

# Our Magazine Plan

*Oxford Magazine* exists as a forum for free expression and open debate within the University community, and much more besides. In its present guise the Magazine was in fact “resurrected” by the University, after a lengthy hiatus, in the wake of the – for the institution surprising -- polemic over the proposed award of an honorary doctorate to the then Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher. The logic behind this decision was that such a publication, in which members of Congregation and the wider university community could write on subjects of current interest to each other, would act as both a pressure valve and a testing ground for potentially controversial topics and decisions.

The “administrative” structure of the Magazine is, we believe, unique. It is produced by OUP, as a service in kind to the University. It is published internally and housed on the intranet by PAD. The Editors are appointed by a Management Board, which includes three members of Congregation (one of whom is a lawyer) and is chaired, currently and in recent decades, by a Head of House. The Editors meet regularly with the Board, and the Board reports annually to the Proctors’ Office – responsible for the observance and upholding of the University’s Statutes and Regulations. The Management Board has no editorial role, and does not influence content; the Magazine is legal-read in its entirety by lawyers at OUP.

A criticism that has been levelled at the Magazine – at times with some justification – is that it has become a forum for narrowly-held positions and special interests. Some years ago, the Editors reached out to various interested members of Congregation, across the Divisions, to create an Editorial Advisory Group. This group has worked to find new topics and potential writers/correspondents to cover these topics; so far we have had some, but limited, success.

We have reviewed as a group some of the reasons that potential contributors are reluctant to come forward; mainly this is the well-known problem of people having too many commitments already. But there is also a nervousness about being seen to criticise the University, if only by association with a magazine perceived to be primarily oppositional.

*Oxford Magazine* operates as an open forum which colleagues, across the University, should feel free to join to express their ideas, their critical views and proposals, to bear witness to or improve the academic, cultural and professional standing of our institution. As universities have a statutory obligation to promote freedom of expression, we view the Magazine as one means by which Oxford University can fulfil this duty.

The Magazine remains fundamentally internal; that is in itself important, perhaps essential, to its critical Oxford University-specific role and also for our “free-speech” credibility, even though this may seem to limit its exposure to some people. That said, we allow and indeed encourage contributors to republish elsewhere and actively seek contributions from outside the University. Furthermore, the magazine is more than just a forum for “sounding

off” – as evidenced by issues in recent years, we are very keen for material on a wide range of subjects broadly related to the University and universities, education, intellectual life, etc.

We hope in future issues to feature material from senior members of the University. We also welcome contributions from the central University administration, at all levels; indeed, we consider that these could be some of the most useful and interesting articles for our readership, and are actively considering ways in which contributors might be reassured and encouraged by their line managers. We very much hope for the Magazine to have greater visibility around the institution; the availability of a small number of print copies would be one means to achieve this.

We are keen to welcome new members to the Editorial Advisory Group. The Editors still rely mostly on contributions that land in their inboxes. For the Magazine to serve its purpose, these need to come from as wide a constitution as possible.

Signed – The Editorial Advisory Group:

Guido Bonsaver,  
Danny Dorling,  
Georgy Kantor,  
William Poole,  
Thomas Sinclair,  
Alex Schekochihin,  
Sam Wolfe.

# OXFORD

## MAGAZINE

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The administrative structure of the *Magazine* is, we believe, unique. It is published internally and housed on the intranet by the Public Affairs Directorate. The editors are appointed by a Management Board, which includes three members of Congregation (one of whom is a lawyer) and is chaired, currently and in recent decades, by a Head of House. The editors meet regularly with the Board, and the Board reports annually to the Proctors’ Office, which is responsible for the observance and upholding of the University’s Statutes and Regulations. The Management Board has no editorial role and does not influence content.

A criticism that has been levelled at the *Magazine* – at times with some justification – is that it has become a forum for narrowly-held positions and special interests. Some years ago, the editors reached out to various interested members of Congregation, across the Divisions, to create an Editorial Advisory Group. This group has worked to find new topics and potential writers/correspondents to cover these topics; so far we

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have had some, but limited, success, on which we are keen to build.

We have reviewed as a group some of the reasons that potential contributors are reluctant to come forward; mainly this is the well-known problem of people having too many commitments already. But there is also a nervousness about being seen to criticise the University, if only by association with a magazine perceived to be primarily oppositional. There may be a

perception that the editors are interested primarily in discussions of University policy or governance; in reality, the editors explicitly encourage submissions on a broad front, including poetry. Content is largely determined by what arrives from colleagues. For the *Magazine* to serve its purpose, content needs to come from as wide a constituency as possible.

*Oxford Magazine* operates as an open forum which colleagues across the University should feel free to join to express their ideas, their critical views and proposals, so as to bear witness to or improve the academic, cultural and professional standing of our institution. As universities have a statutory obligation to promote freedom of expression, we view the *Magazine* as one means by which Oxford University can fulfil this duty. As members of the Editorial Advisory Group, we invite material on a wide range of subjects broadly related to the University and universities, education, intellectual life, culture in the widest sense.

The *Magazine* remains fundamentally internal; that is in itself important, perhaps essential, to its critical Oxford University-specific role and also for our “free-speech” credibility, even though this may seem to some people to limit its exposure. That said, we allow and indeed encourage contributors to republish elsewhere

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The EAG, and the editors, hope in future issues to feature material from senior members of the University. We also welcome contributions from the central University administration, at all levels; indeed, we consider that these could be some of the most useful and interesting articles for our readership, and we are actively considering ways in which such potential contributors might be reassured and encouraged by their line managers. We are hoping to set up a system in which line managers have not only supported the submission of a particular article in advance but are themselves willing to respond to published material so that different view-

points can be represented. We very much hope for the *Magazine* to have greater visibility around the institution; the availability of a small number of print copies would be one means to achieve this.

We are keen to welcome new members to the Editorial Advisory Group. Please contact the editors for further information.

*The Editorial Advisory Group: Guido Bonsaver, Danny Dorling, Georgy Kantor, William Poole, Thomas Sinclair, Alex Schekochihin, Sam Wolfe.*