# Note of 2nd Working Group meeting, 2-4pm, 8 September (Zoom)

**Present**: Claire Craig (Chair), Mark Buckley, Rebekah Hodgkinson, Neil Huntley, Sean Ketteringham, Marina Lambrakis, Sarah McHugh, Poorna Mysoor, Ludovic Phalippou, Andrew Timms, Hamidah Saleem, Afra Sterne-Rodgers, Nafisah Tabassum, Lindsay Turnbull, Gracie Wilson, Alice Wong

**Apologies:** Sue Tutty, Marie Bracey

## Summary

The Chair introduced this ‘middle’ meeting of the WG, and reminded members of the timetable. There is one further WG meeting scheduled at the start of October where the WG will aim to finalise a proposal and set of recommendations for the 22 October Governing Body meeting.

The Chair invited general reflections from student members about work so far. It was felt that the four work strands are operating quite productively, and that it is good to have a space in which to discuss experiences. The issue of representation of BAME people on the WG was raised as something that could be improved in future activity. The Chair noted that there was only one more meeting of the WG, so the matter of representation needed to be built into the WG’s recommendations and subsequent activities. It would also be important to engage widely outside the WG in finalising the recommendations before the next meeting.

### Work Strand A: Culture, Behaviours, Communication

WSA has met once, convened by Marie Bracey (Domestic Bursar). Discussion focused on two issues: first, how to enable informal conversations about racism and create spaces where people can raise issues safely; and second, the provision of training. A key point that emerged was focused on the constraining nature of formal disciplinary procedures, and a desire to develop less formalised mechanisms. The WG discussed moving away from the idea of a threshold for incidents, to identify ways in which issues can be explored in a positive learning environment.

On the subject of training, a number of questions were raised relating to the nature and purpose of any training we might commission, as well as who it should be for (Fellows, staff, students). There were different views about the language we use in relation to ‘training’, “education”, “awareness” and so on. Training might aim to raise awareness and increase knowledge, or be more focused on developing skills and strategies to tackle racism in our communities. The concept of allyship or ‘being a responsible bystander’ was proposed by several WG members. The JCR and MCR traditionally run sessions in Freshers’ Week which serve as an introduction to these issues, but it is felt that these are not really adequate. In terms of staff, this is something to incorporate both in induction and continuing development. The WG agreed that training should be interactive and incorporate direct examples of the experiences of people of colour. It should not function in isolation – it must be part of a broader programme across the academic year to embed anti-racism into the College’s practice and encourage continued engagement, education and awareness-raising. Training should also be effective and targeted to different groups.

The discussion broadened out to recognise that was being explored was the idea of cultural and behavioural change within the College and that training, however defined, would not achieve this on its own. One suggestion was to seek advice from academic experts in these areas within Oxford. The Group also touched on the need to build such change into the College’s intellectual life and to draw from the areas in which those associated with the College contribute to research in areas related to race.

The Chair suggested bringing this issue back for further discussion, either to the WSA group or a smaller sub-group.

### Work Strand B: Access, Outreach, and Admissions

WSB has met twice, convened by Lindsay Turnbull (the incoming Tutor for Outreach) and Ludovic Phallipou (Governing Body Fellow). A number of areas for improvement have been identified, especially related to the current admissions web pages and materials. This should be both to show the College’s diversity such as it is and explain better why potential applicants should choose Queen’s, and also to provide more information to applicants, particularly on the interview process. More generally, there might be recommendations that emerge about the College’s approach to interviews to ensure that unconscious bias is mitigated where possible and to further develop ways to assess the College’s performance on admissions. There will be one further meeting of WSB before the final WG meeting.

### Work Strand C: Student Experience

WSC has met twice, convened by Poorna Mysoor (Early Career Fellow). A number of ideas are emerging from this group. Firstly, there is appetite for an exhibition to celebrate BAME people at Queen’s, similar to the ‘Shining a Light’ exhibition. It is hoped that this could go live in Hilary Term 2021, initially as an online exhibition hosted on the College website, highlighting old and current members of the College. Circumstances permitting, there could be a launch event with a panel of speakers. This work is being taken forward together with Claire Hooper and the Old Members’ Office.

A second theme is around building a community in the College and providing spaces where people can come together less formally – this has been referred to previously as a ‘circle of friends’. An initial plan would be for a termly drinks and dinner event, with a less formal event in Freshers’ Week to demonstrate to new students from the start that Queen’s is a welcoming and inclusive community. These events are conceived as an initiative for BAME people, but would not be exclusive to them – anyone would be able to attend.

There has also been some work to investigate the College’s history and involvement in colonialism and the slave trade. The College Archivist has committed to spend two days in September exploring specific questions in the archive. There is also a broader cross-Collegiate initiative which the College may wish to participate in. A key consideration is the standard we wish to see in these research projects, and ensuring a degree of academic rigour.

The WG discussed ways to amplify its activity among the student body and seek feedback, including the possibility of conducting a survey of students. The suggested timeline for this is to circulate it in mid-Hilary Term 2021, when efforts may have started to bear fruit. It was noted that a broader culture shift is a longer-term project which may take some time to materialise, and so questions on any such survey should be carefully considered. The JCR and MCR have agreed to publicise the notes of WG meetings via their social media pages, to help encourage further student engagement.

### Work Strand D: Recruitment, Appointments, and Training

WSD has met twice, convened by Sarah McHugh (Academic Administrator). The group considered the equality monitoring which the College undertakes in recruitment, and is consulting more widely with other colleges. It is apparent that current monitoring does not provide all the information desired, and small changes have already been made to the process. It was noted that iTrent has the capability built in to include what the College needs, so the Academic Administrator is working with Geoff Benbow to explore this further. Relatedly, there are changes already being considered to the ways in which posts are advertised, both in terms of the language and wording in Further Particulars, and also the fora in which the College advertises vacancies. There has been some consideration of specific training for people on recruitment panels. The next senior academic appointment to which these changes might be applied would be that of the Tutorial Fellow in history.

### General discussion

The WG discussed briefly the role that Equalities Committee might play in consider equality data, and agreed that the broader positioning of Governing Body committees with relation to the WG’s recommendations needed to be thought through [Action: Chair]

The WG agreed that the four work strands appear to be working well, although there might be a need for a cross-cutting group to look specifically at the issue of training, education and awareness-raising. Workstrand convenors should aim to arrange at least one further meeting before the final WG meeting in October, in order to work up a more tangible set of recommendations which can be put to Governing Body. Recommendations don’t all have to be ‘fully cooked’ and could include consulting further on specific issues.

There was a suggestion that it would be helpful for the Governing Body and staff to hear what is wrong, as many may not realise or understand the extent of dissatisfaction. The JCR has collated student experiences, and has agreed to put these together in an anonymous, shareable format. Members noted that including specific examples can be very powerful, but must be done in a considerate and compassionate manner too. Student members also made the point that there is considerable appetite for greater involvement of students in the WG’s activity, and it would be good to capitalise on this before the final WG meeting. WG notes can be shared and those who are interested in particular work strands should be encouraged to get in touch with convenors. A future event was discussed, as a means of publicising the WG recommendations once they have been considered by the Governing Body.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Marina Lambrakis, 11 September 2020, approved 18 September