



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

# Gazette supplement



## Voting on a Resolution in respect of the Graduate Application Fee Voting on a Resolution to constitute a Redundancy Panel under Statute XII

**Congregation 25 June**

### **David Prout, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Resources**

Good afternoon, everyone. It's great to see so many of you here today. I'm afraid the Vice-Chancellor is away on business abroad that she couldn't put off. So you're going to have to put up with me today – I'm David Prout, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Resources.

There are three items of business before Congregation today.

An item of business that was on the agenda of this meeting, that is voting on a resolution on Statute XI, has been adjourned until next term.

Would you please be seated?

The first item of business is questions and replies on the topic of the student occupation of the University Offices. These were published in the [University Gazette on 20 June](#) as set out in Section 5.2 of the Congregation Regulations. No debate shall be permitted upon the reply but, at the chair's discretion, supplementary questions may be asked to elucidate it. If you will forgive me, to permit time for debate on the other two items we have today, the questions will be taken as read and elucidatory questions will be submitted by correspondence. I hope that is OK.

Copies of the questions and replies are available from stewards in this meeting; Council will consider any elucidatory questions and publish replies in due course.

The second and third items of business are resolutions. I read the first resolution on the graduate application fee submitted by members of Congregation and the second a resolution on the constitution of a redundancy panel submitted by the Council. In each case, the resolution will be moved and seconded; the opposition will be moved and seconded; there will then be some pre-arranged speeches; by that, I don't mean that they've been pre-written by someone else, but we know who's speaking.

Then a mover and seconder will each have the right to reply.

Due to the volume of business, again if you will forgive me, it will be not be possible to take questions from the floor. At the conclusion of all items, both resolutions will be put to Congregation and a vote will take place by ballot paper. Each member of Congregation will have two votes, each on a different-coloured ballot paper – yellow and green.

A member may not leave a completed voting paper with another member. Only a member's personal voting

paper will be accepted. Any member who cannot stay until the vote will not be able to vote.

I hope that's all right and clear for everybody. We'll start with questions and replies on the topic of the student occupation of the University Offices, and the Registrar will read the replies on behalf of the Council.

#### **Gillian Aitken, Registrar**

Council's responses to the questions raised are as follows.

Question 1: University Protocols for the handling of protests have developed over the years and are reviewed annually by Oxford University Security Services, known as OUSS, and that group is overseen by the Security Subcommittee. In both 2009 and 2024 the key role in deciding on action in respect of what is termed a 'spontaneous protest' was held by the University Marshal, who advised the Vice-Chancellor on the occasion of the 2009 Clarendon protest and who confirmed the decision, made by Security Services, to call the police on 23 May 2024.

No two incidents are the same and judgements had to be made in the moment based on an assessment of the circumstances. It is not just the protocols that have changed since 2009, but the circumstances of the occupation were different on 23 May 2024, and it should also be noted that police were called to manage the occupation of the Radcliffe Camera by students and non-students protesting against University fees in November 2010, resulting in the removal of the protesters by the police after 24 hours.

At the current time, the events of 23 May remain the subject of an ongoing police investigation; however, the key points regarding the circumstances are outlined here.

The decision to call the police was made on the basis of the activation of a panic alarm by the receptionist at Wellington Square, the receipt of two phone calls to OUSS from Wellington Square staff stating that protesters had 'stormed' and 'broken into' the building, and awareness that the receptionist had been prevented from activating the lockdown button. By this time, the protesters were within the Vice-Chancellor's office and footplate, and the building had been locked down, meaning that the internal doors were automatically locked. The protesters, hooded, masked and disguised, had entered the VC's office shouting slogans and filming using their mobile phones, interrupting a Teams meeting. The VC was initially unable to make herself heard by the intruders (who then identified themselves as protestors) and repeatedly she asked them to leave, noting that this was a place of work, there were many correct channels she was willing to use to have dialogue, and this behaviour was not what she expected from

students. She repeated the phrase: 'I respectfully ask you to leave.' An intruder encouraged the rest to allow the VC to speak and they were quiet for a short period before shouting and chanting again. They also started to lock and secure one of the doors to the VC's office through which they had entered. The PVC for Innovation entered the VC's office to ask if she was all right and, noting they were not listening or willing to listen but that the two of them were potentially being locked in the office, they agreed they should leave. The VC, the PVC (Innovation) and other members of staff in the floorplate then departed via the door adjacent to Room 6B. Meanwhile, the intruders set about moving furniture from offices, barricading doors and screening themselves from sight using sheets.

On the basis of the activation of the panic alarm and the two phone calls from staff members, the OUSS Duty Supervisor judged that the situation warranted police assistance and called 999 at 5 minutes past 8. He also dispatched an OUSS patrol to Wellington Square which arrived shortly afterwards and informed the Marshal who drove to Wellington Square arriving at 14 minutes past 8. The Marshal confirmed that calling for police assistance was the right decision (he would have cancelled the call had he felt it unwarranted); and a few minutes later, having established the forced nature of the entry and the concerns felt by those who had witnessed it, he instructed a further call to the police asking them to expedite their attendance. The protocol worked as it should.

The question asks about attempts to achieve peaceful resolution. As described above, the VC attempted to engage with the intruders but the account shows that there did not appear to be a realistic prospect of a peaceful dialogue. Relevant to the decision to involve the police was: the forced nature of the entry by unidentifiable intimidating intruders (it later transpired that 5 of the 17 were not current members of the University); the alarm and distress of staff who encountered the intruders including those who called OUSS; the activation of the panic alarm and then the lockdown button; the movement of the intruders into the VC's floorplate area and then her personal office while she was in the room, and their subsequent behaviour; the occupation of offices of senior officers of the University in which it would be expected to find sensitive and confidential papers and data.

Turning to question 2: the University confirms that the protocol was followed on 23 May 2024.

And finally, question 3: the University is not pressing charges as the decision whether to bring any charges against the intruders will be made by the police. They will investigate the circumstances and facts, taking account of all relevant factors before making a decision which will itself be subject to the Crown Prosecution

Service agreeing that the bringing of a prosecution would be in the public interest. The police, like the University, are aware of the concern felt by some members of our community at the impact of charges on students.

### David Prout

Thank you, Registrar; and, as I say, elucidatory questions can be asked and will be answered by Council.

We now move to the second item on the agenda: a resolution on the graduate application fee. The resolution, together with an explanatory note, was placed on the agenda of this meeting in the [University Gazette published on 6 June](#). I shall first call Professor David Gavaghan to move the resolution and then Professor Helen Swift to second it. I shall then call on Professor Chris Lintott to oppose and Professor Ben Sheldon, to second that opposition. There will then be further speeches in support of or in opposition to the resolution. At the conclusion of the debate, Professor Gavaghan and Professor Chris Lintott will be able to reply as well.

So, Professor Gavaghan, would you like to take the floor? – thank you very much. You’ve got four minutes, and then Helen has got three.

### Professor David Gavaghan

Thank you all for coming on this very warm afternoon. As the Pro-Vice-Chancellor said, I’m David Gavaghan, I’m a Professor in the Department of Computer Science.

Every speaker today shares the goal of ensuring that more graduate students from under-represented and socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds actually come to Oxford to study. And that’s the key point: that they actually come to Oxford to study.

Where we differ is in the means to achieve this aim.

Six years ago, I was asked by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, Martin Williams, to set up and chair a Graduate Access Working Group.

Martin’s pitch was not compelling – there was no funding – just his complete support and that of exceptionally committed teams in Graduate Admissions and Student Fees and Funding, and that of a handful of like-minded colleagues in departments and colleges across the University.

So, we set about building a coalition of those who were willing, who devoted their time and energy, and, in the case of the colleges, substantial funding, to building up the initiatives that mean that Oxford is now seen to be sector-leading in graduate access in the UK.

Working closely with colleagues in the Department of Education, each initiative, from the UNIQ+ summer internship programme to the Academic Futures Scholarships, is grounded in evidence from the socioeconomic and ethnicity data that we now collect from every applicant and each initiative has been piloted and evaluated before being rolled out University-wide.

What we have learnt is that graduate access is extraordinarily complex – initiatives that may appear to be an obviously good thing in one part of the University may have severe unintended consequences in another.

These differences are exacerbated by the ever-growing number of graduate applications, which reached 40,500 this year – up 12% on last year, and double those of 10 years ago.

This growth puts ever-increasing strain on our entire admissions system, but because 2/3 of the applications are for PGT courses, those departments with a substantial PGT intake – that’s postgraduate taught intake – bear the brunt of the impact.

In particular, the Social Sciences Division receives more than twice as many applications (over 17,000 in 2023) than any other division and yet has only about 1/6 of the University’s academic staff.

On average every member in Social Sciences has to process 48 applications (many individuals of course will process many more, in the hundreds) and some departmental administrators have to process several thousand.

In other parts of the University, including my own MPLS Division where most of those opposing this resolution are based, application numbers are generally much lower. For example, in 2023 the Biology Department had just under 3 applications per academic, and Physics and Chemistry just over 5. But even here large disparities exist, with the smallest department, Statistics, having about 35 applications per academic due to a large postgraduate taught programme.

Now, the whole point of removing the application fee is that more people will actually apply. Experience with fee waivers in Oxford for those on low incomes and removal of the fee for PGR applicants – that’s DPhil applicants – in Cambridge shows that this increase will be from everyone, not just access candidates. Our best estimate is that this increase will be in the region of 40%–100%.

In Biology, Physics and Chemistry this would mean a greatly increased workload for the DGSs and the Graduate Administrators, but possibly a manageable increase of 2–5 applications for each academic.

In Social Sciences departments the increase would be ten-fold (20–50 on average per academic – hundreds for some academics) – clearly unmanageable and resulting, as my colleagues will explain, in a hugely negative impact on both graduate access work and staff wellbeing.

In summary, the evidence that we have gathered over the last six years does not support the blanket abolition of the graduate application fee as a route to improved graduate access.

What is effective depends on the local context and genuine progress requires substantial investment of resources and funding into this area.

I urge you therefore to support the resolution and allow us to continue to make a genuine difference to graduate access across our collegiate University. Thank you very much.

#### **David Prout**

Thank you, Professor Gavaghan. Professor Swift, please.

#### **Professor Helen Swift**

Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Helen Swift and I'm a Professor of Medieval French Literature. What's relevant about me today is that, whilst undergraduate widening participation has been a focus for me for 20 years, I'm a relative newcomer to graduate access, through UNIQ+ and through sitting on committees with the colleagues whose expertise in this work you see in our flyer; I've learnt a lot. I've also seen the dread escalate these past months as it's become clear that streamlining adjustments to the graduate admissions system, whilst welcome, are a drop in the ocean compared to the workload implications of next year's rounds with the fee abolished. As PGT coordinator for my sub-faculty, this spring reminded me how maximally tight the timeframe is already for academic assessment and also how devastating it is at offer stage, after tremendous efforts by all involved promoting candidates of brilliant potential from disadvantaged backgrounds, to find the already limited funding pot empty. For Humanities, with impending AHRC studentship cuts, the situation will only get harder for access as competition tightens, inhibiting a more inclusive recognition of excellence and promise. University-wide this year, 207 offer-holders are eligible for the three Academic Futures Schemes but funding is available for only about 50; ringfenced scholarship funding with the income from the application fee could fund most of them.

Six years of graduate access work have given us effective answers for rectifying the most salient inequities in our system. These gains will turn to loss next year – at best stalling, at worst reversing hard-won momentum for success. Channelling a retained fee into access work not only prevents that loss, but enables a step change,

especially in terms of scholarships, which can then be leveraged to accelerate the progress we all want to achieve.

In March 2020, feeling a clear sense of what's simply unfair, I voted to abolish the application fee. Today I see clearly that many interconnected things are unfair and none of them simple... except that, if I want to look in the eye my administrative and academic colleagues who will face next year's rounds, if I want in good faith to encourage excellent applicants whose circumstances make thriving as a graduate impossible without support and full funding, at this point I have to vote to retain the fee. Please join me in doing so. Thank you.

#### **David Prout**

Thank you very much, Professor Smith. Professor Lintott, four minutes to oppose the resolution, please.

#### **Professor Chris Lintott**

Thank you. Pro-Vice-Chancellor, colleagues, Congregation:

I am Chris Lintott, a professor in the Department of Physics and somebody who for many years has been intimately involved in our graduate admissions process. Like those who have spoken already, those on our side of the debate believe that access is a fundamental and import issue to this University to be addressed in many complex ways. Where we differ is that on principle we cannot support charging a fee, a tax, on those who owe us least. We believe it's fundamentally inequitable to charge applicants a high fee for what should be a core function of the University: assessing those who apply here.

This is especially true for graduate study. Because our graduate applicants have complicated lives – many have caring responsibilities, support partners, have differing financial relationships with their parents. It's not as easy as it is for undergraduates – and goodness knows, that's difficult – to assess how a socioeconomic measure affects their ability to find, at a time of economic hardship and when many of these applicants are burdened by loans and debt incurred from a course of previous study: £75 is not a small amount of money for people.

And it is tempting to believe we can use waivers to divide the world into those we can help and those who can afford this £75 fee. But this complexity prevents that from being so. The data provided by the proposers shows that waivers are ineffective: people do not want to apply for for special treatment from a university that they are considering joining. Waivers simply do not mitigate the off-putting effect of the fee.

As we were in 2020, we're told that there will be an increase in applications. I want to pay tribute to the work done by colleagues across the collegiate University

in the last four years to prepare for this change which everyone knew was coming. We're sitting here at the last possible moment, as if no-one expected an increase in applications. If the applicants we get are high quality, then good! If they are frivolous applicants, then systems can be adjusted and have been adjusted to deal with them. As you've heard, there's an increase in graduate applications that goes back over a decade, which swamps any effect of removing the fee. Our numbers are increasing; we must have systems to deal with them and the fee here is a distraction.

Graduate admissions is complex, I don't want to deny that – anyone, all of you who've dealt with it know that – but changing course at the last moment will add to that complexity next year; it will undo planning that's been made, and may cause unanticipated problems in a complicated system as well as setting the uncomfortable precedent that Congregation can just be asked to simply vote again, if a minority disagree with a decision taken in good faith and with good notice for the University to implement.

Regrettably, on a technical point, I also need to say that the resolution that's before you is not well drafted. It doesn't specify how the money that's raised – whether it's to be ringfenced for graduate access – should be spent between the many options that are on the papers before you. It's not clear that this money would be available for scholarships and not swallowed up within existing costs within the University. There's nothing in the motion that prevents that. More importantly, it does nothing to set the amount of the fee – and we've seen in the past that, once a graduate application fee is seen as a source of income, it can be used as a perceived easy option to fill holes in budgets. That's why it increased from the initial modest £20 to the £75 it hit a few years ago. This resolution gives carte blanche for the fee to be set at whatever the University would like it to be.

So: for procedural reasons, for practical ones – and not changing our minds at the last possible moment – but most of all on principle, I and my colleagues urge you to reject this motion, and continue on the prudent course that we set out four years ago. Thank you.

#### **David Prout**

Thank you very much, Professor Lintott. Professor Sheldon, please. You've got three minutes to second.

#### **Professor Ben Sheldon**

Thank you and good afternoon. I am Professor Ben Sheldon, in the Department of Biology.

Four years ago, Oxford voted to remove the Graduate Application Fee. And in doing so, we demonstrated leadership across the sector; indeed to such an extent that our close peers who'd previously had application fees promptly followed our lead.

The proposition before you seeks to overturn that vote, at the last possible moment. It does so while proposing that the retained fee is used to improve access. Now, I am confident that everyone here agrees that improving access to Oxford should be one of our main priorities, and that despite huge efforts by many across the collegiate University, and many achievements, many of those led by those supporting the proposition, we still have much to do.

So why do I urge you to oppose this proposition? Let me give you two reasons why you should.

First, because funding access initiatives from fees charged to applicants is unjust. In the most recent application cycle, there were 32,000 applicants for graduate study at Oxford and 6,057 places taken up. That means – under the current fee charging regime – that the great majority of applicants paying a fee will never come to Oxford.

If we believe improving access is important – and, again, I am sure we all do – we should demonstrate that by using our own resources to fund it, not by taking money from mostly young people who will never be part of the Oxford community. This is, of course, what we already do with the many successful graduate – and in fact the current graduate – access schemes.

Second, and more fundamentally, I urge you to oppose this proposition because the original imposition of a graduate application fee 20 years ago created inequality at Oxford.

There are many other ways in which one can become a member of this great university: as an undergraduate, as a member of administrative or support staff, as a researcher, or as a member of academic staff. What all of those have in common is that application to become a member of Oxford is without a fee.

One of the arguments that the proposition advances is that the administrative costs of assessing graduate applications are considerable. And of course they are, but colleagues who have been engaged in undergraduate admissions, or in the recruitment of academic staff, will be aware of just how heavy the workload for those can be as well. Now, it would be absurd to suggest that we start charging applicants for academic posts an application fee. Equally, introducing a fee for undergraduate applications would be seen as a completely retrograde step. Why, then, should we single out potential graduate students among the entire Oxford community to pay this cost?

The vote to remove the graduate application fee in 2020 removed a fundamental cause of inequality at Oxford. If we reintroduce it now, we will be making Oxford less equal. We would also be the only one of our UK peers to

charge a fee for graduate research applications. So I urge you to vote no to this resolution.

**David Prout**

Thank you, Professor Sheldon. And we've now got four further speakers. Two and a half minutes each, starting with The Revd Professor Gilbert, please.

**Robert Gilbert**

Good afternoon. My name is Robert Gilbert, and I'm the Director of Graduate Studies in the Nuffield Department of Medicine.

After the 2020 postal ballot on application fee abolition, I considered the matter closed and was involved in planning for the process changes required as part of the application fee Working Group. Why then am I speaking in favour of this motion? Because new information has become available. We understand more about mechanisms that promote access and equality of opportunity in graduate studies. We know more about what does and does not work well. And we know that the principal limit on our ability to promote access in an effective way is the availability of scholarships.

The application fee working group has done a very good job. And as much as we found possible, process improvements identified have and will be implemented. One output has been significant streamlining improvements to the graduate application form, including integration of candidate CVs. This change is already promoting equality in access and opportunity among graduate applicants, alongside the UNIQ+ internship programme, and improved information and guidance, while banding of applicants for socio-economic disadvantage has been especially impactful in conceptualising decisions about places and funding.

But the main limiting factor in promoting access – for DPhil students, in particular – is the availability of funding. The Academic Futures scholarship scheme has targeted support at disadvantaged DPhil candidates, alongside improved decision-making. But it is certainly the case that highly qualified candidates are declining offers of places because funding cannot be found.

This is one thing we know better, and highlights a key difference between measures promoting access by undergraduates and graduates. Applicant diversity is the key to promoting access and equality of opportunity in the University at undergraduate level. For graduate students, it is not the same – because of funding. Yes, we need to promote applications from a diverse and inclusive group of potential students, and yes, we need to remove barriers they encounter to making applications and gaining places on courses. But the one thing we can do which will make most difference is to be able to offer more targeted scholarships, alongside enhanced on-course support, and more effective use

of application fee waivers. A future motion might come to Congregation arguing for the reimposition of the application fee to enable funding, as now, of core Graduate Admissions processes. Supporting this motion will ensure that instead the fee is used to promote graduate access. Thank you very much.

**David Prout**

Thank you very much. Professor Marshall, please.

**Professor David Marshall**

Good afternoon. My name is David Marshall, from the Department of Physics and St Hugh's College, and I'm Programme Director at the Doctoral Training Partnership in Environmental Research.

Let me start by stating where we are in agreement. Over the past few years, Oxford has established sector-leading initiatives in graduate access, led by colleagues such as David Gavaghan and Gail Preston. These initiatives are making a real difference and further investment in scholarships is required to underpin these efforts.

Nevertheless, I cannot support the resolution before us. Congregation voted four years ago to abolish the graduate application fee. The resolution proposes to reinstate that fee and to use the money to support scholarships for access. I believe it is unfair and ill-advised to ask applicants, the majority of whom will be unsuccessful, to fund DPhil scholarships for those that are successful. I have also consulted with many students over the past two weeks and heard heartfelt anecdotes of how the application fee, and exceptionally restrictive conditions to qualify for a waiver, are genuine disincentives.

As a scientist, I also believe in taking decisions evidenced by data. We are warned of an imminent meltdown in graduate administration. Firstly, a 42% increase in applications does not result in a 42% increase in admissions workload, as long as the number of candidates shortlisted remains unchanged. For example, taking the proponents' figures and assumptions for the Doctoral Training Centre at face value, the increased workload is 22.6% – significant, but hardly catastrophic given the preparations the University has made, again, for example, the proposed removal of manual redactions more than compensates for the increase for the DTC. Secondly, and more importantly, we are about to discover the actual impact of removal of the application fee: why not await the data, rather than overturn a democratic decision at the 11th hour on the basis of speculation?

The optics of decisions taken by Congregation matter, especially in the run up to a general election. The resolution before us may be well intentioned, but I believe it is misguided and likely to be

counter-productive, sending the wrong message at the wrong time. I urge you to vote against. Thank you.

**David Prout**

Thanks, Professor Marshall. Dr Robson, please.

**Dr James Robson**

Good afternoon. I am James Robson from the Department of Education and a Research Fellow at Green Templeton. Colleagues, like everyone in this discussion, I'm here because I care passionately about the issue of graduate access. This is also one of my main areas of research and I am the academic lead for the Close the Gap project – a large collaboration with Cambridge focused on addressing inequalities in graduate admissions. So, I spend a great deal of time conducting research on and analysing how we can make graduate admissions fairer at all stages of the process.

Ultimately, that's what this discussion is about. The fundamental aim of the initial decision to remove the graduate application fee was to improve graduate access. However, we now know much more about this issue and what really makes a difference to who actually comes to this institution. What matters are pre-application support initiatives, access-oriented selection approaches, and needs-based scholarships.

Without these, removing the application fee is irrelevant. Worse, we now have enough of an understanding of our admissions to see that a blanket removal of the fee actually poses a risk to some of these empirically proven activities.

Access-driven admissions require care, attention and, most importantly, time. Given the increased number of applications, particularly for Humanities and Social Sciences PGTs, academics in these disciplines will face an untenable workload. Putting aside the welfare issue, our colleagues are only human and the sad reality is that, when faced with these kinds of pressures, the access agenda fades away. It becomes secondary to the basic need to process applications as quickly and efficiently as possible. Our research is already showing this.

A blanket removal of the fee is too much of a blunt and regressive tool. We are, therefore, suggesting reintroducing the application fee but, importantly, in a progressive way. New broad waivers will ensure that those who can't afford it will never have to pay the fee, multiple speculative admissions will be reduced, and the income will be used to ensure that proven access work and appropriate scholarships will be supported in a long-term, sustainable manner.

I strongly believe our goal should be to ensure that the best candidates do not just apply, but also take up their places regardless of race, class or socio-economic status.

That is what we're trying to achieve with this resolution and so I hope you will support it.

**David Prout**

Thank you, Dr Robson. Dr Gooptu, please.

**Dr Nandini Gooptu**

Good afternoon. My name is Nandini Gooptu and I speak in my capacity as the Associate Head of Social Sciences Division for equity, inclusion and diversity. Like previous speakers, I too had espoused a principled opposition to the application fee. But I now see that, in our division, fee abolishing can paradoxically defeat our EDI and access goals by severely impairing our ability to recruit and support promising applicants from underprivileged and minoritised backgrounds. Let me explain.

Social Sciences has several interdisciplinary and practice-oriented degrees and departments, including large professional faculties – Law, Business and Public Policy. Our applicants frequently come with experience of practical work in a range of fields beyond academia. For them, previous degree performance alone is a blunt instrument to assess ability and merit. Those from non-traditional backgrounds may not have the best grades, for example, due to having to work and support or care for families whilst studying. But they often have exceptional achievements in other fields of work. Those from under-served backgrounds do not necessarily have the academic grooming to write pitch-perfect applications, including some among our high number of international applicants.

So our only effective strategy to enhance access, and do justice to underrepresented groups, is to read every aspect of every application carefully and in detail. For this fundamentally important exercise there are simply not enough academics with enough time. Additionally, academics overwhelmed with applications will be forced to reduce the attention given to on-course students, to the particular detriment of those who have academic potential but need additional support to succeed.

With increasing application numbers, measures to ensure more efficient management now include, for instance, more elaborate instructions for prospective applicants and a grade-based eligibility self-evaluation tool. These could both put off and screen out those who already fear Oxford is not for them. To prevent unintended consequences of this nature, fine-tuned and enhanced fee waiver for deserving UK and Global South applicants is much the better solution than blanket fee abolition.

The best graduate access initiative would consist of targeted fee waiver, outreach and application support

programmes such as UNIQ+, combined with a much larger number of scholarships and on-course support to ensure that students have the best chance to succeed. Thank you, and I urge you to vote in favour of the resolution.

**David Prout**

Thank you, Dr Gooptu. Professor Gavaghan or Professor Lintott, do you want to reply?

**Professor David Gavaghan**

So, there are several points I would like to rebuff – too many – and so I'm just going to try and summarise what we have put before you this afternoon.

Those of us proposing the motion have explained how our work over the last 6 years has found little evidence that the 2020 resolution to Congregation to abolish the graduate application fee will result in the desired increase in the number of graduate students from under-represented and socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds actually coming to Oxford to study.

Instead, the evidence shows a complex environment where the intersection of a lack of scholarship funding, perceptions of who Oxford 'is for', ever-increasing staff workloads, undergraduate student demographics, the balance of PGT and PGR degrees – which has not been addressed by those opposing this motion – and the heterogeneous nature of graduate admissions processes means that any intervention has both positive and negative impacts.

What we therefore need is an eco-system of access initiatives tailored to the needs of different disciplines and their students. Each initiative must be introduced in a carefully controlled manner with its impact fully evaluated before being rolled out on a University-wide scale.

For the removal of the application fee, this implies a controlled trial for volunteer degree programmes (or volunteer departments) where application numbers per academic are relatively low – as in the departments of those opposing the motion – and where any negative impact can be carefully mitigated through workload planning and provision of additional resources.

Such a study should be designed and evaluated by colleagues with research expertise in this area (such as Professor Robson, from whom we heard earlier), and should follow a research methodology that results in sound data and well-evidenced conclusions, as befits a world-leading research-intensive university.

Keeping the application fee in place but channelling the income into graduate access initiatives would give us the resources to conduct such a study immediately – we

could do it next year; we could do it in the departments of those opposing the motion – as well as other much needed initiatives such as expanding and improving the effectiveness of our existing graduate application fee waiver schemes, which we agree is absolutely essential. We need the resources to make them work better. And we would like to work with those who oppose the notion on making them better.

Please allow us to continue this vital work on your behalf by supporting today's resolution. Thank you very much.

**David Prout**

Thank you very much. Professor Lintott, did you want to add anything?

**Professor Chris Lintott**

Thank you. I'm supposed to be using this for a reply, so let me try to reply to some of those points. As a very long-winded way of saying that it's not going to change, I think a proposal for a research project that might exist in the autumn introduced at the end of the debate isn't what we're talking about. It's also interesting, I think, that in the debate we've heard from those proposing this motion about the importance of ringfencing this income for graduate access initiatives. And we all believe that more money for graduate access is vital and important. But it's interesting how it shifts from being used to cover the costs of processing the applications to being used for scholarships to being used for waivers – there are ten things in motion that this money is supposed to do. We know this is not how budgeting works. And sadly, the problems of lack of scholarships and funding won't be addressed by this amount of money. It's just not the solution.

We know that waivers don't work, and nor is this resolution targeted at particular courses where there is a problem. If we have too many people applying, then we should use academic criteria to filter – that is the criteria on which we wish to judge people, not their ability to find money.

What we haven't heard in the debate is any argument that there are people out there whom we would want to support, for whom £75 isn't easily achievable. There is a population of people who we can help access this university by rejecting this motion, and I urge you to think of those when you vote.

Thank you.

**David Prout**

Thank you very much indeed.



**David Prout**

We're going to move straight on to the second resolution on constituting a redundancy panel. This resolution, together with an explanatory note, was placed on the agenda of this meeting in the [University Gazette published on 23 May](#). I shall first call Kate Mavor, Master of St Cross, to move the resolution and Professor Anne Trefethen, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, to second it. I shall then call Professor Tseng to oppose the resolution and Professor Waltham-Smith to second that position. They'll then be further pre-arranged speeches – more this time, actually, we've got 8 speeches after this. Four minutes for the proposer; three minutes for the second, then two and a half minutes for each of the other speeches. So Kate Mavor, would you like to come forward, please?

**Kate Mavor, Master of St Cross**

Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Kate Mavor; thank you very much for coming to listen to our case today. I have been Master at St Cross College since September last year, and I'm proposing this resolution because I believe it is in the best interests of the college and because it is supported by the overwhelming majority of my Governing Body Fellowship.

St Cross was founded in the 1960s and is now home to 620 students and 144 Fellows. St Cross is one of the least well-funded colleges in the University and it needs to work harder to raise money to support and nurture its community. We have only 32 full-time staff.

I need to ensure we have the right people in the right roles to build a college which is financially strong, has a secure future and can provide a better experience for our students.

My governing body brought me in last year to take the college in a new direction, strengthen its community and build a donor base to support more scholarships and student facilities. My predecessor, Professor Rana Mitter, commissioned specialist consultants to advise the college on strategic options. A steering group, comprising Professors Kevin Marsh, Sir Andrew Pollard, Helena Hamerow and the college bursar, reviewed and scrutinised the evidence for change. We further engaged 750 members of our wider community in developing options for the future of the college. As a group we are unanimous in our view that we should adopt the proposals. These recommendations have now been debated by our governing body and a decision has been taken to change how we structure our small team to invest our limited funds in more development and engagement activity.

We cannot proceed with our plans to transform the fortunes of the college without adopting this new structure. The proposal to restructure the team was shared with the governing body in January. It is now five

months on, and we have given ample time to considering all alternatives.

We care about our staff. Every effort has been made to consider other options and to offer support in finding alternative roles. And it matters a lot to me personally that we follow the best and the most supportive process for our people. But it is simply not right to invest charitable funds in a role that is no longer needed.

I leave you with three points:

- Firstly, please trust the college fellows to know what's best for the college – they know the facts.
- Be assured that employee protection under Statute XII will be safeguarded by the approval of an independent panel (drawn from this Congregation) to test that this is a proper redundancy.
- And finally, we all believe in a fair and legal process – let's allow it to take its course.

I urge you to vote FOR the resolution. Thank you.

**David Prout**

Thank you very much. Professor Trefethen, please.

**Professor Anne Trefethen, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People & Digital)**

Anne Trefethen, Fellow of St Cross, Pro-Vice-Chancellor responsible for People and Digital.

Colleagues, I am speaking today as the Pro-Vice Chancellor for People and I'd like to clarify a number of points relating to Statute XII, the redundancy process and your vote today.

One of the guiding principles of Statute XII is to enable the University to provide education, promote learning, and engage in research efficiently and economically. The ability to make redundancies would be key to that objective. A further guiding principle is that of justice and fairness.

As members of Congregation, I would ask you to have these at the forefront of your mind when you vote today.

The University's procedure for considering cases of potential redundancy is set out in three places:

- Part B of Statute XII,
- the Regulations for the Redundancy Panel in Council Regulations 2 of 2017, and
- the University's Redundancy Procedure, which was produced in consultation with the unions.

It is the Redundancy Panel that is provided with the information necessary to decide whether the Statute XII definition of redundancy is satisfied in any specific case.

Congregation's role today is to decide whether a Redundancy Panel should be formed. Congregation has only been provided with limited and high-level information for this purpose, and is therefore not in a position to form a view as to whether a specific proposal is covered by the University's definition of redundancy, and it is not being asked to do so.

Congregation's decision today will not serve to amend the Statute XII definitions of either 'redundancy' or 'good cause'. The decision today will not determine any future case. It relates only to whether a Redundancy Panel should be formed to consider the proposed dismissal by way of redundancy of one member of staff in St Cross.

The Redundancy Panel, comprised of five members elected from and by Congregation, will scrutinise the detailed information provided to it to determine whether the Statute XII definition of redundancy is met. Members of the panel are trained and supported by Human Resources and have access to legal advice, if required.

The individual has the opportunity to make written representations to the panel. A panel meeting takes place, at which the individual and the department can make representations in person and where a UCU observer is invited to attend.

If, in the opinion of the majority of the panel, one of the conditions are not satisfied, the panel will return the proposal to the originating department for further consideration.

Congregation's role today is only to decide whether a Redundancy Panel should be formed. The Redundancy Panel (comprising five members of Congregation) will give proper scrutiny to the case in accordance with the provisions set out in Statute XII, Part B. Guided by the principle of justice and fairness, vote to approve the formation of the Redundancy Panel.

#### **David Prout**

Many thanks. Professor Tseng, please.

#### **Professor Jeff Tseng**

Jeff Tseng, Department of Physics, St Edmund Hall. Mr Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Proctors, Assessor, Members of Congregation:

Today, Congregation is being asked to approve a Redundancy Panel where all the indications are that there is no redundancy. This is a remarkable position for Congregation to be in.

The decision before us is bigger than the case of an individual employee: it's about the role of Congregation to oversee the integrity of its statutory scheme, in particular the statutory protections of all colleagues within the scope of Statute XII, from the grade 6 and above. As such, the decision today concerns all of us.

The statutes are the constitutional framework of the University. In this framework, Statute XII contains what we might call our Bill of Rights, including, very broadly, our freedoms to question and challenge, and to teach and to research largely as we see fit. But these would be empty promises if we weren't protected while exercising those freedoms, so Statute XII is also the source of dismissal protection. It permits only two routes for dismissal: redundancy and good cause. And it is redundancy at question here.

You can look up how redundancy is defined for Statute XII, Part 7. It has been quoted widely, including in our [flysheet](#), and there are some long sentences, but the main point is that it applies when an activity ceases, or requirements for a particular kind of work ceases or diminishes. It does not apply to situations where an activity or its requirements are neither ceasing nor diminishing.

What is happening here? Well, we actually have some answers, answers to questions recorded at the college's governing body. For instance, on whether the removal of the postholder's role would result in more work for other fellows, the college 'assured Governing Body that this was not the intention, and that all activities would be accommodated...'

Another quote: 'There was a further concern voiced about whether – if the work was being redistributed – the role of the [postholder-job-title] could be retained, since the work still had to be done.' In response, the college outlined that 'the intention was to reallocate work to staff of a lower grade.'

Another question was asked about the reputation of the college if it didn't have the named role. The college 'confirmed that if the proposals were agreed, the college would have such a role... the [junior-postholder-title] will fulfil this role.'

So what we have here smells a lot like a regrettably common business practice often known as 'fire and hire'. But Statute XII reminds us that the University of Oxford is not a business. It is a university. Given the distinctive purposes of a university, special protections were debated and carved out in the 1988 Education Reform Act which led to our King-in-Council Statute XII and corresponding statutes in the independent colleges.

What is proposed at St Cross does not look like a finely balanced dance around the protected perimeter of

redundancy. It actually looks like using a sledgehammer. Should Congregation rubber-stamp the process? Let's remember that St Cross is a department of the University – it's not an independent college – and its statutes are the University Statutes, Congregation is the relevant backstop for Statute XII protections.

Now it has been argued that the Redundancy Panel itself should decide all these issues. But if Congregation rubber-stamps the sledgehammer and makes this routine, imagine a future reorganisation where your work neither ceases nor diminishes, but is proposed to be redistributed. Is this a way to get you to interview again for your old job?

We are told, however, that we shouldn't worry; that this won't set a precedent. But that's not really up to us: it's actually up to a future administration trying to lower headcount. Why wouldn't they point to this as a precedent, if it gives them another spanner for their toolbox with which to knock out Congregation?

Therefore I move to oppose the constitution of a Redundancy Panel in this case, and I urge my respected colleagues in Congregation similarly to oppose it.

#### **David Prout**

Thank you, Professor Tseng. Now we have Professor Waltham-Smith, please.

#### **Professor Naomi Waltham-Smith**

Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Proctors, Assessor, members of Congregation:

During the House of Lords debate in June 1988 on the Education Reform Bill, the Lord Chancellor was asked a question: 'Does he include as a reasonable reason for redundancy the dismissal of a senior member of staff and his replacement by a junior member of staff for the purpose of saving the difference in salary?' His answer was a resounding 'no.' With the abolition of tenure, academics should nonetheless still enjoy 'additional protection' to their rights under general employment law. Redundancy would be limited to cases where the activity of the work ceases, and not merely where requirements for staff of a particular kind are deemed to cease.

In accordance with the 1988 Act, Statute XII quite properly draws the boundaries for permissible dismissals narrowly and defines redundancy strictly. To approve the appointment of a Redundancy Panel where the facts, on the college's own case, point strongly towards a restructuring case of the kind that Parliament intended to be out of scope would endanger the very principle Statute XII is designed to protect – academic freedom, yours and mine.

Academic freedoms of expression, research, teaching and professional association are nothing without the employment security and procedural guarantees that the Joint ILO–UNESCO Committee has underscored as 'a fundamental condition' for 'the full exercise of academic freedom.' The UNESCO 1997 Recommendation – on which the statement of freedoms in Statute XII, Part A, is based – states that employment protections 'should be safeguarded even when changes in the organization of [an institution] are made.'

Because academic freedom is crucially safeguarded by collegial academic self-governance, it is Congregation that is rightfully, constitutionally, charged with providing rigorous scrutiny in such a case. To decide otherwise risks setting a dangerous precedent for all University staff falling under Statute XII.

At her Admission Ceremony in this very room, the Vice-Chancellor eloquently and powerfully asked: 'What is the point of a university like Oxford if we don't have the boldness, integrity and confidence to think differently?' It is hard to think boldly if we fear we could be replaced by someone cheaper. It is hard to think differently if the deskilling of academic labour erodes the principle that a university is governed by its academic community. If we undermine on an ad hoc basis the core enabling conditions of academic freedom, we imperil a principle that defines the character of the University, a principle so foundational to British society that Parliament decided it only be undone with the consent of the Privy Council, a principle that we at Oxford rightly take pride in cherishing.

What, then, is the point of a body like Congregation if we don't have the integrity and confidence to defend the principles it embodies?

#### **David Prout**

Thank you very much, Professor Waltham-Smith. Professor Pollard, please.

#### **Professor Andrew Pollard**

I'm Andy Pollard, I'm a professor in the Department of Paediatrics and I have been an academic here at the University for 23 years and a Fellow at St Cross for the past 18 years.

Currently I lead a team of about 200 scientists and support staff and I can assure you that in a multi-disciplinary research environment, we require the right people in the right roles at the right time to ensure that our work is delivered. And that structure has to change over time to meet the needs at that time and of the project required. It's not constant. Although, of course, some of us will be resistant to change, it is healthy, and it is indeed necessary for the ongoing academic success of our organisation. I was one of the five people who was on the steering committee, who worked closely to review

the evidence for change at St Cross provided by the survey of our community, as you've heard, interviews with key stakeholders, and the experience and expertise of our independent advisors. As the Master says, our view is unanimous that we need to make changes, and that this will result in several redundancies. It's something we accepted to refocus the college, to refocus the college team, and to reimagine and assure our future.

That proposal was taken to the college governing body on 1 May, and was supported by an overwhelming majority of our fellows. And I believe it is right now that the academic redundancy should be tested under robust University process by the Redundancy Panel drawn from our Congregation. When the evidence points to a need to change, it makes no sense to put obstacles in the way. Along with the other speakers in favour of the resolution today, I'm a firm believer in employee rights. And I've been clear all along that we must follow a strictly fair and legal process to ensure we give our staff the best possible options available to them. We, as fellows of the college, have taken a decision based on a careful evidence process that points to a need for change, and I see no sense in preventing it. Indeed, it's the right option for the future. So please vote for the resolution.

#### **David Prout**

Thank you, Professor Pollard. Professor Ramirez, please.

#### **Professor Raphael Ramirez**

Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Proctors, Assessor and Members of Congregation, good afternoon. My name is Raphael Ramirez, Governing Body Fellow at Green Templeton College and the first Professor of Practice at this university. I have only once before spoken in Congregation, and that was regarding Statute XII, eight years ago. Today I am forced to speak again, as what to me and other colleagues appears to be an abuse of this statute is presented for us to discuss. I urge you to vote against this motion.

The issue before us is not at all how St Cross is managed or mismanaged. St Cross is a part of the University, and it is about University management that we are here discussing. The issue is not about the management itself, but about the protection of Statute XII. And this is not only one case, but it's a case that affects all of us if Statute XII were to be interpreted the wrong way.

The motion put forth is a motion for Congregation to decide on, not for the Redundancy Panel. The motion is one for the sovereign body of this university, which is the one where votes matter. We need to uphold Statute XII by voting against this first clumsy attempt to circumvent the protection that it offers all of us. Thank you very much.

#### **David Prout**

Thank you very much, Professor Ramirez. Professor Lord Tarassenko, please.

#### **Professor Lionel Tarassenko**

Good afternoon. I'm Lionel Tarassenko, President of Parks, now Reuben, College since February 2019.

I have been an academic in the University for the past 36 years, since April 1988; this is the fifth meeting of Congregation which I have attended in person. Therefore I fully respect the role of Congregation in the University's governance, but I am concerned that those who oppose the motion are asking Congregation to intervene in a college matter which is not within its remit.

As the authors of the [flysheet](#) opposing the motion concede, by putting the word 'department' in inverted commas, St Cross is not strictly speaking a University department. Like Kellogg and Reuben, St Cross is a self-governing college, whose governing body is responsible for the running of the college. At Reuben, we are hugely helped by having a very generous endowment from the Reuben Foundation, but this is being delivered in several tranches, and so the college's finances must be very carefully managed.

Like St Cross, Reuben is run as a very tight ship with a small staff team. Development and fundraising to support the college's academic activities assume a high priority and it makes complete sense to me that St Cross would wish to put more focus on its development capacity. Following a strategic review, the college has identified that it needs to grow its income from targeted fundraising. The college's governing body has decided that this is a top priority, which can only be supported within the affordable staff salary envelope.

Congregation's decision today, as you have heard, will not determine any future case, but it could set a dangerous precedent by exercising oversight over the management and decision-making of three of the University's colleges, purely on a technicality. At some point in the not-too-distant future, Reuben, St Cross and Kellogg will acquire their Royal Charter. The signatories of the [flysheet](#) opposing the motion are from colleges whose governing body would, quite rightly, fiercely resist any attempt by Congregation to interfere in the running of their college. As the Master of St Cross has said: trust the college fellows to know what is best for their college. I urge you therefore to vote for the resolution. Thank you.

#### **David Prout**

Thank you very much. Professor Vilain, please.

**Professor Robert Vilain**

Colleagues, Congregation:

I am Robert Vilain, I am Senior Tutor, Tutor for Graduates, and Tutor for Admissions of St Hugh's College, a college that prides itself on good employment practice. I would like to think we would not do what is being proposed today.

Following the controversial abolition of academic tenure, the 1988 Education Reform Act introduced bespoke dismissal protections which would come to cover academic, academic-related and administrative staff at Grade 6 and above. These protections were stronger than those provided for under the general law on unfair dismissal. This was necessary to ensure that the core values and purposes of the University (including academic freedom and the pursuit of knowledge) were not undermined by attacks on job security.

University statutes, including Statute XII, still reflect the requirements of that act.

An earlier version of the bill seemed to include provision for redundancy where a senior member of staff could be replaced by a junior member doing the same work. Phrasing at that stage contemplated a diminishing need for 'members of staff of a particular kind'. But redundancy is about the activity, not the nature or level of the role.

When this consequence was pointed out to the government, the Lord Chancellor agreed readily to remove that phrase from the bill.

Its retention would have meant that it would be easier to make university staff redundant than other employees. Switching work from more expensive to cheaper employees is not a 'redundancy' under the ordinary law of unfair dismissal. This would have been perverse because the 88 Act was intended to give university staff more extensive dismissal protections.

What is being proposed today is identical to the scenario that was ruled out by the Lord Chancellor in 1988. A vote in favour today would in effect be a reinstatement of the offending clause that removed protection for academics. And this is a bad precedent for Oxford. It is also a subversion of Statute XII which is based upon that 1988 scheme.

You have been told that it is best to leave such a matter to the Redundancy Panel itself. But the facts in this case overwhelmingly point away from its being a redundancy, so the role of Congregation today is to engage in anxious scrutiny of the decision to appoint the panel – a panel that cannot and will not reflect on its own validity once it has been constituted. This is a matter for Congregation and not for the panel itself and it is urgent.

Accordingly, I urge Congregation to vote against the resolution.

**David Prout**

Thank you very much. Professor Pirie, please.

**Professor Fernanda Pirie**

Good afternoon. I'm Fernanda Pirie and I am a member of the Faculty of Law. I also speak as a member of the UCU – and regret that, for the first time ever, I find myself opposing its position.

Today, I urge Congregation to support this resolution, because it doesn't undermine the protections that Statute XII gives us. In fact, it applies them.

Section 7 of Statute XII covers two cases: someone can be made redundant if their work ceases (which is not the case here), but also where the need for numbers of staff to do that work diminishes (which is the case). For example, if the University decided to review its administrative structures and found that some of its central teams had become inflated, so they needed to be slimmed down – a process we would surely support, if it was done properly – that would fall under section 7 of Statute XII. And it is the same in this case.

This is quite different from an attempt to 'hire and fire', to replace a senior academic with a junior hire. That is not covered by section 7, because the numbers don't reduce.

So this resolution would not set a precedent by facilitating that scenario and it's wholly wrong to suggest it would. It's not an attempt by the University to unshackle itself from Statute XII. Rather, the resolution seeks to apply the safeguards of the statute. And they are those are found in the Redundancy Panel: five members of Congregation, of us, whose first job is to decide whether section 7 does properly apply. The panel have all the documents, will hear from all the parties, will consider all aspects of the process. And if it finds that section 7 does not apply, or the proper processes haven't been followed, the panel will tell us. That's the safeguard that Statute XII provides for us.

If we oppose this motion today, we are pre-empting that process, we are undermining the very safeguard the statute gives us. And that cannot be right. We must support this resolution. That is the best way to protect the academic freedom that we all value so highly.

**David Prout**

Thank you very much, Professor Pirie. Professor Parrington, please.

**Professor John Parrington**

Professor John Parrington of the Department of Pharmacology and also Tutorial Fellow for Medicine at Worcester College and the Head of Research at Worcester College. I'm also treasurer of the University and Colleges Union in this university.

And I thought I would mention that, because in October 2023 Oxford University UCU exposed the shocking scale of casualisation, precarious work and poverty pay in the University of Oxford.

In the midst of one of the wealthiest universities in the UK, the UCU Report found that:

- the pay of hourly paid workers is often less than the National Living Wage;
- hundreds of colleagues are locked into a precarious cycle of rolling short-term contracts that can sometimes span decades of academic employment;
- and this spiral of precarious employment tends to impose the most severe disadvantages on workers with protected characteristics. So it falls heaviest on women and workers with disabilities, and it impedes socio-economic and racial diversity in the academic workforce.

The University of Oxford declares on its website that 'We provide a diverse, inclusive, fair and open environment that allows staff to grow and flourish.'

This is of course half-true. It is half-true because it fits a core of academic staff privileged with the full suite of protections. It is half untrue because there is an army of precarious workers on the periphery who are exploited and who fall within the scope of the UCU report.

So why is this important to today's debate?

It is important because what is before Congregation represents a further narrowing of the core of protected employees through a disreputable practice called 'fire and hire'. Despite what's been said about this, this is a variation on 'fire and rehire'. It describes a situation where the employer downgrades pay and conditions of employment by replacing core employees with cheaper workers, often on casual contracts. The core shrinks and the periphery expands.

This is not a redundancy, because the employer still needs the work done. It just wants the work done more cheaply. While this may be sometimes be permissible under the general law of unfair dismissal, it is fortunately not permissible under Statute XII.

Many members of Congregation will no doubt recall the P&O Ferries scandal where the CEO was hauled before a

parliamentary select committee. That was a fire and hire case too. The Labour Party is currently proposing to ban it and it is very likely to be enacted in the first 100 days of a Labour government.

In these circumstances, I believe it would be shameful if the University of Oxford was to keep company with P&O Ferries and I would therefore urge you to vote down this panel and vote down the resolution.

**David Prout**

Thank you, Professor. Professor Hamill, please.

**Professor Heather Hamill**

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Heather Hamill; I am a professor in the Department of Sociology and I have been a Fellow at St Cross for almost 20 years, where I am also the Dean. I welcome the involvement of Congregation in matters of significant interest to the University community. I also believe in safeguarding the rights of all of us as the people who make the University the excellent institution that it is.

I am a Fellow and Dean of a college with over 600 graduate students to support. It is our responsibility as governing body members to ensure that the college has the wherewithal to provide a positive and nurturing environment for its community. Many of our students face significant financial hardship during their degrees with substantial knock-on effects on their academic progress, mental and physical health, and general well-being. We urgently, as a college, need to raise more funding to mitigate these hardships and offer much better support with scholarships, accommodation, subsidised meals and welfare, and with the aim of increasing access for students from less-advantaged backgrounds.

As a college, we now have a clear strategy to achieve the vital changes to help us reshape our college to strengthen it for the future and provide the support that our students desperately need. It is also crucial that proper employee protection is observed and it is for this reason I support the convening of an independent redundancy panel drawn from our Congregation. I see no risk here to academic freedom, but I do see a significant risk to St Cross – and to our students – if we are unable to restructure.

Along with the overwhelming majority of my governing body colleagues, who discussed this issue at length, and were made fully aware of all of the facts of the case, I endorse this proposal, and I urge you as Congregation to help us to help our students by supporting the motion. Thank you very much for your time.

**David Prout**

Thank you very much, Professor. And finally, I call Boyd Rodger.

**Boyd Rodger**

I'm Boyd Rodger, member of Nuffield Department of Population Health. Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Proctors, Assessor and members of Congregation, eight years ago, I stood here, along with 11 other speakers, advocating support for all cases of proposed redundancy to be before Congregation first. Today we have the first such referral.

I will focus on the mutual roles of Congregation and the Redundancy Panel.

The constitutional role of Congregation cannot be performed by a Redundancy Panel. I have been a member of the Statute XII Pool of Congregation members since 2017. Not once have I heard academic freedom being discussed during panel deliberations or other strategic questions asked. Such panels simply focus on the information provided to them about the specifics of a case and assess the consistency with University procedures. They do not reflect on the broader constitutional implications.

It is therefore fanciful to suggest an internal review body can reflect on the limits of its own jurisdiction. Only Congregation can do that. Congregation can elevate consideration of this motion to the level of anxious scrutiny if it deems fit, especially where, on the University's own case, the facts point strongly away from the relevant activity ceasing or diminishing.

Your choice is clear: you can either rubber-stamp the motion, as suggested, or you can consider the wider strategic implications for the University as a whole and vote against the motion. The wider review role was argued in 2016 during the Statute XII debate as the essential reason for redundancy motions to be heard here first. Disregarding that wider review would be like asking turkeys to vote for Christmas.

If Statute XII protections fail this individual, the subject of the motion, it fails all of us. The protections in Statute XII are there for a reason. Let's uphold them today by voting against the motion.

**David Prout**

Thank you very much. Kate, would you like to reply, please?

**Kate Mavor**

Thank you very much to those of you who have objected to this motion, because I think it's very important for us to hear what are both sides of the story in the narrow field that we're reviewing today. And we agree, all of us, that Statute XII should be protected. I don't think that's really the matter in hand. Those objecting to the motion have not seen all the facts about this particular case. They are saying that, because this case has particular features, it shouldn't be handled in the way it's been

handled. They don't know all the facts of this case; it is a confidential matter. And that's why it has to be reviewed by a panel that can see all the facts, that can be advised by independent legal sources that will tell them about the Schedule V parameters involved and they can take that decision – and those of you in this room are likely to be – some of you may be on that panel.

Without seeing that fact they can't determine – you can't determine today – whether we meet the definition or not. Any future redundancy would need to be agreed by Congregation. There's not a proposal to replace a highly paid into individual with a low-paid one. The college needs to hire in new skills. The panel will have that full advice to make the decision. I refer you back to Anne Trefethen's point from the beginning of this debate: put fairness and justice at the front of your mind in supporting this motion. Surely we need decisions to be properly reviewed, particularly when it affects an individual, with people in full possession of the facts. I once again urge you to vote in favour of forming a Redundancy Panel, which will give this matter proper consideration. Thank you.

**David Prout**

Thank you very much. Professor Tseng, please.

**Professor Jeff Tseng**

I would certainly like to thank my colleagues for their patience in hearing the arguments on this sweltering afternoon. I would also like to thank my distinguished colleagues in arguing the other side in this debate for putting forward their arguments in the finest traditions of civil debate in this House.

I'd like to make – well, I guess just a couple of notes.

You know, one thing that I'd like to say is that, yeah, change is sometimes necessary. No-one doubts that. But we need to be reminded sometimes that we do operate in a legal framework, which includes Statute XII. St Cross's statutes are, in fact, University statutes, with Statute XII. And it does apply, and it's not a technicality.

The college has said that the work still has to be done. The requirement for this activity hasn't diminished. And, you know, you might say it's actually a little bit interesting if an entire restructuring depends upon one redundancy. So I'd like to remind my colleagues that this decision is bigger than the case of an individual employee. It is actually about Congregation's role in our constitution. Do we rubber-stamp Redundancy Panels just because an administration says we should, or do we actually own our role in Statute XII's protections, protections which are key to our academic freedom? Turning away and waving this through is as much a positive act as intervening and stopping the process in its tracks. Today it's an individual at St Cross. Tomorrow it could be you. Thank you very much.

**David Prout**

Thank you very much. So at that point, we can move to voting on the resolution. And the Proctors have to confirm that there are 25 people here.

[Laughter]

So I now call the vote on both resolutions. I ask the Proctors and the Pro-Proctors to move to the voting stations at each of the exits to the theatre. So if you could please do that now. When they are in their positions, I shall invite members of Congregation to cast their votes. Only members of Congregation can vote. Having completed your vote on paper, those seated in the floor and semi-circle go out of the South door; those in the galleries go out the East and West doors. The doors then get closed; the votes get counted; you get let back in; we announce the outcome of the vote. Off we go, I think.

Vote on a Resolution in respect of the graduate application fee: the resolution reads ‘continue to require a graduate application fee from those who do not meet our access criteria, for all this income to be used for graduate access initiatives and scholarships’.

Voted for the resolution: 142; voted against the resolution: 138. So the resolution is carried.

Vote on a Resolution to constitute a Redundancy Panel under Statute XII: ‘that a Redundancy Panel be constituted to consider whether to recommend dismissal by reason of redundancy in respect of one member of staff under the jurisdiction of Statute XII, who is not required or undertakes in their role, academic teaching or research’.

Voted for the resolution: 130; voted against 139. So the resolution is rejected.

Thank you very much. That concludes the business before Congregation.