

# Education and research

**Vision:** A college where excellent teaching and research co-exist in a stimulating intellectual environment.

Throughout its history, education and research have been intricately linked at the Hall, along with an understanding that outstanding teaching is informed by research. At St Edmund Hall, we currently offer 30 degree subjects for study at undergraduate level (Figure 1) and have graduate students enrolled on 192 different courses.<sup>2</sup> The teaching for many of these subjects, particularly for undergraduates, is led by our subject tutors, many of whom are also internationally recognised research leaders.



English tutorial in St Edmund Hall, 2018

**30**

degree subjects  
studied at  
undergraduate  
level

**192**

different courses  
studied at  
graduate level

**396**

Undergraduates

**296**

Postgraduates

**40**

Visiting  
students

<sup>2</sup> Data as at 1/12/18



**Figure 1: Undergraduate student numbers by course and division for the 2018-19 academic year**

This close link between teaching and research is an incredibly important part of what makes a college education unique – yet, as in most colleges, this relationship is under constant threat at St Edmund Hall. A standard academic year sees in excess of 6,500 hours of tutorial teaching provided by our academic staff.<sup>3</sup> However, academics are increasingly judged on research output alone, with ever greater pressures on individuals to publish and obtain grant income. There is a danger that as Tutors trade off tutorial teaching time with research in departments, the activities that are critical for creating a unique teaching–research environment and enhancing subject cohesiveness in the Hall will be lost. There is a further concern that this tension may directly impact on the number of student applications from excellent candidates to study at the Hall and on their academic performance while they are here.

Reducing the administrative load on subject tutors is therefore critical to achieving much of the above.

Looking forwards, we therefore need to ensure that a close link between teaching and research is enhanced and supported across all disciplines in the Hall. We need to facilitate a research culture within the college that builds a community which is strongly engaged with the range of intellectual activities across the college.

We also need to increase visibility of the research activities of the college, for example by giving inspiring research talks at departmental and college open days and on school outreach visits. Steps have already been made towards this aim, with the inaugural Access Hall Areas event being held in the college in 2019 as a means of showcasing our research and ‘Hall spirit’ to the wider Oxford community, and the growth of the *Centre for the Creative Brain*, which brings together students and academics from a wide range of disciplines, providing an opportunity for discussion and dialogue. There should also be greater focus on communication of our research activities via digital media and other web-based platforms.

Our aim by 2030 is to attract outstanding first-choice students inspired by our teaching–research culture. Moreover, we aim to develop a system which provides data-driven analysis of their progress through the Hall to ensure that each individual student is supported throughout their time to achieve their best academic outcome. We also intend to add greater flexibility into the teaching–research system. For example, we will establish adjustable quotas on subjects/numbers and, as a result, when the number of good applications in a given cohort is low, we will take fewer and/or increase the numbers in another subject area.

In the longer term, we should aim to develop a principles-based, long-term strategy for subject mix to consider the ‘ideal’ for the college in terms of subject coherence and synergy over a horizon of more than ten years.

## To achieve these aims, we propose to undertake the following actions:

1. build an Early Career Teaching and Research Fellowship (ECTRF) programme, with ECTR Fellows appointed to help provide academic teaching and support activities in all main subject areas offered by the college;
2. set up a defined annual programme for each subject cohort (which spans from undergraduates and postgraduates to postdoctoral researchers, Tutors, Professorial Fellows and Emeritus Fellows), with a designated budget to include activities such as subject dinners, evening talks, project presentations, career and mentoring sessions;
3. create a graduate teaching fund to enable St Edmund Hall graduate students to help mentor and provide academic support to our undergraduates;
4. develop a systematic, data-driven approach to assess each student’s progress from school exams through to graduation so that there is better understanding of their trajectory and the support they require in order to achieve their best academic outcome;
5. increase the external visibility of our research activities through research weekends, Teddy Talks, seminars, *Access Hall Areas* college open events, and web-based blogs and research videos; and
6. establish an annual programme of regular interdisciplinary seminars in the college in order to create a stimulating intellectual culture with synergies and coherence between different academic disciplines.

<sup>3</sup> Data as at 09/08/2019. Collated from the Oxkort tutorial reporting system.



A St Edmund Hall College Lecturer talks about his research at the *Access Hall Areas* event in May 2019



'Neuroscience of Dance' during the *Centre for the Creative Brain* event in February 2019

# What will success look like in ten years?

## EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

- A student body achieving at least 40% first class degree results, with all student outcomes at II.2 or higher
- The first choice college for at least two thirds of the prospective undergraduate students that are considered for admission
- At least one Early Career Teaching and Research Fellowship (ECTRF) in each key subject area
- A strong research culture, with a defined annual programme of activities for each subject cohort
- Annual conference/symposium of interdisciplinary research on sustainability and environmentalism

## ACCESS AND DIVERSITY

- A student body of BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) undergraduates that at least mirrors the University average, with a target of reaching national average by 2030
- A proportion of students admitted from the two most socio-economically disadvantaged groups (ACORN categories 4 and 5) that at least mirrors the University average
- A proportion of on-course students with a declared disability in line with the University admissions target
- Annual equality and diversity training provided for Fellows, staff and students
- External accreditation (e.g. Athena Swan, Stonewall) gained as a marker of success

## FINANCE

- Cost to student of studying and living at St Edmund Hall is in the mid-point of other colleges
- All tutorial fellowships endowed
- Median endowment per student achieved by 2030
- Dedicated funds to remove any financial and/or other barriers to application and continued study at St Edmund Hall
- At least 40% of annual operating budget spent on teaching and research

## CULTURE

- A collaborative and creative approach to culture, involving students, academics, staff and alumni in all elements of college life
- A strong sense of shared space ownership across the college:
  - staff common room provided
  - increased use of the Wolfson Hall for concerts and other cultural events
- Annual college dinners to be held for events such as Thanksgiving, Chinese New Year, Diwali
- A dedicated Culture Fund for students covering arts, music, sciences and performances, encouraging diverse cultural activities
- Regular events with a focus on sustainability and environmentalism hosted at the college

## ESTATES

- St Edmund Hall recognised as the greenest and most environmentally sustainable college in Oxford including:
  - a zero-energy establishment
  - self-generated energy from a combination of rooftop solar panels, geothermal heat, air and/or water-sourced heat pumps and biodigesters
  - greatly reduced energy use through improved heating systems and insulation
  - eliminated use of single-use plastics
  - increased visible greenness in all college sites, e.g. green walls, rooftop gardens etc.
- New accommodation on existing college-owned land, providing a range of high-quality, affordable college-owned accommodation for all undergraduate and visiting students and all first-year graduate students
- All existing student rooms and accommodation of a good to excellent standard with 70% of rooms en-suite
- Under-utilised space opened up and repurposed for use in teaching, cultural activities and administration