

Access to Excellence

WADHAM COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Impact Report

2020

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Foreword from the Warden

The pandemic continues to have an unpredictable impact on us all. Our immediate focus remains on the health and wellbeing of our students, colleagues and the wider Wadham community. We continue to support the national effort in every way we can, from our sixth-year medics working on the front-line to the ventilators (already in production) designed by our academics.

But while the medical response is the urgent priority, we know that Covid-19 will have significant secondary effects on the economy, the labour market, and on education; and that these may intensify social inequalities in the UK and around the world. We see this most immediately in young peoples' different experiences of home education and their access to technology, but also in the wider economy as job losses are already having a differential impact on families.

For the College, this is a call to action. Our commitment to fair access has its roots in our founding principles. We know you expect Wadham to welcome talented students of all backgrounds and now, in what is likely to be the biggest crisis of this generation, this matters more than ever. In this briefing, we summarise our work to date, why it matters, the impact we have made so far (and how we evaluate that impact) and our vision for the future, both during and beyond the pandemic.

In this report we share with you the impact of our work up to the end of the 2018/2019. In the last four years we have increased significantly the breadth and impact of our access activity (across working with over 25,000 pupils across 657 events). We continue to disseminate our evaluation evidence and contribute to policy debates.

At this time when solutions to our most pressing global challenges depend on research, innovation and creative insights, supporting the brightest talent, wherever it can be found, remains our unwavering priority. Our Access to Excellence programme continues to bring talented young people to the College from all backgrounds – and their achievements are a vital aspect of our positive hopes for the future.

We are grateful to the many members of the Wadham community, including tutors, students and alumni, who have helped Wadham widen its doors to talented students from all backgrounds. Access to Excellence exemplifies the College's commitment to equality and talent, but it is also a lively example of how our community comes together to deliver impact in demonstrable and meaningful ways.

If there was ever a time for communities to come together in this way, it is now. We wish you well in the coming months, and may this message find you safe and secure with friends and family.

Lord Macdonald of River Glaven Kt QC
Warden of Wadham College

“The pandemic’s impact on the economy will affect most acutely those who are already disadvantaged. That is why the University is giving particular attention to equality as we navigate this new world, and why Wadham’s redoubled focus on access, on evaluation evidence, and on how to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds, is so important.”

Professor Louise Richardson, Vice Chancellor, University of Oxford

To find out more about how we are caring for students and staff and how Wadham alumni globally are making positive change in the face of the pandemic, please visit www.wadham.ox.ac.uk.

Programme elements and impact evidence

“Our approach to access is built on four pillars – serving our link regions in the most effective ways possible; targeting the pupils who will benefit most from the programme; sustained engagement with pupils, schools and teachers; and robustly evaluating our work. Breadth and impact are as important to us as volume of activity, as we develop a programme that offers impactful and targeted support for pupils throughout their journey to Higher Education.”

Hugh Munro, Access Officer

- In the four academic years up to 2018/19, the College engaged 25,283 pupils in outreach activity.
- This included 213 Wadham led events in 2018/19, taking our total across the four-year period to 657.
- In 2018/19 we worked with 362 schools. 90% of Wadham’s link state schools which offer academic qualifications (of which there are 200) have engaged with the College in the four-year period.
- Impact on pupils’ awareness of Oxford and aspirations towards studying at the College is evident across our activity. For example:
 - Prior to participating in one of our summer schools, less than a third of participants understood how to make an effective application to Oxford; after the summer school this had risen to 100%. At the start of the summer school, 27% of participants felt confident they would fit in at Oxford University; after the summer school this had risen to 86%.
 - Across the 213 Access Events organised by, or run at Wadham College, there was a 38 percentage point increase in students who agreed with the statement ‘I feel confident I would fit in at Oxford University’ after participation, and a 20 percentage point increase in students who agreed with the statement ‘I am planning to go to a Russell Group university’ after participation.
- Pupils engaging in Wadham outreach activity are increasingly likely to apply to Oxford, to Wadham - and more likely to secure a place. For example, from the pupils engaged in the two summer schools and our sustained Wadham programme in 2018/19, there were 29 applications to Oxford (sixteen to Wadham), and twelve places offered (including four to Wadham).
- Statistical analysis undertaken for us by UCAS data highlights that pupils engaged in our access activities are ‘very significantly’ more likely to apply to Oxbridge and also ‘very significantly’ more likely to take up places at high tariff institutions. This evaluation will be repeated annually to help track the impact of interventions with younger pupils as they apply and take up places at university.
- More than 69 individual Wadham Student Ambassadors contributed to access events in 2018/19, leading tours and key aspects of our residential programmes.

“A massive thank you for everything about the summer school. As someone who didn’t think I would fit in and, honestly, worried that I wouldn’t like people at Oxford, the student ambassadors showed me that there are people who I would fit in with. I had an amazing experience, with a good balance of being academically challenged but also reassured of how much I love learning. Thank you to everyone at Wadham for this experience; it is one I’ll never forget.”
Wadham Summer School attendee.

“I feel very strongly that my students have as much right to be here as anybody else, but unless we empower them and make them realise it’s a possibility, they won’t aspire to it. It’s important for our current students to see that they could achieve this and flourish here in Oxford.”

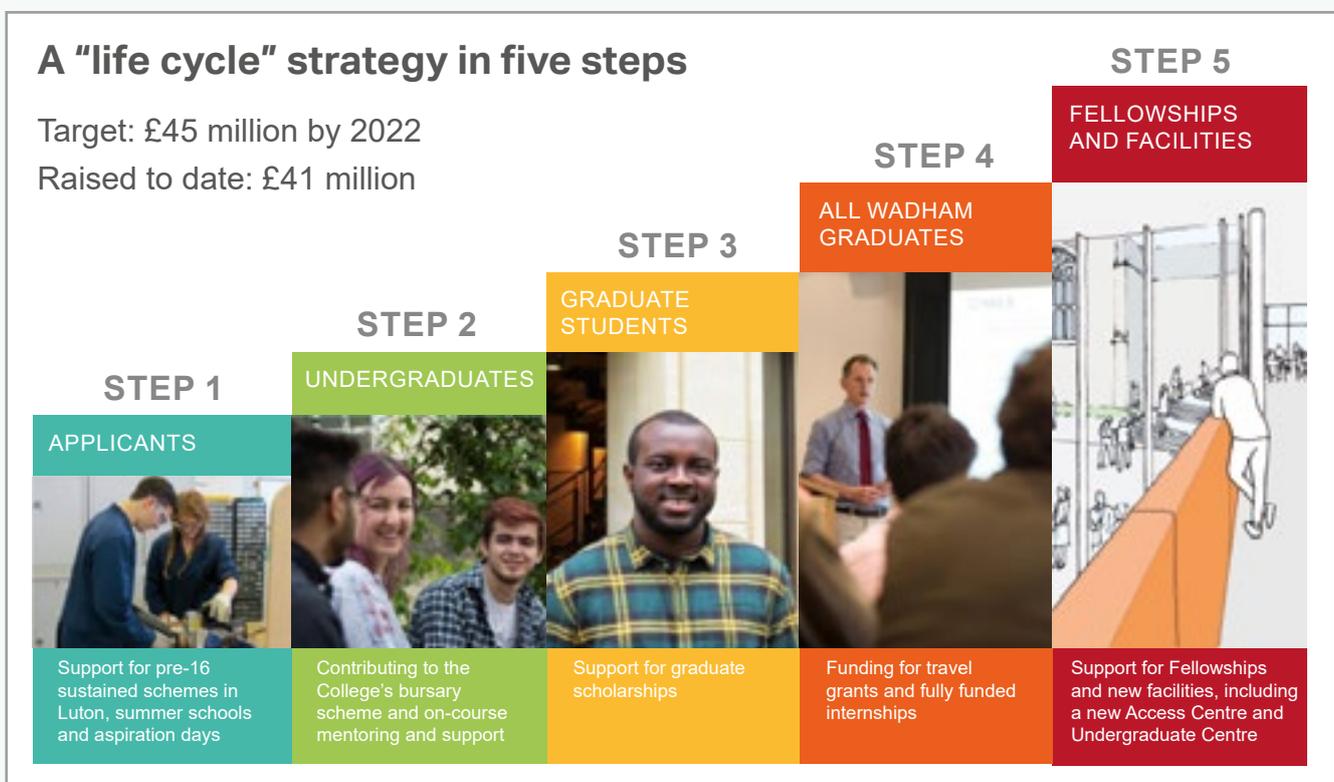
Sixth Form Tutor, Milton Keynes state school

Access to Excellence

Wadham's Access to Excellence programme supports young people from the moment they consider university, through their undergraduate and graduate studies, and as they go out into the world to make a difference.

We have long adopted a strategic, evidence-informed approach to access. This approach, which has now been in place for six years, balances activity that supports pupils' broad aspirations to study at research intensive universities, promotes applications to Oxford and to Wadham College, and supports Wadham students through to graduation.

Approximately half of our activity engages pupils studying for their GCSEs (or equivalent): this focus is vital, since it is too late to address many of the challenges associated with university access at later educational stages.



“Access has been a huge part of my time at Wadham, and it will be one of the things I miss the most after I leave. If, in giving a not very funny but hopefully informative tour, I’ve helped even one person consider a university application more than they did before, then it was time well spent. Access has constantly reminded me not only how lucky I am to have had the opportunities I’ve had, but also why I love my subject, and why I love Oxford and Wadham.”

Evie Atmore, Wadham College Student Ambassador

Over many years, our comprehensive outreach programme has included day events at the College, larger sustained projects, and collaborative activities with the University and other partners. These are mainly available to schools in our link regions (allocated to each College by the University), which include large parts of East London and the Essex borders, as well as Cambridgeshire, Luton and Milton Keynes.

Year 9/10 Aspiration Days

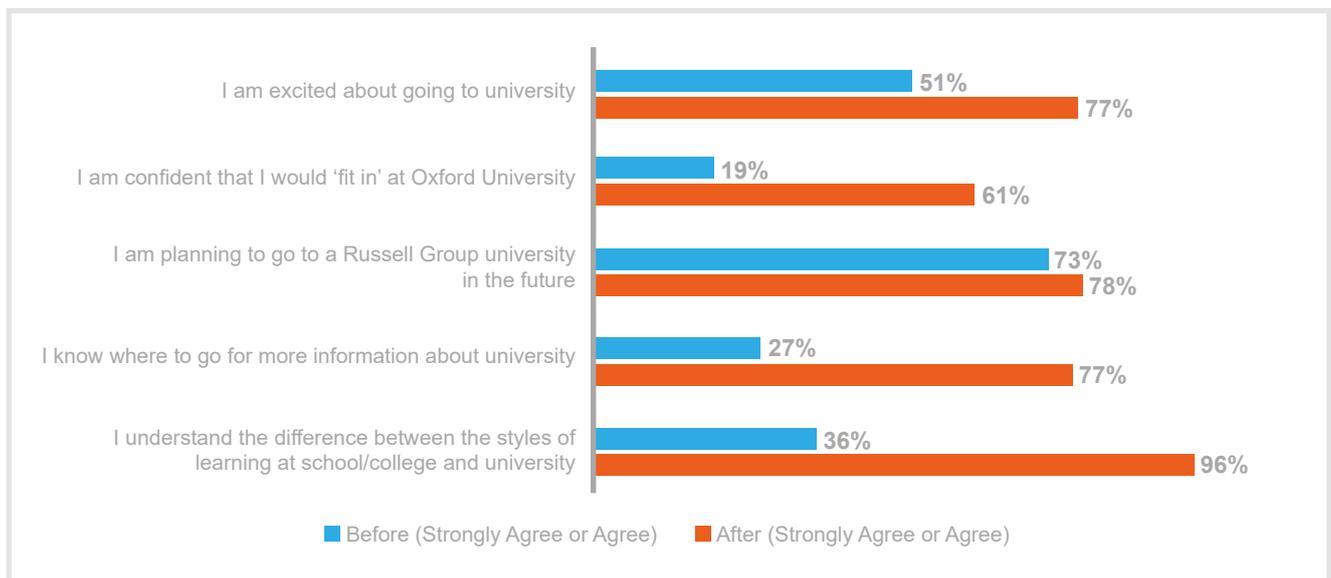
The College's Aspiration Days give students the opportunity to visit a university, to explore the range of disciplines available, and to consider what they can do to put themselves in the best position for university in the future. Across the day, pupils engage in a university information talk from the Access team, two dynamic academic taster sessions delivered by tutors or postgraduate students, the opportunity to meet students during a College tour and a visit to one of the University's inspiring museums.

More than 2,700 pupils have attended an Aspiration Day in the last three years, and the impact of these events in the most recent year is shared below. Before taking part, a general concern from the students was that the University may not be for people 'like them', with only 19% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they would 'fit



in' at Oxford. Following the event, 61% now felt they could belong: understanding the perceptions underlying this data will be important for the College in developing activities that break down pupils' misconceptions about the University.

Access Days 2018/19 feedback





Above: Students from 2019's Luton Project on the steps of Wadham College at the end of their course.

Sustained programmes

At the heart of our work are programmes that engage with pupils early and over a sustained period, a strategy which research consistently shows makes the most significant difference. Since 2015, Wadham has collaborated with schools in Luton (one of 11 link regions allocated to the College by the University) working with groups of pupils across Years 10 and 11. Today the project continues to thrive and, in collaboration with the Connolly Foundation, the College has embarked upon a major expansion of the Luton Project. By 2023, 3,200 students will engage annually through the initiative as it expands to work with schools across Bedford and Bedfordshire. Rooted regionally, these programmes are recognised nationally by ministers, policymakers and in the media.

In collaboration with the University, the College is planning a major expansion of the Luton Project - by 2023, 3,200 students will engage annually through the initiative as it grows to work with schools in Bedford and Bedfordshire. Pupils attend after-school master classes and have the opportunity to meet staff and students in the College to find out about university life. Throughout Year 11 pupils receive support with their next steps and in subject choice and skills to help with the transition to A-level. At the end of Year 11, pupils will then attend the College for a residential course. The funding to make all this possible has come from a partnership between Wadham College and the Connolly Foundation.

These projects also harness teacher expertise to boost the academic performance of young people and develop their skills to impact future choices and destinations. This lifecycle approach is crucial in widening access to top institutions like Oxford.

“It’s wonderful to have over 20 schools from across Bedfordshire taking part in this new programme, which is targeting talented pupils from backgrounds under-represented at Oxford. By working with pupils consistently, from a young age, the programme will increase the likelihood of participants attaining higher academic grades at school, and of entering higher education.”

Hugh Munro, Access Officer

“My Challney Girls’ parents are ambitious for their daughters – they want them to go to London, Russell Group Universities or Oxford and Cambridge. But there is a gap between the aspirations in their hearts and having strategic, practical solutions to support their children on this journey.”

Supriya Menon, Deputy Head at Challney School for Girls in Luton

“This new partnership from Wadham College will improve access for state school pupils in Bedfordshire, including working with them early on in their secondary school careers. As with any programme, it will be important to evaluate impact, to make sure it is reaching the right people in the right schools.”

James Turner, CEO of the Sutton Trust

The College also runs a Year 12 programme working with pupils from Newham and Tower Hamlets interested in studying arts/humanities courses at university. Taking barbarism as an umbrella theme pupils have a series of sessions from different academic disciplines and participate in a residential at Wadham – see [here](#).

“New Vic students have benefitted greatly from our relationship with Wadham College. For several years we have taken part in the Wad-Ham programme and our students have developed important higher level skills, including their critical and creative thinking. The wider reading they were encouraged to do also supported their development as independent learners. It has also enriched their understanding of academic topics outside of their curriculum area and A-level specifications, and widened their horizons. Most importantly however it has allowed them to engage with the University, its tutors and current undergraduate students. They have come to see Oxford as a place they could aspire to. They began to realise that their social background, ethnicity etc. would not be a barrier to them making a competitive application, and came to view Oxford as a more inclusive place than they had originally assumed; this was especially important for our students as many come from a more deprived area. Several of our students have made applications to Oxford.”

Teacher, hub link for Wad-HAM

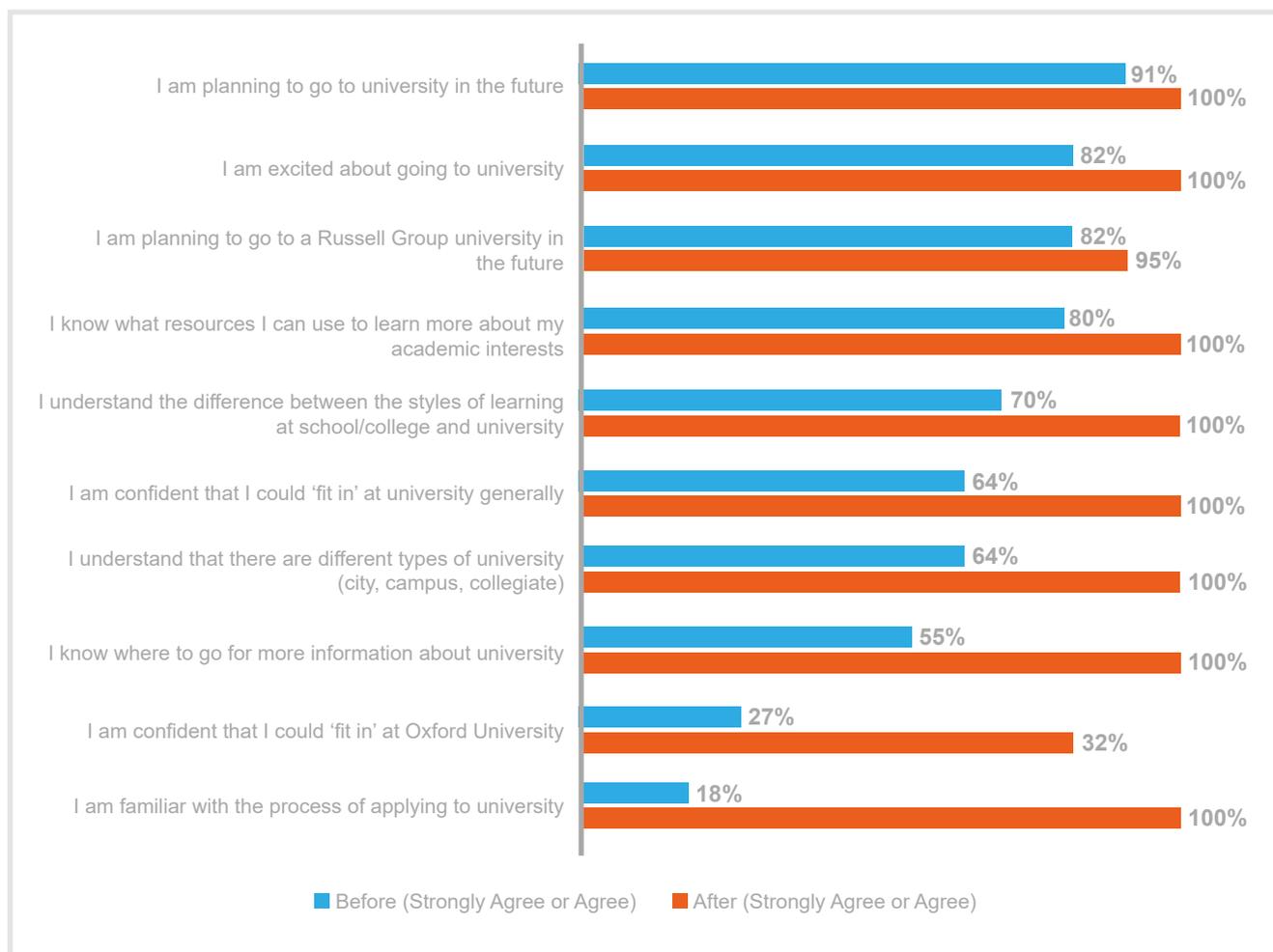


Above: Students on the Wad-HAM programme

The Wad-HAM programme ran from December 2018 to May 2019 with New Vic acting as the host school. Pupils attended six academic sessions, each taking Civilisation and Barbarism as theme. The university subjects covered were: Political Science, Human Science, Political Theory, French, Archaeology and Egyptology. The sessions were led by tutors or DPhil students from Oxford and ended with an optional extension activity if pupils wanted to extend their understanding. Pupils were also invited to attend an overnight residential with pupils participating in academic sessions (International Relations, Law and Spanish, and Celtic Languages) and Information, Advice and Guidance sessions on university applications all supported by student ambassadors.

The feedback suggests very positive outcomes across the participants with all statements having above 90% agree/strongly agree responses at the end of the programme. It is particularly striking for those aspects where the initial responses were lower, predominantly in areas around awareness about university (applications, styles of learning) and being able to 'fit in' at university in general at more specifically at Oxford. The feedback also highlights the strength of the residential aspect of the programme.

2018/19 programme feedback



Summer schools

The College's commitment to delivering summer schools is based on evidence about the importance of these more intensive opportunities. Our existing academic summer schools, in [Classics](#), [Biology](#), as well as the [UNIQ](#) Engineering strand, would not have been possible without the invaluable support of our alumni, and the involvement of the College community.

The purpose of the summer schools is to give Year 12 students a realistic experience of university life, to provide intensive academic training in their chosen subject-area (focussed on areas beyond the A-level syllabus), and to provide subject-specific guidance to help prepare students for making strong applications to university. During the Classics and Biology summer schools, for example, the participants attended seminars, workshops (or language classes), and lectures and took part in social activities in the evening with undergraduate mentors. Towards the end of the week, the Classics students were also asked to submit an essay, which was marked by a tutor and was then discussed in a tutorial.

The post-event feedback highlights some encouraging results regarding the effectiveness of these resource-intensive events. Students from both summer schools felt more excited about attending university, and felt that they had a greater understanding of the differences between the styles of learning at school and university. The latter point is a key aim of both subject-specific summer schools.

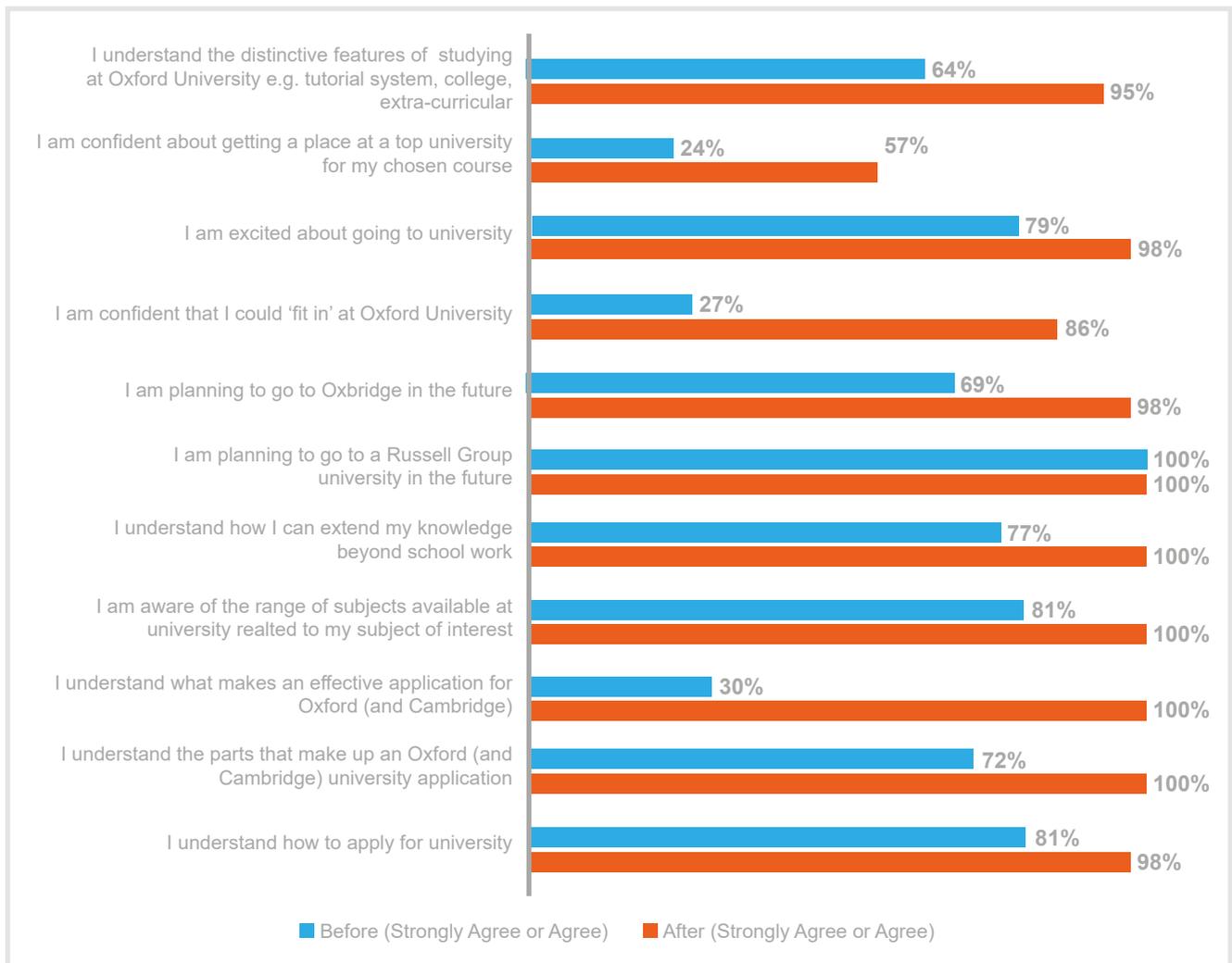
From 19th-23rd August 2019, Wadham College ran its sixth annual Classics Summer School, as well as the second annual Biology/Human Sciences Summer School. These two five-day residential programmes aimed to deliver focussed engagement with Year 12 students who demonstrated an interest in pursuing relevant subjects at university, alongside a strong academic profile and widening participation flags. Students took part in an intensive week of seminars, lectures, application workshops, assignments and social activities. These programmes could not have gone ahead without the support of Wadham academics, undergraduates and postgraduates, as well as collaborations with the Plant Sciences and Zoology Departments, the Classics Faculty, Hertford College, Balliol College and the Ashmolean Museum.

- We received 134 applications for the Summer Schools, a 65% increase in Biology applications and a 30% increase in Classics applications compared to the previous year.
- 34% of successful applicants were from one of Wadham's eleven link areas.
- 43% of participants report a history of eligibility for Free School Meals.
- At the start of the summer school 30% of participants understood how to make an effective application to Oxford. After the summer school this had risen to 100%.
- At the start of the summer school 27% of participants felt confident they would fit in at Oxford University. After the summer school this had risen to 86%.
- 93% participants agreed after the summer school that they understood what it was like to study a particular university subject.



Above: 2019 Biology Summer School students

2019 Summer School Feedback



Access Events for Sixth Form Pupils

Our [events for sixth form pupils](#) encourage students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to consider Russell Group universities in general, and Oxford and Wadham in particular. Wadham's summer schools give students realistic, first-hand insights into university life, providing intensive academic training in a chosen subject, and guidance on preparing strong university applications.

These take place throughout the academic year and are open to all of our link schools. During Access Days, we encourage students who may already be thinking about applying to university to consider Russell Group institutions, along with Oxford University and Wadham.

Year 12 students (aged 16-17) have an Information, Advice, and Guidance talk, and go to an academic taster session run by Wadham tutors and graduate students – titles of these sessions include: 'Would Harry Potter Have Burned?' or 'Basic Brain Surgery: It's Not Rocket Science!'. These sessions offer a valuable insight into the Oxford tutorial environment. The students then have the opportunity to meet current Wadham undergraduates, have a tour of the College, and take part in a workshop that explores the crafting of the Personal Statement.

As illustrated in the chart below, we find that students express significant changes in attitude as a result of engaging with the College. However, while it is encouraging that the percentage of students who feel they will fit in at Oxford doubles as a result of visiting Wadham, it is still concerning that only around a third feel this overall after spending time with us. We continue to explore in more detail the factors that contribute to this.

“The experience at Wadham fired up the pupils’ brains. On the way home they had debates about political nihilism, educational meritocracy and climate change - they usually stare vacantly at rolling Snapchat stories. Thank you.”

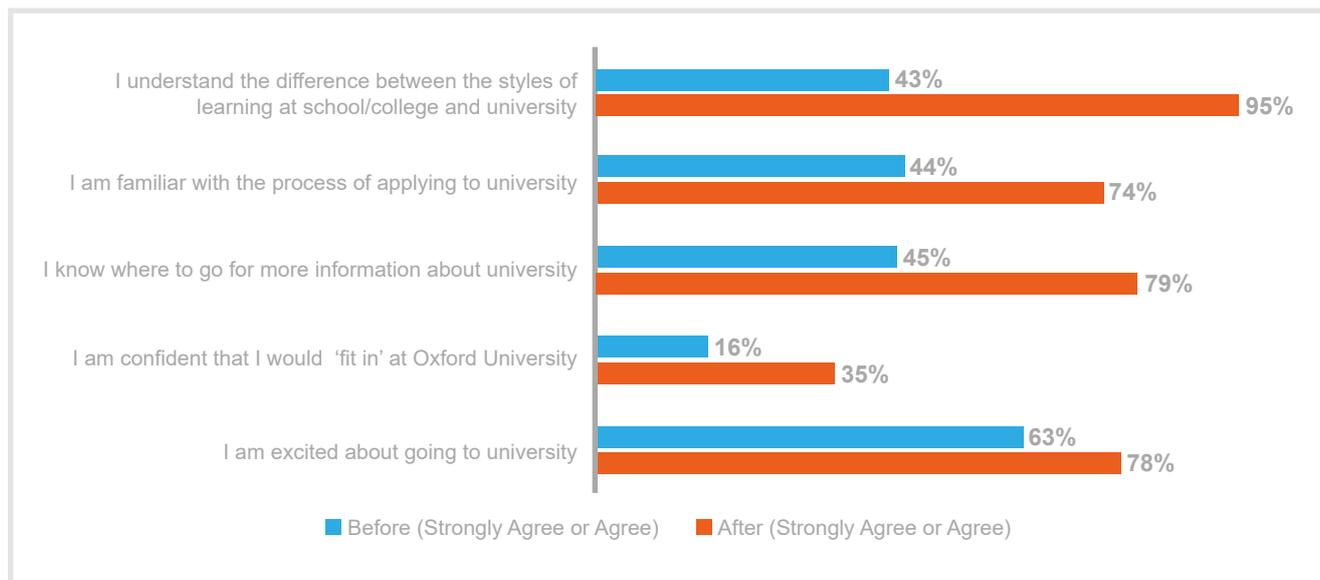
Higher Education and Aspiration Officer,
Hackney state school

Throughout the academic year 2018/19, the Wadham Access Team also visited schools, delivering talks and workshops. Primarily targeted to Year 12 and 13 students, these sessions provided targeted advice and support throughout the university application process, and include:

- Russell Group Information Talks
- Application Talks
- Personal Statement Workshops
- Interview Workshops

These interactive talks form an important component of our access work, enabling engagement with a larger number of students at each school in addition to the potential for sustained interaction with Year 12 and 13 students.

Year 12 Pupils attending an Access Day



Third Party Collaborations

Innovations in access are being driven from schools and universities, but also from a range of charities throughout the UK. Wadham benefits greatly from its partnerships with a number of third parties that develop innovative and effective programmes to support raising attainment and aspirations of under-represented groups and their path to high-tariff universities. The College's primary partners are Target Oxbridge, IntoUniversity and The Brilliant Club; collaborations with these groups have enabled the College to engage with an additional 747 schools in 2018/19.

- **Target Oxbridge:** Wadham has funded 12 places (4 in 2017, 8 in 2018) and has increased this to 10 in 2019 – link to article [here](#)
- **IntoUniversity:** Wadham has supported 12 visits to the College, with 374 pupils.
- **The Brilliant Club:** Wadham welcomed 570 pupils across 7 visits.

Access Centre

One day in the future, we will gather together again. When this happens, Wadham will be ready. The new Undergraduate Centre and Access Centre put access at the heart of the College, providing a dedicated space where prospective school students from Wadham's target areas can participate in outreach programmes. It also combines world class facilities with academic mentoring and accessible information about what university has to offer.

Government directives have meant that it has been possible to continue building work and we are making good progress on the William Doo Undergraduate Centre and the Dr Lee Shau Kee Building in Wadham's Back Quad. With distancing and hygiene measures applied on site, the installation of internal doors, frames, partitions and skirting continues on the upper levels, and façade works, including the installation of brackets, fire breaks and glazing are moving ahead.

You can see the how Oxford's first purpose-built Access Centre is taking shape by linking [here](#).

Targeting, evaluation and advocacy

Our vision is to be an international beacon for access. The impact of our access strategy extends well beyond the pupils, teachers and schools that we work with – this is especially important at a time when the need for effective practice is so great.

Just as we are committed to delivering evidence-informed activities that make a difference, we also know that careful targeting of these activities and effective evaluation are key to ensuring we can deliver maximum impact, and inspire others to do the same. The Access Team deploys a data-driven approach to targeting, analysing the latest sector, school and pupil-level datasets to ensure we engage the young people who will benefit most from the access programme.

Correspondingly, we have embedded a robust approach to evaluation over the last four years, which has been developed in partnership with The Bridge Group. This is based on the Kirkpatrick model, which measures impact in four areas using a variety of tools, including tracking pupils, feedback surveys and focus groups, and by accessing national benchmarking data.

How participants feel about their experience	Feedback forms, observing participants' reactions, asking teachers
The increase in participants' knowledge, skills, aspirations	Formal and informal assessments of knowledge and skills before / after the intervention(s), e.g. measuring levels of understanding about higher education, or the university specifically
How far learning is applied and results in personal change	Observation and interview of participants over time. Tracking pupils into university and beyond
How far the programme impacts on organisational or societal factors	Using local and national data sets to identify whether activities are shifting participation, especially within the institution, and the effects of this





Above: 2019 Summer School students

We are careful to approach targeting in the most effective way, because the difference we make depends on reaching the right people. Likelihood of entering higher education can be measured according to the neighbourhood in which a young person lives, using a scale known as POLAR (The Participation of Local Areas Classification).

There are five categories in the POLAR scale: groups, also known as quintiles, 1 and 2 represent neighbourhoods where the fewest number of people have historically entered HE. Groups 4 and 5 represent neighbourhoods where the greatest numbers have historically progressed to HE. We recommend that schools try as much as possible to offer opportunities to students living in quintiles 1 and 2.

Data in the following tables are self-reported by students and reflects data collected during the academic 2018-2019

Live in a low HE participation neighbourhood (POLAR4)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4-5
Count	80	221	345	978
% Total	5 %	14 %	21 %	60 %

Based on 1624 known values

For a detailed explanation of POLAR, please see: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/>

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
Count	80	221	345	575	403
% Total	5 %	14 %	21 %	35 %	25 %

Based on 1624 known values

The overall average proportion of students participating in activities living in a POLAR4 Q1 or Q2 area is 19%.

Using postcode profiling to identify disadvantaged students, this table shows the level of disadvantage that your chosen students are likely to experience. The

greater the number of indicators, the more disadvantaged the area in which the student lives will be.

For example, 4 indicators mean that students are classified as disadvantaged using all 4 disadvantaged indicators (POLAR4, IMD, EST and IDACI).

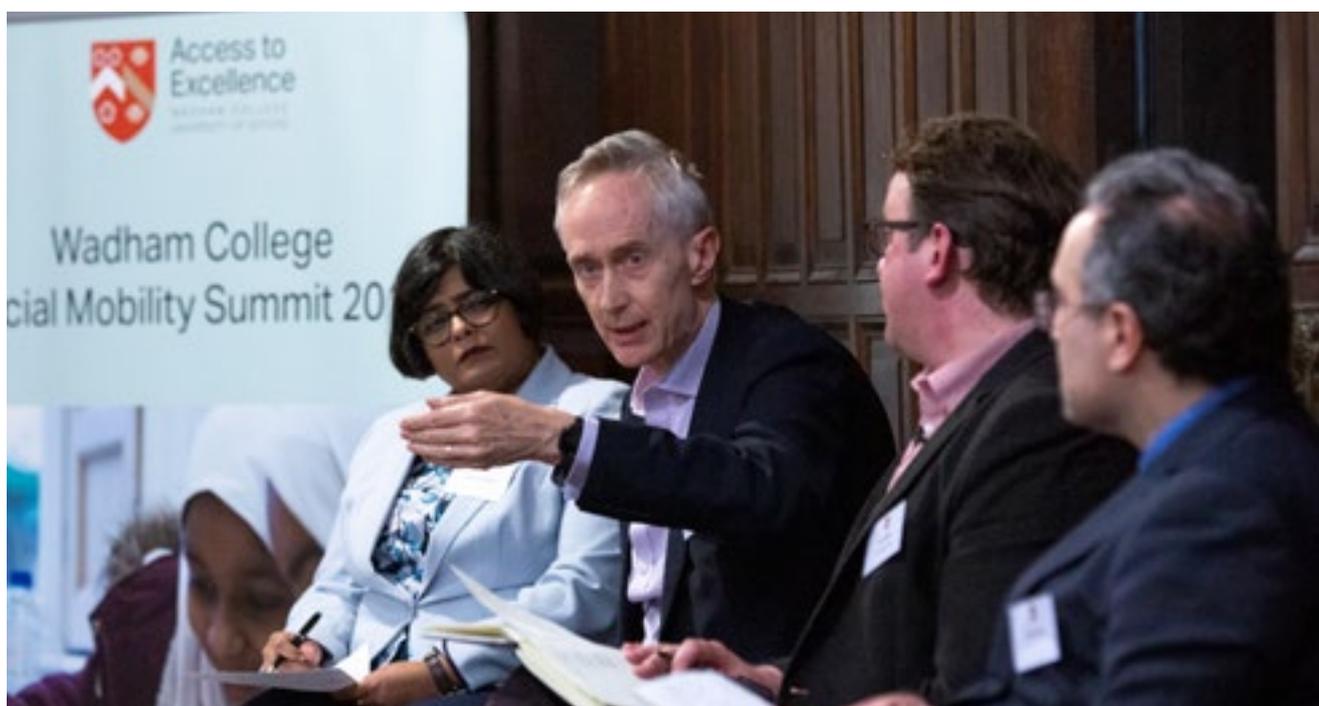
	4 Indicators	3 Indicators	2 Indicators	1 Indicator	None
Count	165	318	341	210	590
% Total	10 %	20 %	21 %	13 %	36 %

Based on 1624 known values

The overall proportion of students taking part in University of Oxford - Wadham College activities who are classified as disadvantaged in at least one indicator is 64%.

Social Mobility Summit

This focus on best practice and evaluation has put us in a strong position to use our own evidence and practice as a basis for convening wider discussions about policy and practice relating to access. For example, in 2019 we held our third Social Mobility Summit. You can find out more [here](#).



The Warden was joined by Sir Michael Barber, Chair of the Office for Students; Supriya Menon, Deputy Head at Challney School for Girls in Luton; Dr Omar Khan, Director of the Runnymede Trust; and Nik Miller, Chief Executive of the Bridge Group - along with an audience of alumni and current Wadham students.

Building on previous events, the Summit explored 'ethnicity and socio-economic background: advancing equal access to university', with panellists focusing on specific actions that universities, schools, government and the third sector can take to advance equal.

Recognition of the attainment gap and the need for sustained financial, academic and social support for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds were among topics addressed at London's Toynbee Hall, the pioneering venue for social reform founded by a Wadham alumnus in the late 19th century.

"I'm really glad that social mobility is so firmly on the agenda for Wadham. The very fact that they are on their third Social Mobility Summit but much more importantly the Access Centre being constructed in the Back Quad, the emphasis they have given in terms of the leadership they are providing in Oxford – these things are very important."

Sir Michael Barber,
Chair of the Office for Students

Future thinking

We are happy to recognise and celebrate the impact achieved so far, but we are also acutely aware that we need to respond and adapt to changing times. The pandemic is impacting everyday life, but it also risks exacerbating educational inequalities. In consequence, our work needs both to increase in breadth and to meet entirely new challenges.

In terms of immediate action this summer, we are working in partnership with Causeway Education to offer online support for UCAS applications and personal statements (matching what we would usually offer via face-to-face workshops at this time of year). This opportunity has been targeted at schools most likely to benefit from this support, and 250 pupils will access this online support during this vital time in their educational journey.

We are also examining carefully how we can develop all our programmes for an unpredictable future.

First, we are expanding the digital delivery of aspects of our outreach programme – not simply replicating provision online, but also adapting content and approach to make the most of the technology available. We are also exploring the potential of online outreach to be more inclusive – for example engaging more introverted

pupils, for whom face-to-face engagement may be more challenging. This will support young people now, but also promises to transform our ways of working long into the future, providing a model for increasing the scale and reach of our outreach programme, and a catalyst for the development of blended digital and face-to-face activities.

Second, in collaboration with teachers, we are beginning a project to develop digital teaching materials for use in schools. These aim to engage young people in academic content which complements school studies and boosts the cognitive and study skills that enable students to excel at institutions such as Oxford. These developments enable us to take our work beyond our 11 link regions to the wider UK and rest of the world.

Finally, we know that while they will leave the University with world-leading degrees, today's students will face a challenging graduate labour market – whether they are due to complete their studies this year, or in the years that follow. The effects of a contracting workforce are likely to impact on students from lower socio-economic backgrounds most severely. Working with alumni and employers to build on the existing support available to students from the College and the University's Careers Service, we will continue to source fully-funded internships and work experience, professional advice and training for students who need it most.

Thank you

We are grateful to the many members of the Wadham community, including tutors, students and alumni, who have helped Wadham widen its doors to talented students from all backgrounds and enable us to do significantly more than many of our peer institutions. The generous support from alumni and friends of the College have made Access to Excellence possible. The programme exemplifies the College's commitment to equality and talent, but it is also a vivid example of how our community comes together to deliver impact in demonstrable and meaningful ways.

If there was ever a time for communities to come together in this way, it is now. Join us.

www.wadham.ox.ac.uk



Above: Student ambassadors

“There has never been a more important time for business to sharpen its focus on inclusion and diverse talent in order to remain competitive. For young people, the challenge starts at school – and at Wadham we’re focused on how we best support the broadest range of young people on their journey to Oxford and beyond, both during the pandemic and for years to come.”

Warren East CBE (Engineering, 1980)

Chair, Wadham College Development Council; CEO of Rolls-Royce

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