

CELEBRATING A DECADE OF IMPACT



WADHAM
COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

“The residential has been the deciding factor. Oxford didn’t seem real, but coming here, seeing the styles of teaching, the careers advice, the student support – I’m definitely going to apply”.

Y12 student, Wadham Access to Banking participant

“We are delighted to partner with the College on our longstanding and ambitious programme. We share a vision for supporting the most talented students, irrespective of background, and ensuring aptitude and hard work determine who gets ahead.”

Simon Brannigan, Global Head of Corporate, Linklaters LLP

“Social mobility is so firmly on the agenda for Wadham. The Social Mobility Summit, the Access Centre in the Back Quad, and the leadership they are providing. These things are very important.”

Sir Michael Barber KB, Prime Minister’s Adviser on Effective Delivery

“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 at rolling Snapchat stories. Thank you.”

School Teacher, Hackney State School

“There has never been a more important time for business to sharpen its focus on diverse talent to gain competitive advantage. So, it’s natural that at Wadham we are focused on how to support the broadest range of young people on their journey to Oxford and beyond.”

Sir Warren East CBE (Engineering, 1980) Chair, Wadham College Development Council, Former CEO of Rolls-Royce

Wadham College: A Beacon of Access and Excellence

For over 400 years, Wadham College has inspired academic excellence across diverse communities, driven by our relentlessly independent spirit.

Today, our mission is more urgent than ever as we confront growing challenges in access and social equality in the UK and in higher education. The latest data reveals a widening gap in university progression rates between disadvantaged pupils (29%) and their peers (50%) – the largest disparity since 2005.

Tackling systemic inequalities demands sustained and focused effort. Amid global and national economic pressures, our College community is steadfast in its commitment to access. At Wadham, we not only foster debate about social equality: we act, convene, and lead programmes that make a real difference.

Access to Excellence, launched nearly a decade ago, transformed our bold ambitions into impactful realities. The Dr Lee Shau Kee Building, the William Doo Undergraduate Centre, and the Locke Access Centre (the only one of its kind in Oxford) are all powerful embodiments of our vision for access.

Through Oxford’s most extensive summer school programme and over 1,300 events, we’ve engaged nearly 50,000 young people, inspiring them to discover that an elite university education is achievable. Our comprehensive evaluation shows we are creating pathways for disadvantaged pupils to access the UK’s most competitive institutions, including Oxford. This is testimony to the exceptional talents of the pupils who participate in our access programmes, many of whom we are proud to welcome into our own College.

Collaboration with alumni, fellows, and students is instrumental to these successes. While our Social Mobility Summits bring together leading ministers,

business leaders, and researchers to amplify our impact nationally; our local financial, academic and wellbeing support for students empowers all to thrive.

As higher education contends with deepening inequalities, Wadham continues to shine as a beacon of equality and opportunity. Through the bold vision for our forthcoming campaign, we have ambitious plans for our Access programme, and are aiming to secure £10 million for an endowment to safeguard our enduring commitment to access, broaden financial support, and strengthen welfare provision.

Together, we will empower the next generation of exceptional minds to thrive at Wadham – and to shape a brighter future for us all.

With hope and gratitude,

**Robert Hannigan
Warden**



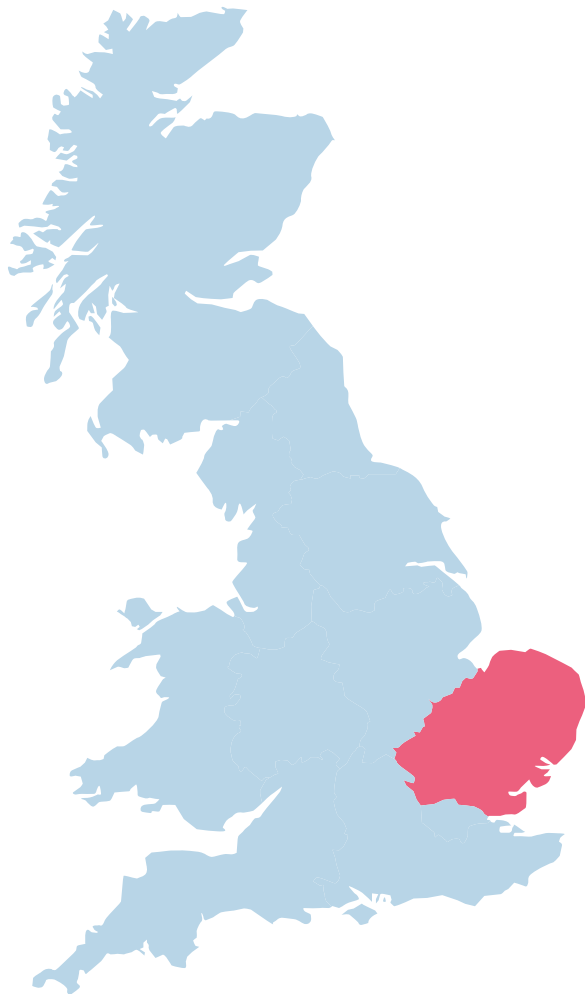
Our guiding strategy for access

Access to Excellence has enabled the Wadham team to provide an enduring programme that is responsive to the latest evidence in policy and practice.

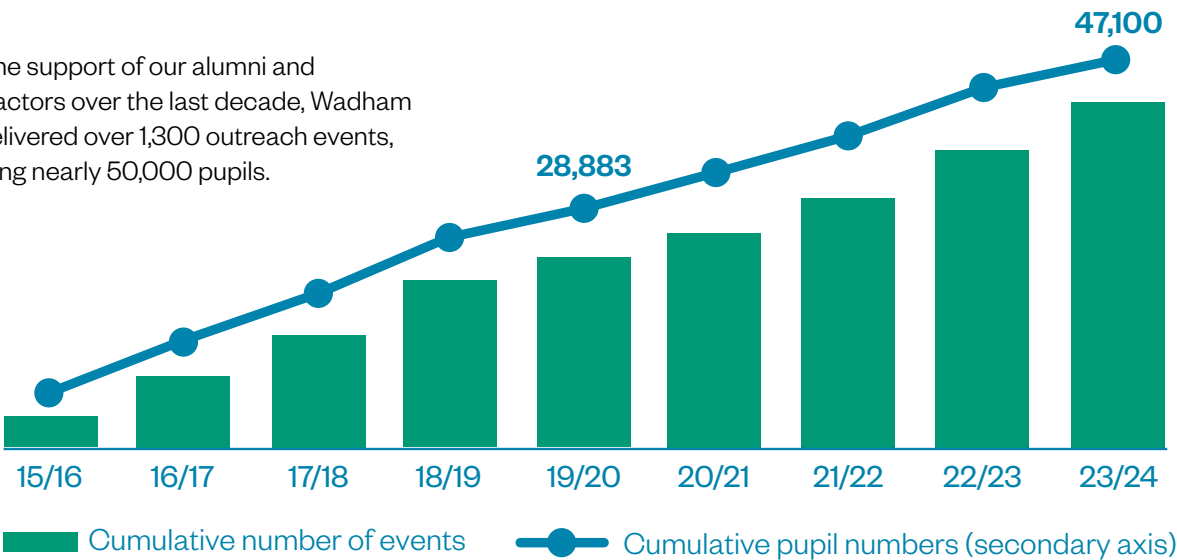
Each Oxford college focuses their outreach work on specific local authorities in the UK, as part of the University's regionalisation programme. Our link regions are **Barking and Dagenham, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hackney, Havering, Islington, Luton, Newham, Redbridge** and **Tower Hamlets**.

“Our strategy for access combines collaboration, sustained engagement, employer partnerships and immersive summer school. This engages students at every stage of their educational journey and responds to the evidence on effective practice, while building lasting relationships across our community.”

Dr Hugh Munro,
Access and Outreach Officer



With the support of our alumni and benefactors over the last decade, Wadham has delivered over 1,300 outreach events, reaching nearly 50,000 pupils.



Collaborating to create connections

By fostering partnerships between universities, employers, and policymakers, Wadham College is contributing to the creation of a more coherent and equitable system that promotes the success of students from all backgrounds.

To amplify our impact, we work in close partnership with the University. Wadham was among the first colleges to join the Astrophoria Foundation Year, providing an additional pathway to Oxford for talented students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. We also offer places annually through Opportunity Oxford and proudly host the University's UNIQ Summer School, providing immersive experiences that prepare students for the academic demands of university life.

We also collaborate with leading educational organisations to further our mission. The Brilliant Club supports students in accessing and succeeding at top universities, while Target Oxbridge enhances opportunities for talented students from minority ethnic groups to secure places. Causeway Education equips young people with the tools and confidence to navigate their post-18 choices, while Future Leaders empowers Year 12 students to champion equality in their communities.

Sustained engagement

At the core of our mission is the commitment to engage pupils early and consistently over time – proven by research to create the most meaningful impact. Grounded in our regional communities and delivered in partnership with teachers, these initiatives have earned national recognition from ministers, policymakers, and the media.

“The sessions have opened my eyes to what is possible with hard work and dedication. It’s inspired me to think now about my future and to get out there and fuel my curiosity about Chemistry – thank you!”

Year 10 pupil,
Stockwood Park Academy, Luton

The Wadham Project, our flagship programme, exemplifies this commitment. For over a decade, we have worked with pre-16 pupils in Luton and Bedfordshire, fostering aspiration and unblocking potential. Pupils participate in a dynamic seminar series, experience the inspiring environment of Wadham and the University, and receive tailored support with study skills and guidance for their next steps.

We robustly evaluate the impact of the programme; the insights from our 2024 visits to Wadham are illustrated below, showing the tangible difference of this initiative.



“When my pupils come to Wadham, I can see they are initially apprehensive. But the minute they start working and problem solving, they quickly realise that they are fully capable of competing. They literally come away with a spring in their step and you can see their confidence levels have risen.”

School teacher, Bedford

Employer partnerships to pioneer access

In response to policy developments emphasising access to the professions, since 2021 we have partnered with Barclays and Linklaters to support students into Oxford – and to progress to competitive careers in law and investment banking.

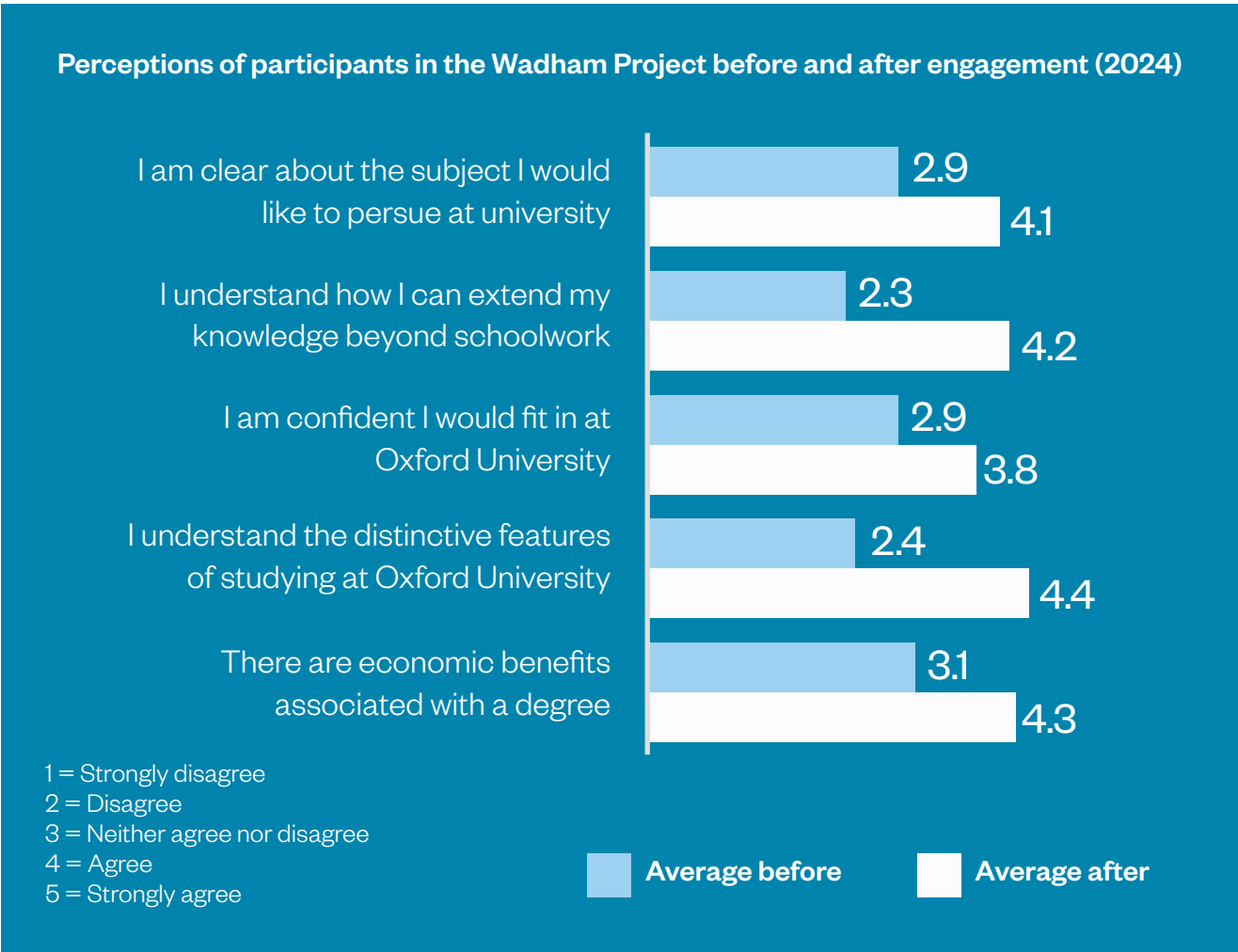
Access to Banking and Think Like a Lawyer are two-year initiatives targeted at students in Year 12-13 who are eligible for Free School Meals.

They are structured around a tailored skills curriculum that prepares participants for university study and professional life. This includes sessions with professionals at Barclays and Linklaters, office visits in central London, a residential experience at Wadham, online academic and career skills workshops, and personalised A-Level tutoring.

Many participants are already progressing to Oxford and embarking on pathways into their chosen professions.

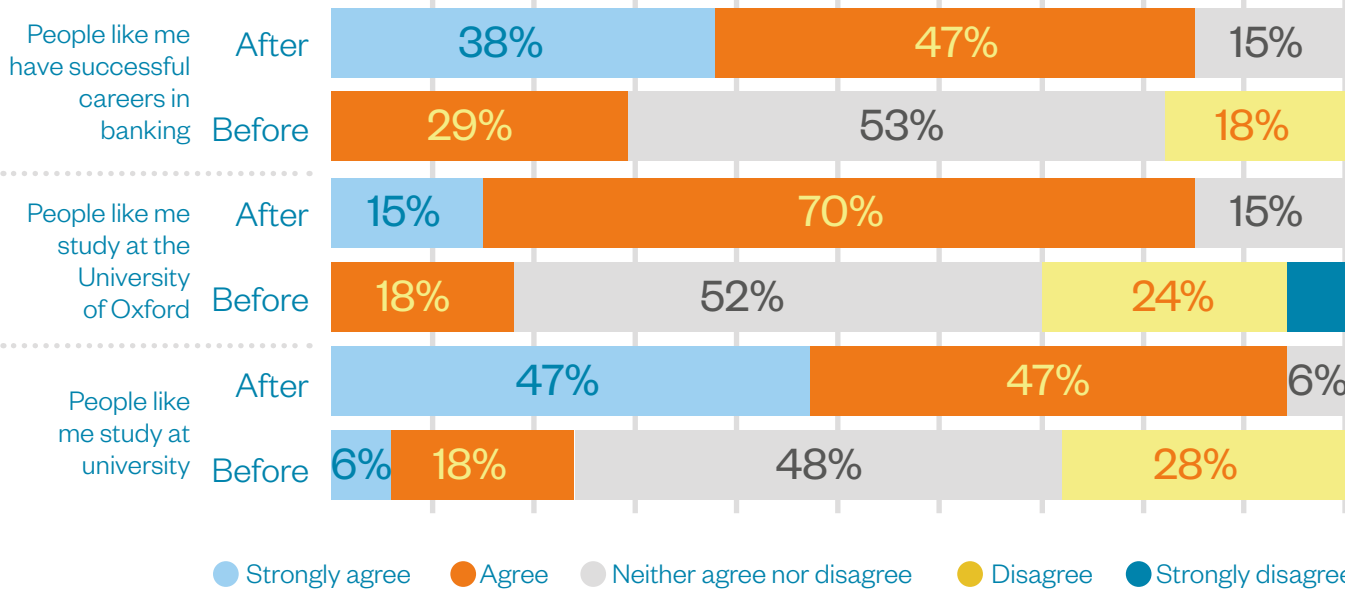
“The programme provides a set of interlocking experiences that the participants could not otherwise have accessed. The combination of the various elements, and the way in which they complement and build on each other, is the driver behind the powerful, positive impact of the programme.”

Evaluation report, the Bridge Group (2024)





Students' attitudes before and after the programme, Access to Banking (2025)



“I found the Careers Awareness Session with Linklaters gave a valuable insight into how a career in law could expand across the globe. I enjoyed the content sessions with the tutor, they are a great complement to the weekly law lessons I have in 6th Form.”

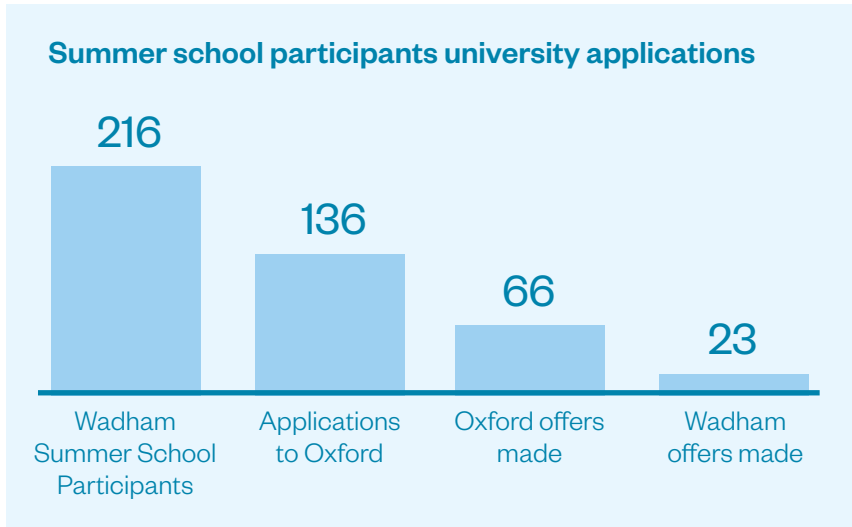
Y13 student, Think Like a Lawyer participant

Shaping success through Wadham's Summer Schools

Research shows that summer schools are one of the most effective interventions for higher education access.¹ In response to this, we host the most extensive summer school programme of any Oxford college, offering five-day residential experiences that immerse students in the academic and social life of Wadham.

Participants engage in classes, tutorials, and workshops, stay in College accommodation, and complete an academic assignment with feedback from tutors. They also receive tailored guidance on university applications and engage with current Wadham students who serve as ambassadors and mentors.

The Classics Summer School includes Ancient Greek language classes, seminars led by the Faculty of Classics, and a visit to the Ashmolean Museum. Our Modern Languages Summer School covers French, German, or Spanish seminars, beginner



classes in additional languages, and guidance from Wadham's language tutors. Meantime, at the Biology and Human Sciences Summer School students engage in interdisciplinary seminars on climate change, led by academics exploring its biological and societal impacts.

We robustly measure impact through UCAS analysis,²

comparing participant outcomes with relevant control groups. Our summer school participants are statistically *very significantly* more likely to apply to and receive offers from higher-tariff universities.

This includes nearly two thirds (63%) of summer school attendees applying to Oxford, with nearly half securing offers – including 23 being recently admitted to Wadham.



1. Sutton Trust (2022)
2. www.ucas.com/providers/our-products-and-services/data-products-and-solutions/outreach-evaluator-tracking-results

Serving our student community

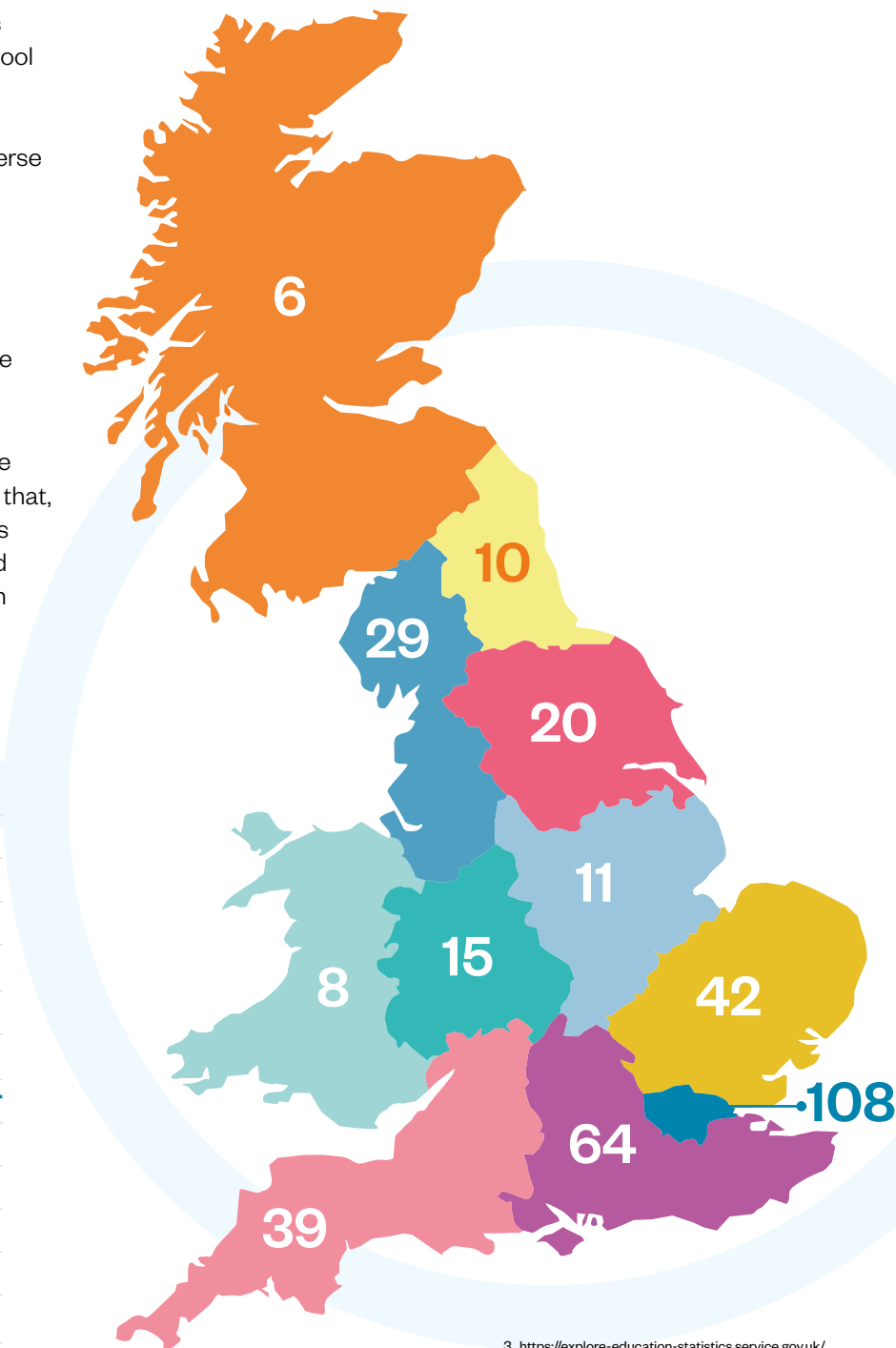
The diversity of our own student population is obviously an important outcome from our access programme – and ensuring all students at Wadham can thrive in their studies. More than one fifth of Wadham students (21%) grew up in postcodes in the two highest quintiles for childhood deprivation (quintile 1 or 2 based on IDACI).³

Against all metrics for student access (postcode data, eligibility for Free School Meals and State School attendance), students accessing Wadham College over the last three years are more diverse compared with University-wide data.⁴

Analysis of our undergraduate cohort in 2023/24 also highlights significant diversity by geography; in this year we welcomed students from across all the UK regions.

Securing a place at Wadham is just the start of students' journeys. We ensure that, from their first day in College, students can access the academic, welfare and financial support they need to thrive in their studies and career ambitions.

1	Channel Islands
2	Northern Ireland
6	Scotland
8	Wales
10	North East
11	East Midlands
15	West Midlands
20	Yorkshire and The Humber
29	North West
39	South West
42	East of England
64	South East
108	London



3. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/>
4. www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/admissions-statistics



“I’ve really enjoyed the opportunity to work collaboratively and have a real dialogue with the students. I see students visibly relax as they realise that their difficulties are normal and that solutions can be found.”

Leah, Wadham Study Advisor

Academic Support

Wadham students are united by their passion for learning. Yet even amongst our talented student cohorts, diverse prior educational experiences can mean the transition to university has challenges. Wadham’s programme of one-to-one and group academic skills sessions helps students get the most out of their studies.

The College’s Study Advisors are graduate students trained to foster skills including time management, organising productive reading, and planning essays. available to all students who want to reach new heights in their academic studies.

Welfare Support

Student mental health remains one of the most significant concerns for leading universities around the world.⁵ Our Welfare Lead, a position established in 2002, is responsible for coordinating College welfare and wellbeing provision. The academic and welfare teams collaborate to support students who may face challenging circumstances and, together with the student representatives and peer supporters, cultivate an environment in which everyone can feel a strong sense of belonging.

5. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/obp-8593/>

Financial Support

The financial burden of studying at Wadham is greatest for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. We now provide means-tested Accommodation Assistance Bursaries to all eligible students; and funding is available for students facing unforeseen financial difficulties. There are specific financial awards for students who have experienced care or who are estranged from their families, typically supporting students to live in College accommodation for the full twelve months of the year. Our Education Support Fund helps with course-related costs, including books, field trips and conferences – and grants are also available for arts, music, sport and travel.



“The students I’ve seen have shown fantastic adaptability and great capacity for self-reflection. They encounter complex challenges but engage openly and honestly with the program which results in constructive discussions and practical, personalised solutions.”

Mathilde, Wadham Study Advisor

Demystifying Oxford

Summer schools and school visits showed Rafay Yousef that Oxford could be a place for him. Now, he’s helping to inspire the next generation of students to take the same leap.

Growing up in Luton, within an immigrant community marked by high levels of social deprivation, Rafay never imagined that Oxford could be a place where he could thrive. That conviction began to shift after he attended a series of Oxbridge access events, including school visits and summer schools, which, as Rafay puts it, helped to “demystify” Oxford. Encouraged by these experiences, he decided to take “a leap of faith”: he applied, attended an interview, completed the admissions test, and earned a place at Wadham College to study Persian.

Even with his offer in hand, Rafay was unsure how he would be find life at Wadham. “Between getting my offer and coming here, I worried whether I would fit in. I’d be spending four years here; would I enjoy it? Would I feel singled out?” he recalls. Those anxieties quickly lightened. “I’ve never been made to feel that because of my background I’m not good enough or don’t belong,” he reflects.

Now in his final year, Rafay speaks passionately about the transformative opportunities he has embraced at Oxford, opportunities he believes would not have been possible elsewhere. These include grants that enabled him to travel to Armenia, Tajikistan, Jordan, and Pakistan. Rafay has now played an active role in Wadham’s Access initiatives, first as a volunteer and



now as part of his role in the Student Union. It has been especially meaningful to connect with students from his hometown, which falls within Wadham’s catchment area.

Reflecting on the support he has received, both before applying and during his time at Oxford, Rafay describes the impact: “I can’t even picture how my experience would have been if I hadn’t had these opportunities. I’ve grown so much and, coming out the other side, I feel I’m such a more well-rounded person. I feel so enriched.”

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A beacon of access and excellence: our enduring ambition

Participants in our pioneering access programme are significantly more likely to apply to and secure places at Oxford – and other leading universities. This impact is only possible through the extraordinary support of thousands of alumni who share our conviction in the life-changing power of education.

Yet current resources can sustain the impact of these programmes for only five more years. To secure their future, we are launching an ambitious endowment campaign to secure the College's future, and we have an ambitious £10m target for endowing the Access programme in perpetuity to give enduring support for our widening participation initiatives and to enable ongoing innovation.



Here's a snapshot of our priorities for the coming years:

- **Sharing programme learning with broader audiences.** We will distribute more content and resources online, and empower current students to become paid access ambassadors so they can deliver workshops and inspiring sessions in schools to inspire others to follow in their footsteps.
- **Engage with pupils and schools** at early stages to support their ambitions towards learning and skills for success, including at primary school.
- **Convening leading figures from government, business, and academia to explore innovative solutions for access.** By providing stimulating platforms for open debate and the idea creation, our influence reaches far beyond the boundaries of our own access programme.
- **Further developing our on-course support,** including expanding our academic guidance through Study Advisors

and addressing essential needs such as vacation accommodation for care leavers and those estranged from their parents.

Our ambitions continue to be shaped by policy developments, such as the Office for Students' emphasis on improving progression to professional employment.⁶ In partnership with major employers, we will seek to more deliberately integrate university study with work placements, including guaranteed internships that provide students with clear routes from education to impact through professional success.

These priorities will be foundational in our forthcoming campaign, which builds on the College's legacy of innovation and impact. Wadham's future depends on the collective spirit of its community – alumni, donors, and supporters united by the shared vision to inspire access to excellence. Wadham will remain an enduring beacon of opportunity for our current students and for future generations.

6. www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/

“I am very grateful to everyone who has made Wadham one of the vanguard colleges in achieving the successes we have had in opening up to pupils of every possible background.”

Retired Chancellor (July 2024), The Rt Hon the Lord, Patten of Barnes KG, CH, PC





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