Panel Guidance for University of Oxford submissions

The organisational and staffing structure of the University of Oxford is different from most other universities. This guidance provides additional information about those features that may be distinctive to Oxford to assist panel members in assessing Oxford submissions.

1. Collegiate system

Oxford is a collegiate university, consisting of the University itself and 38 colleges. All students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, and academic staff (but not all researchers) are members of a college.

The colleges are independent legal entities, governed by their own statutes and regulations, and are related to the University in a federal system. They:

- Select and admit undergraduate students, and provide them with tutorial teaching (weekly small group teaching).
- Provide accommodation, meals, common rooms, libraries, sports and social facilities, academic support and pastoral care for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The University comprises academic departments and research centres (organised into four divisions), administrative departments, libraries and museums. It:

- Determines curricula, organises lectures, seminars and laboratory work, sets and marks examinations, and awards degrees.
- Admits and supervises graduate students, and examines theses.
- Provides a wide range of resources for teaching and learning such as libraries, laboratories, museums and computing facilities.
- Provides centrally managed student services such as counselling and careers.

The University is the primary locus for Oxford’s extensive research activity and employs the majority of researchers, while colleges provide a supportive community, and host seminars and workshops.

2. Undergraduate admissions

Colleges select and admit undergraduates. Competition for places is strong and admissions are selective. Candidates apply to a preferred college via UCAS and are assessed by that college against a range of criteria including contextualised GSCE results, often an admissions test or written work, and (if they are shortlisted) at least two interviews, each carried out by at least two college tutors. Around 60% of applicants are interviewed.

Many academics involved in admissions decisions are jointly employed by their college and an academic department, and departments often play a role in co-ordinating applications across colleges. However, departments do not have direct control over which students receive offers and subsequently who arrives for registration at the start of the undergraduate course.

3. Academic staffing structure

Oxford’s distinct career structure is summarised below. It should be noted, however, that the University is highly devolved and that individual departments may differ from the general picture presented here. In addition to these roles, the colleges may appoint their own teaching-only staff (‘stipendiary lecturers’) to contribute to tutorial teaching, and offer early-career research posts.
**Academic grades (teaching and research)**

- Statutory Professor (SP) is the most senior academic grade, expected to take an academic leadership role within the department, the University and beyond.
- Titular Professors (TP) are Associate Professors (AP) and senior researchers awarded professorial title in the annual ‘Recognition of Distinction’ exercise (see below). Although SPs and TPs are distinct, both equate to senior professorial appointments at other institutions.
- Associate Professor is the main academic grade, carrying out both teaching and research. It is a senior role, recruited at Grade 10; the starting salary equates to that of a Professor or Senior Lecturer at other institutions. APs may be tutorial (employed jointly by the University and a college and contributing teaching and administrative duties to both) or non-tutorial (having a college affiliation but teaching solely within their department).
- Departmental Lecturers (DL) are generally fixed-term, Grade 7 posts, used to increase teaching capacity or cover for staff absences. The use of DLs varies across departments, but post-holders will sometimes also conduct research.

**Research grades**

- The most senior research positions, known as RSIVs, are of equivalent academic standing to professors. Accordingly, the majority of post-holders are TPs.
- Some researchers are recruited at grades 9 and above but post-holders are typically holders of independent research fellowships and directly appointed.
- Postdoctoral researchers are appointed at Grade 7 or 8.
- Grade 6 research posts often have specialist skills (e.g. research nurses); they support research projects but do not typically provide a route into postdoctoral research.

**Career pipeline**

There is no internal career path from DL or researcher to AP. Early career staff typically move to first academic posts at other universities or progress in research-only careers (at Oxford or elsewhere).

4. **Promotion and progression**

The University does not have a formal promotions process for any category of staff. Promotion is achieved through application to a new role.

The University provides progression for APs and research staff at Grades 9 and above through the annual ‘Recognition of Distinction’ exercise, which confers the title of Professor on those who demonstrate exceptional achievements in research, teaching and citizenship. The award of title does not change the individual’s underlying duties. Successful APs are awarded a small salary increase.