consistency and transparency of reasonable adjustment processes.
- Review accessibility of key information by seeking student feedback and outreach feedback.
- Work with students to identify themes for formal hall and other celebratory events.

Our fellows

Goal: Recruit, retain, develop and support a diverse fellowship through fair, transparent and accessible recruitment and retention processes.
Initial Focus: Composition of applicant pools, shortlists and appointments; recruitment routes; progression, retention and experience; and completion of agreed process reviews.
Actions:

- Review recruitment pipelines, role descriptions, person specifications, advertising and selection processes to identify and mitigate against potential bias and to remove unjustified barriers to diverse recruitment.
- Support consistent, role-appropriate training for those involved in selection processes.
- Use appropriately constituted panels while avoiding disproportionate burdens on underrepresented fellows.
- Monitor recruitment outcomes and report progress to the EDI Committee.
- Initiate work to make development and progression routes transparent and accessible.

Our staff

Goal: Develop a reliable understanding of workforce diversity and staff experience while improving fairness, accessibility and consistency in employment practices.

Initial Focus: Workforce composition by role and grade; recruitment, promotion, development, retention and exit information; staff experience; confidence in raising concerns; and access to support.

Actions:

- Review and improve equality-monitoring arrangements and the quality of workforce data by improving the completeness, consistency and quality of data across key staff groups.
- Review recruitment, selection, progression and promotion processes to identify and address unjustified barriers, inconsistent practices and potential sources of bias, supporting fair and transparent opportunities for staff.
- Develop a consistent approach to gathering staff experience data, including regular opportunities for staff to provide feedback on inclusion, belonging, fairness, and access to opportunities with findings considered by staff group and other relevant characteristics.

Our community

Goal: Build a welcoming culture in which people can participate, are treated with courtesy, and can raise concerns safely and confidently.
Initial Focus: Participation and inclusion; awareness of policies and reporting routes; confidence in reporting; anonymised themes and timeliness from casework; experience of support; and uptake and usefulness of role-appropriate learning.
Actions:

- Improve awareness and visibility of the routes available to staff and students for reporting discrimination, bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct, including the external whistleblowing service and internal reporting routes, and ensure support for those affected.
- Improve the accessibility and inclusivity of college events, teaching-related activity and communications.
- Continue to improve physical and digital accessibility, drawing on feedback from disabled and neurodivergent members of the college community.

Our governance and leadership

Goal: Improve the representativeness and inclusiveness of Governing Body and core committees, beginning with areas of evidenced underrepresentation (gender and racial imbalance), monitoring both membership and participation.
Initial Focus: Composition and turnover; routes into leadership roles and committee service; experience of participation; consideration of EDI issues in major decisions; and delivery against agreed actions.
Actions:

- Ensure transparent selection processes are used to broaden routes into leadership roles and committee service while avoiding disproportionate burdens on underrepresented individuals.
- Introduce a prompt to consider how major policies and decisions affect EDI issues and record material considerations in decision papers.
- Assign owners, timescales, and resources to Delivery Plan actions and review progress regularly.

Track 2 — Build the Data

In the first year, we will map and quality-assure information already held by the College or (at least insofar as it is relevant) available from the University, identify any material gaps in it, and agree the minimum additional information needed. The Appendix sets out the initial measurement and evidence framework. Evidence will combine quantitative measures with surveys, consultation and other qualitative sources.

Where numbers and confidentiality permit, analysis will consider intersecting characteristics as well as aggregate patterns. Personal data will be collected and used only for a clear and lawful purpose, handled securely, and reported with appropriate suppression of small numbers.

Likely sources include:
- admissions, attainment, continuation and progression information;
- workforce, recruitment, promotion, retention and anonymised exit information;
- student, staff and Fellow surveys and proportionate qualitative enquiry;
- accessibility feedback;
- information on how people access available support;
- anonymised themes from complaints, harassment and casework processes; and
- Governing Body and core committee papers, decisions and minutes.

From evidence to action

Evidence will be used through a repeating cycle to: understand disparities and unjustified barriers; prioritise according to scale, severity, feasibility and the College's ability to make a difference; act through a defined intervention; evaluate process and outcomes; adapt, scale or stop activity in light of the findings.

Measures of success

Measures and targets will be agreed where justified by the baseline and will be interpreted alongside qualitative evidence. Success will be assessed across the following dimensions:
- Representation — who enters, works, progresses and participates.
- Experience — courtesy, inclusion, confidence in support and psychological safety.
- Outcomes — attainment, continuation, retention, progression and pay.
- Accessibility — the timeliness and effectiveness of adjustments and access to College activity.
- Safety — awareness, reporting and resolution of harassment, bullying and discrimination.
- Institutional practice — completion and impact of reviews of recruitment processes, consideration of EDI issues in decisions, and agreed actions.

Benchmarking will be used from the outset where comparisons are meaningful. Possible comparators include data from St Hugh's, the relevant University population, comparable Oxford colleges, relevant academic recruitment pools and national higher education.

Governance, accountability and reporting

Governing Body retains overall accountability for the EDI Strategy, and will approve the annual Delivery Plan and receive an annual EDI report. The EDI Committee, led by the EDI Lead, will: oversee implementation, ensuring this is coordinated and delivered in an operationally streamlined manner; scrutinise progress, risks and delayed actions; and make recommendations to Governing Body. Each Delivery Plan action will have an operational owner in the relevant part of the College.

The EDI Committee will receive progress reports at an agreed frequency and will escalate material risks, persistent delay or resource constraints through the College's normal governance routes. Governing Body will ensure that implementation is supported by proportionate staff time, expertise and financial resource.

The College will publish or otherwise make available an annual EDI report appropriate to its size and context. It will summarise activity, available evidence, progress against agreed measures, learning from interventions and priorities for the following year. Where evidence is incomplete, the report will say so.

Students, staff and fellows will have appropriate opportunities to contribute to priority-setting, implementation and review, with coordination between the different aspects to ensure operational efficiency. Engagement will be designed to avoid repeatedly burdening members of underrepresented groups with responsibility for institutional change.

Implementation timetable

Year 1 (2026–27)
- Approve the EDI Strategy, governance arrangements and ownership.
- Map and quality-assure existing data; agree definitions, gaps and data governance; begin baseline collection.
- Begin all Year 1 priority actions and agree the annual Delivery Plan.
- Establish feedback routes and initial measures.
- Publish or otherwise make available the first annual EDI Report.

Year 2 (2027–28)
- Complete the initial baseline where feasible and analyse quantitative and qualitative evidence.
- Agree measures and targets where justified.
- Refine priorities and launch or adjust targeted interventions.
- Review Year 1 implementation and early effects; update the Delivery Plan and annual report.

Years 3–4 (2028–30)
- Monitor trends, evaluate interventions and improve data quality.
- Benchmark where comparisons are meaningful.
- Continue, adapt, scale or stop interventions in the light of the evidence.
- Update the Delivery Plan and EDI Report annually.

Year 5 (2030–31)
- Evaluate progress over the strategy period, identify remaining evidence gaps, undertake external benchmarking where useful, publish a final review and refresh the Strategy.

APPENDIX: INITIAL MEASUREMENT AND EVIDENCE FRAMEWORK

This framework identifies information likely to be useful; it is not a commitment to collect or publish every item. Measures will be selected only where they serve a clear purpose, are proportionate, can be collected lawfully and safely, and can inform action. In a small community, qualitative evidence and careful suppression of small numbers will be especially important.

Our students

Remove barriers to student participation

Applicant, offer and entrant patterns, for undergraduate and graduate students where available, using appropriate measures of:

- nation and region;
- socioeconomic disadvantage;
- school background;
- caring responsibilities;
- care experience;
- sex;
- gender;
- ethnicity;
- disability;
- neurodivergence, recognising that it is not always disabling and may not be self-described as a disability;
- estrangement; and
- other relevant characteristics or circumstances where numbers permit.

Ensure students are supported

- Awareness, accessibility and use of academic, financial, disability and welfare support.
- Reasons for non-use and experience of support.
- Timeliness, consistency and effectiveness of reasonable adjustments.
- Experience of participation, courtesy, inclusion and ability to contribute.

Ensure students achieve their potential

- Attainment, continuation and progression patterns by relevant characteristics where numbers permit.
- Qualitative exploration of material disparities.

Our fellows

Recruit a diverse fellowship

- Composition of applicant pools, shortlists and appointments.
- Recruitment routes and completion and outcome patterns by relevant characteristics.
- Evidence of accessibility and consistency in recruitment processes.

Retain, develop and support a diverse fellowship

- Fellowship composition by role and career stage.
- Development, progression, retention and exit information.
- Pay-gap information, where meaningful and lawful.

- Feedback on inclusion, workload, flexibility, adjustments, confidence in raising concerns and access to support.

Our staff

Recruit a diverse workforce
- Composition of applicant pools, shortlists and appointments.
- Recruitment routes and completion and outcome patterns by relevant characteristics.
- Evidence of accessibility and consistency in recruitment processes.

Retain, develop and support a diverse workforce
- Workforce composition by role and grade.
- Promotion, development, retention and anonymised exit information.
- Pay-gap information, where meaningful and lawful.
- Staff feedback on inclusion, workload, flexibility, adjustments, confidence in raising concerns and access to support.

Our community

Participation and inclusion
- Participation in College activity and barriers to participation.
- Views on courtesy, inclusion, connection and the ability to contribute.
- Accessibility feedback on events, communications and College environments.

Harassment, discrimination and safety
- Awareness of policies, reporting routes and available support.
- Confidence in reporting bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct and discrimination.
- Anonymised themes, timeliness and experience of support from relevant casework.
- Material differences in experience between groups, where data can be reported safely.

Learning and capability
- Participation in role-appropriate EDI and accessibility training.
- Feedback on the usefulness and application of learning and practical guidance.

Our governance and leadership

Representation and participation
- Composition and turnover of Governing Body and core committees.
- Routes into leadership and committee service.
- Experience of participation, including whether contributions are heard and valued.

Inclusive decision-making
- Evidence that equality implications, accessibility and relevant consultation are considered in major policies and decisions.
- Evidence that material equality considerations are recorded in decision papers and minutes.

Accountability
- Completion and timeliness of Delivery Plan actions.
- Resources used, outcomes achieved and learning from interventions.
- Progress reports, escalated risks and themes raised by students, staff and fellows.

Indicative external benchmarks

- Previous St Hugh's performance.
- The relevant University of Oxford population.
- Comparable Oxford colleges.
- Relevant academic and professional recruitment pools.
- National higher-education data, where meaningful.