



## Black Lives Matter: a response from the Provost and Governing Body of The Queen's College

9 June 2020

The following message was sent to all students, Fellows and staff at the College on 9 June 2020.

Dear members of the Queen's community,

You will have seen the coverage of the Black Lives Matter campaigns and many of you are active in these and other movements to combat systemic and institutionalised racism and injustice. Members of the Governing Body have been contacted by students who are deeply concerned about recent events, and who want to know what the College is doing. Their concerns are both personal and general.

This College community is part of the wider world. How its members behave towards each other day-to-day, what is taught and learnt, what is researched and how, will all influence the future. So, too, will the lives that its students go on to lead, with all their potential to make changes in the organisations and communities in which they will live and work.

As the College's Governing Body we wanted to say, first and foremost, that we condemn racism in the strongest possible terms. There should be no place for discrimination or injustice at The Queen's College.

We see it as our role to do our utmost to ensure that Queen's is a place where diversity is recognised as a profound source of richness; inclusivity and fairness are essential; and individual differences are respected in everything that we do. These ideals are beset with obstacles and challenges. Some of the gaps between those who are privileged and those who are not are entwined with matters of race and deeply embedded in society and in institutions like ours. Such discrimination runs counter to some of the basic principles that underpin the pursuit of knowledge, and without vigilant, proactive measures it continues and grows. We know that we have failed to be proactive, have contributed to the problem by not doing more, and have allowed ourselves to become complacent. Recent world events and discussions within College have helped us see this more clearly. In response, we renew our commitment to do our utmost for everyone in our community: every single person associated with the College deserves nothing less.

Last week, alongside other heads of Oxford colleges, the Provost signed a letter of solidarity that was published in the Guardian. However, our response is not limited to letters, whether internal or public. We are called upon to act. Right now, we are discussing how best to confront the systemic racism of which we have been a part: how we can correct our errors, and how we can do better. We will listen to, and engage with, our community to identify where we are falling short and the steps we will take to improve.

Most immediately, we wanted to remind those students who are facing immediate difficulties that the College provides a range of avenues for you to seek help or simply to talk through your concerns and the impact recent events may have had on your studies. For undergraduates, your moral tutors, and, for graduates, your graduate advisors, are more than willing to talk to you. The system for providing support in cases of financial hardship was recently streamlined and can be accessed through the College

website or the College Office. The Welfare Officer is also available and can, among other things, point to more specialised sources of support.

We are setting up a working group, to include students and staff from across the College, tasked with working over the summer to put forward concrete and meaningful proposals to the Governing Body at its first meeting next term. It will look at all areas where the College can improve: in its outreach activities, in admissions, and in financial support, for undergraduates and postgraduates alike; in the procedures related to hiring and retaining academic and non-academic staff members of the highest calibre; in student support; and in all aspects of fostering an inclusive community in which everyone feels respected, valued, and heard. We will address the ways in which we have permitted systemic racism to persist across our history as a College, and we will change them for the better.

Thank you and best wishes,

The Provost and Governing Body