



# Keble Access and Admissions Report

June 2020

*This is our second annual report to Fellows, college staff, students and alumni on our access and outreach activity in academic year 2018-19, as well as undergraduate admissions in the last round, December 2019.*

## Highlights:

- Keble hosted two events for UNIQ, the University's flagship access initiative; a residential programme for 58 students and a celebratory dinner for 250 people
- In July, we welcomed 50 participants in Target Oxbridge for two days
- We provided accommodation over the summer to 4 participants in the University's new access programme for graduates, UNIQ+
- We launched schemes to support travel expenses for attendance at Open Days and admissions interviews
- 70% of our undergraduate offers to UK applicants were to applicants from state schools, above the University average
- We made our first offers under the new Opportunity Oxford Programme
- Our offers to applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds and areas were well above target
- We hosted our first Teachers' Evening in Birmingham, exclusively aimed at teachers working in the state sector within our link region.

## Access and Outreach

### Our activities in 2018-19: summary information

We participated in 98 outreach events in 2018-19 of which:

- 94 were organised and run mainly by Keble
- 79 took place mainly at Keble (Key Stages 3-5)
- 14 were at schools in our link area (mainly Key Stages 4-5) and five were at other venues in our link area (mainly Key Stage 5), e.g. Higher Education fairs and Teachers' Evenings

548 schools were involved in these events

Our potential reach was more than 14,000 prospective applicants, including attendees at Higher Education fairs

We ran 52 full day programmes of which 31 were for individual schools; 77% of those have above national average pupils eligible for Free School Meals.

- 37 events involved years 12 and/or 13
- 26 events involved years 10 and/ or 11
- 13 events were with primary and/or years 7, 8, and 9

Our activities included:

- 64 inbound school visits to the College
- 9 events involving students from multiple schools, organised either with the Brilliant Club or the Pathways programme; these generally engage 80-100 students at a time.

### Key activities in 2018-19

#### **Year 13 Oxford and Cambridge Admissions Test and Interview Evenings 2019**

The main purpose of these events was to inform applicants about how best to prepare for admissions tests/written work/interviews at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Experience suggests that of all the hurdles faced by applicants, these are the most problematic.

210 prospective applicants from state schools in year 13 attended one of six separate after school sessions (each lasting 2.5 hours) hosted at various hub schools in Keble's link region. Of those 21% lived in POLAR4 quintiles 1-3 and 31% lived in ACORN areas 4 and 5 (the most disadvantaged). Almost half (102) went on to make an application to the University of Oxford.

#### **Keble at Large Application Information Day**

In May our students ran an event for 52 year 12 students from 17 different non-selective state schools in our linked region. During their stay, they were given subject specific advice and guidance about how to get ready for admissions tests and interviews. At least 28 Keble undergraduates were involved one way or another in the event.

#### **UNIQ at Keble July 2019**

UNIQ is the University's flagship access programme, open to students studying in their first year of further education based at UK state schools and colleges. Successful applicants attend a residential

course in Oxford, during which they attend lectures and seminars in their chosen subjects and receive expert advice on the admissions process.

We hosted 58 UNIQ participants at Keble in July for the four-night summer residential programme; 23 applied to the University in the following admissions round.

### **Target Oxbridge 2018-19**

Target Oxbridge is a free programme that aims to help black African and Caribbean students and students of mixed race with black African and Caribbean heritage to increase their chances of going to Oxford and Cambridge.

In July we hosted a two-day event for 50 participants in the programme, many of whom went on to apply. Two former Target Oxbridge participants have started at Keble this academic year

### **Teachers' Event at Mazars in Birmingham**

We ran an event for teachers from state schools in our link region, at which we offered advice on writing teacher references, as well as how to help their students get ready for admissions tests and interviews. We also took three Keble students with us to give them the chance to get their views on studying at Oxford. The feedback from the 30 or more teachers that attended was positive, and we would consider running similar events again.

### **Travel support**

We helped 18 prospective applicants to attend our Open Days in July and September by subsidising their travel. Our aim must be to increase awareness of this support since we did not use all of the funds available

## **The Access Project – Update**

We are working in partnership with the Access Project and Colmers School and Sixth Form College in Rednal, Birmingham. The Access Project programme. Participants, who are selected by the school, get support and one-to-one meetings from a University Access Officer and individual tuition in their chosen subject from mentors. This helps them build independence and confidence.

In the first full year of provision, we can report

- the 85% tutorial attendance last year was the best in the region
- satisfaction with partnership so far has been high
- Year 13 destinations at the early days of the programme at Colmers (months after we launched) Birmingham City University x2, University of Birmingham x3, University of Leicester, and University of Worcester.
- Across all TAP programmes two thirds of TAP students were placed at a top third university, with 13 at Oxbridge this year.

In 2019-20 the aim will be to try to broaden the horizons of university destinations for Colmers students, including to Oxford and Cambridge.

## Who did we reach?

Our access and outreach activities are focused on schools and neighbourhoods with either a low level of progression to Higher Education and/or higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage. The measures we use for these assessments, ACORN<sup>1</sup> and POLAR4<sup>2</sup>, have their limitations but they are specifically used in the University's Access and Participation Plan with the Office for Students. We are now making a more concerted effort to gather the information to allow us to monitor and inform our activities, although we are also very mindful of the needs of data privacy (especially where young people are involved).

### Participants living in a low HE Participation neighbourhood (POLAR4 Classification)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
Count	142	223	217	210	285
<b>% Total</b>	<b>13 %</b>	<b>21 %</b>	<b>20 %</b>	<b>19 %</b>	<b>26 %</b>

Based on 1077 known values. The overall average proportion of students participating in activities living in a POLAR4 Quartile 1 or Quartile 2 area is 34%.

### ACORN Classification

ACORN Category	Count	% Total
<b>1</b>	284	26 %
<b>2</b>	82	8 %
<b>3</b>	247	23 %
<b>4</b>	232	22 %
<b>5</b>	209	19 %
<b>6</b>	19	2 %

Based on 1073 values.

We do not have full or complete information on the gender and ethnicity of people involved in our activities, but from the information we do have we can say:

- 64% were female and 36% were male
- 47% were First Generation Higher Education
- 38% were BAME and 62% were White

<sup>1</sup> ACORN 1= Affluent Achievers; ACORN2 = Rising Prosperity, i.e. younger but wealthy households; ACORN 3 = comfortable communities, i.e. average incomes in rural, small town and suburban areas; ACORN 4 = financially stretched; ACORN 5 = urban adversity.

<sup>2</sup> POLAR4 is a measure of progression to Higher Education. In each local area in the UK the proportion of young people who go to University is calculated and then each area is categorised by quintile, i.e. five bands from highest to lowest participation rate. POLAR4 quintile 1 has the lowest level of progression.

## Evaluation of our activities

Although there are many logistical difficulties with evaluating our activities (as well as data privacy issues) it is important for us to find out how effective they are. Do we make a difference?

Over the three years 2016-19 we have been collating feedback surveys from school visits to the College. This is what they are telling us:

96% strongly or slightly agreed with the statement 'I now know more about university' (234 respondents)

94% Strongly or slightly agreed with the statement 'I now better understand what the interview at Oxford might involve and how to prepare for it' (69 respondents)

86% strongly or slightly agreed with the statement 'I now have a better idea overall of how I can prepare for applying to Oxford University' (80 respondents)

83% strongly or slightly agreed with the statement 'I now know more about the Oxford University admissions tests and how to prepare' (80 respondents)

From now on we'll be starting to use pre and post-event online forms in the hope that we'll get more reliable responses in higher numbers.

Numbers don't tell the whole story so here are a couple of written comments received from current Keble students who participated in Target Oxbridge and UNIQ before gaining a place:

### How did Target Oxbridge help you on your journey to Oxford?

*Target Oxbridge surrounded me with others from the same background as me. That, in itself, made me feel more comfortable with the application process because I knew that I was not alone: the proportion of black students at Oxford is significantly lower than that of my secondary school. Sometimes you just need a physical reminder that you are not alone and, for me, Target Oxbridge was that. I received support throughout my application process from others like me - including personal statement and interview workshops.*

### What did you get out of participating in UNIQ?

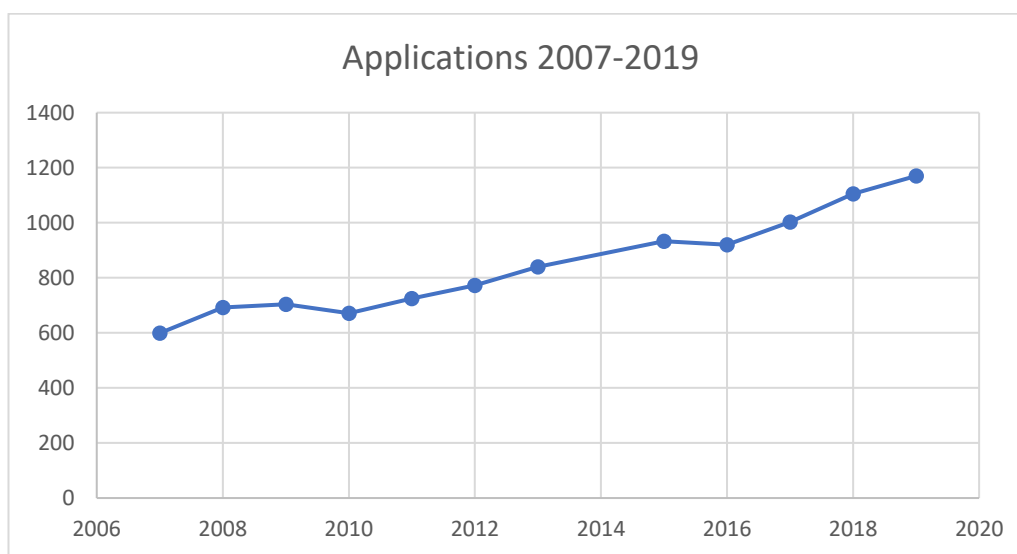
*By re-enacting a week in the life of a medical undergraduate student, I was able to gain my own feel for what Oxford would really be like. It helped to break stereotypes I had read about because I was able to form my own opinions first-hand, rather than based off of other people's opinions. I realised that I really liked the concept of tutorials when I sat through a sample one because they offered a more intimate way of learning and a way to push students to think more deeply. I saw that Oxford would stimulate students to reach their academic potential by experiencing it myself - which is what I had hoped for in a university. UNIQ was definitely a confidence-booster as it reassured me about my application.*

## Applications

Our outreach and access activities are designed to enable students to make good, informed decisions about their future and to encourage them to aim high. By providing support and guidance on the admissions process, we also try to enable students to make the best applications they can. If that leads to an offer at Keble we are understandably pleased, but we also encourage students to apply to whatever course, college, or University they think suits them best. Keble is only one college

at Oxford, and we work in concert with our colleagues across the University to achieve our common goals.

Keble has a lot of applicants and is one of the most popular colleges in Oxford. In the last admissions round we received 1201 applications, continuing the upwards trend of the past decade or more. The number of people applying to the College has doubled since 2007, although the number of places available has stayed more or less the same.



We are not able to interview all applicants and only around 40 per cent are shortlisted. This means that over 700 applicants are disappointed at this early stage, the vast majority of whom have achieved good grades at school and are predicted to do well in their end-of-school examinations. This year, however, shortlisting took more account of the individual circumstances of each student. In line with the University's new Access and Participation Plan, more detailed information was available on applicants and their schools, enabling tutors to make better judgements about their relative ability and potential. More information on how we use contextual data can be found on the University's website: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/decisions/contextual-data>.

Some subjects are consistently more popular than others and they attract high numbers of applicants relative to the number of places available. For Keble, the most popular subjects this year were Physics (141 applicants), Economics and Management (101), Mathematics, and Engineering Science (98 each). There is some reallocation of applicant between colleges before interviews to ensure as far as possible, that the ratio of candidates to places is about the same across all the colleges. It's worth remembering that about one third of undergraduates in Oxford attend a college to which they did not actually apply.

This year we made our highest number of offers ever, 162 (151 last year). Five of these were for 2021 entry and ten were open offers. We have found in the recent past that a higher proportion of offer-holders are either turning down their places or missing their grades, often by sizeable margins. In response, we're trying to make more offers. For applicants who narrowly miss their conditions, we can and do take account of mitigating circumstances. We write to schools before the results are out

to encourage them to let us know about whether someone's education was disrupted, for example by family situation or something at the school itself.

The University tries hard to make sure that college choice does not unduly influence the chances of being made an offer and that the most deserving applicants are placed. Different subjects have different ways of trying to do this, usually identifying people who would otherwise slip through the net. Among Keble's offers, 26 were to candidates who had applied to another college. Forty of Keble's applicants were made offers at a different college.

## Admissions

This year's undergraduate admissions round was the first to be carried out under the University's new Access and Participation Plan agreed with the Office for Students. The plan is available to be read here: [https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/UniversityOfOxford\\_APP\\_2020-21.pdf](https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/UniversityOfOxford_APP_2020-21.pdf).

Part of this plan ('participation') is about improving the performance of key groups while on course, notably by reducing or eliminating gaps in attainment. Part concerns access, how Oxford is going to address its well-known inequalities in admissions. A key element of this plan was the setting of new and more demanding targets for admitting students from areas of lower participation in higher education (POLAR4) and/or socio-economic disadvantage (ACORN), as well as from under-represented groups. The three main targets are:

- Target 1: to reduce the gap in participation rates for disadvantaged students (ACORN) to 3:1 by 2024-25.
- Target 2: to reduce the gap in participation rates for under-represented students (POLAR4) to 8:1 by 2024-25.
- Target 3: to eliminate the gap in offer rates for Asian applicants by 2021-22.

To this end, more and better information on applicants was made available and admissions processes were reformed to take full account of contextual data. Tutors received new and refresher training in admissions to help them make more informed decisions.

The University publishes an annual Admissions Statistical Report which is accessible from its website (from 23<sup>rd</sup> June). This report contains statistics about socio-economic disadvantage, gender and ethnicity, and school type for each subject and college. These figures are retrospective and they concern 'accepts', i.e. students who take up their places at the start of the year, rather than 'offers', i.e. students to whom offers have been made.

The following sections report on Keble's performance on some of the key access measures, with a focus on the most recent admissions round (which is not included in the University's report).

## Socio-economic disadvantage

We made four offers under the new Opportunity Oxford Programme. This is designed for applicants from under-represented backgrounds and areas who would otherwise just miss out on an offer. They will have the chance to undertake a part-residential course before taking up their place in

order to bridge the gap between school and University. This year there were around 100 places available on this programme across all the colleges.

There were eight offers to applicants from POLAR quintile 1 (against our provisional target of 4 accepts). The ratio of POLAR Q5:Q1 was 7.9:1 (and University 7.6:1). The target on *accepts* for 2024-25 for the University is a ratio of 8:1, so this suggest good progress.

There were 26 offers to applicants from ACORN 4 + 5 (against our provisional target of 12 accepts). The ratio of ACORN1: 4+5 was 2.5: 1 (and University 2.8:1). The target on *accepts* for 2024-25 for the University is ratio of 3:1.

Our performance on these measures, which are central to the University's access targets, was considerably better than in some previous years. On both counts, POLAR and ACORN, Keble's accepts had been below the University's average for 2017-19.

## School type

None of the University's access targets refer to the type of school applicants attend, i.e. state or independent. But there is, understandably, intense public scrutiny in this measure as a proxy for inequality. Last year, 67% of our final UK admissions were to applicants from state schools. This was notably higher than in the preceding five years, during which Keble was generally below the University average on this particular count.

Of offers made to applicants from the UK in the most recent round, 70 per cent were to students from state schools. For the second year in a row, this was clearly above the figure for the whole University. Taking account of all offers made (including to non-UK students), that was 58 per cent of all offers. This year, applicants from sixth-form colleges did particularly well; they were just under 10% of all applicants but almost 20% of offers.

The admissions data we get do not enable us to fully distinguish between selective and non-selective state schools.

## Race and Ethnicity

The third of the targets in the new Access and Participation plan is to eliminate the gap in offer rates for Asian applicants by 2021-22 (currently 4%). Progress on this count is not easy to monitor, because ethnicity is not systematically identified during the admissions process itself. When figures are made available, they refer to UK-domiciled undergraduates only.

Keble has a relatively high proportion of UK-domiciled undergraduates who self-identify as BME: 22.5% in 2017-19, compared with 19.4% for the University overall. The designation 'BME' masks considerable diversity. The share of Asian students (2017-19) was 10.7%; of students of Black African and/or Black Caribbean heritage was 2.9%; and mixed heritage students 8.1%. In all cases these are above average for the University.

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