

The Oxford Character Project

The Oxford
Character
Project



www.oxfordcharacter.org



**Our world is
at a turning point.**

A new generation of global leaders

- The challenges and opportunities of the 21st century need a new generation of ethical and effective leaders
- These leaders will be made up of the students and graduates of IARU universities

University of Cape Town

“We will work to unleash students’ potential... to be resilient agents of change for themselves and in society.”

Peking University

“[Our] University... fosters talents that lead the world to the future.”

Yale University

“[Our University] educates aspiring leaders worldwide who serve all sectors of society.”

ETH Zürich

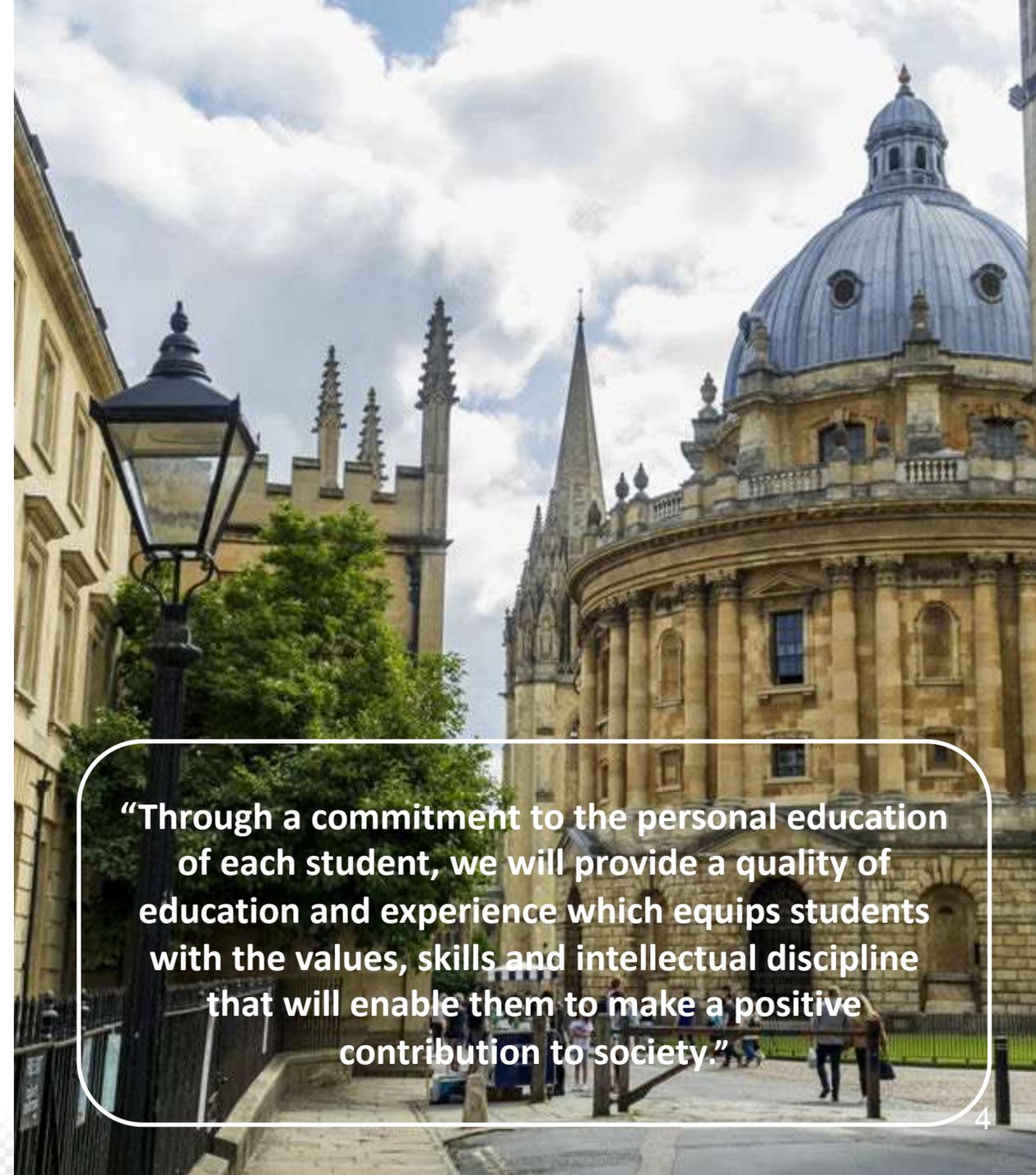
“By educating the next generation of critical and creative thinkers, we make a significant contribution to the common good.”



Leadership education at Oxford

- Oxford students will hold influential positions in communities and organisations around the world
- In the past Oxford has educated leaders through its Classics and PPE courses and its famous tutorial system
- Oxford's business and government schools offer sector-specific leadership education
- Some students have access to bespoke leadership programmes
- But the majority of students receive no focused leadership education

Q. How can we deliver high quality leadership education across the university of Oxford?



“Through a commitment to the personal education of each student, we will provide a quality of education and experience which equips students with the values, skills and intellectual discipline that will enable them to make a positive contribution to society.”

How can we educate a new
generation of thinkers and
leaders?

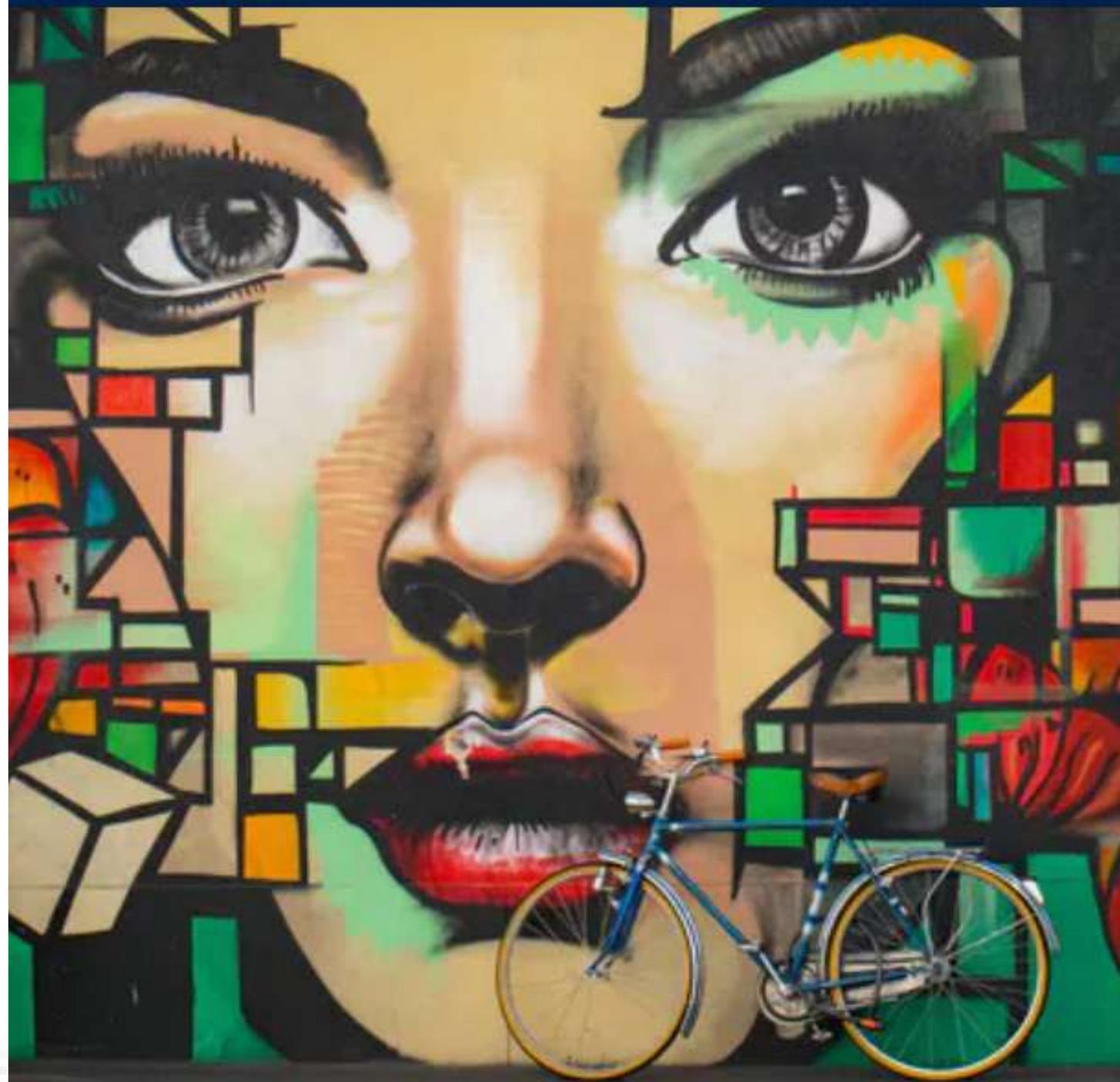
How can we educate a new generation of wise thinkers and good leaders?

Character

To talk about character is to talk about the deep dispositions at the centre of who we are that consistently shape the way we think, feel and act.

Our character is shaped by the patterns of life, the people around us, the stories we tell, the spaces we inhabit, the highs and lows of our experience.

Character is at the heart of what it means to be human.



Two key components



The heart of character

Character has a **motivational** component. It is about our aspiration to be a certain kind of person – to live in accord with what matters to us and determine who we want to become.



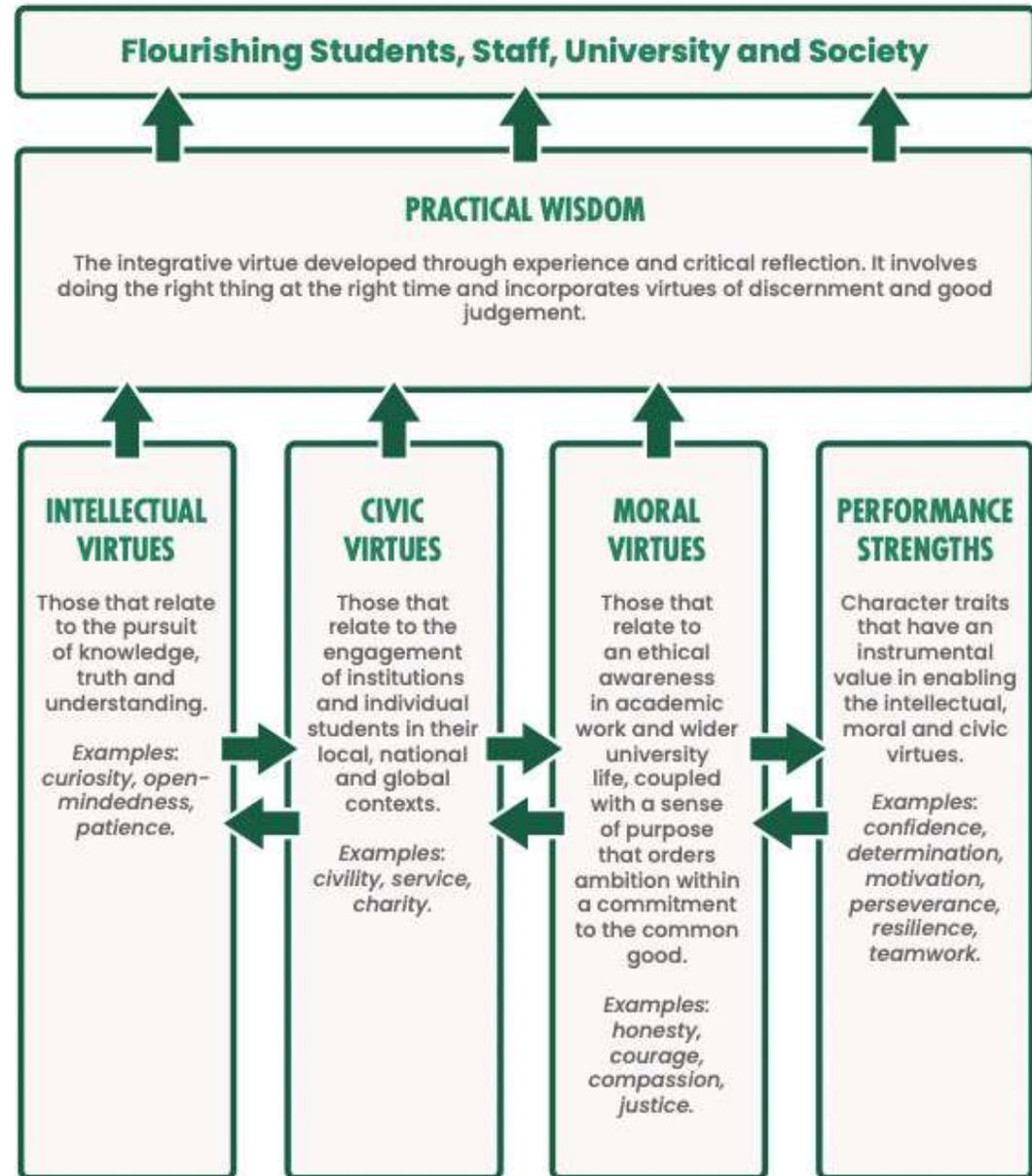
The art of character

Character has a **skill** component. It is about successfully acting on our values and concerns, especially under pressure. Character can be developed over time by way of intentional practice.

Character education

- **Character is a mosaic of personal qualities** – it is made up of habits of thought and action
- **Character changes over time** – it is malleable, not fixed
- **Character involves choice and autonomy** – it is rational and free, not blindly conformist
- **Character is social** – it is shaped within cultural contexts
- **Character manifests principles and convictions** – it is related to questions of meaning and purpose
- **Character involves effort** – it requires ongoing reflection and expression
- **Character requires will-power** – it involves motivation as well as judgment

Character education in universities



Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues and Oxford Character Project. 2020. *Character education in universities: A framework for flourishing.*

Research >> education >> societal leadership

Research-based leadership education for a new generation of global leaders.



Interdisciplinary research

- Philosophy
- Psychology
- Education
- Business
- International development



Student programmes

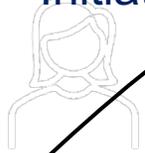
- Global Leadership Initiative
- Summer School
- Global Leadership Challenge
- SDG Impact Lab
- Partner programmes



Positive social change

- Collaboration with business, government and third sector
- SDG focus
- Supporting and connecting alumni around the world

December 2014
Global Leadership Initiative



May 2017
Cultivating Virtue in the University Conference

September 2014
Launched with the support of TWCF

May 2018
Character of Leadership in partnership with HKU

February 2019
The Arts of Leading Conference in partnership with Wake Forest

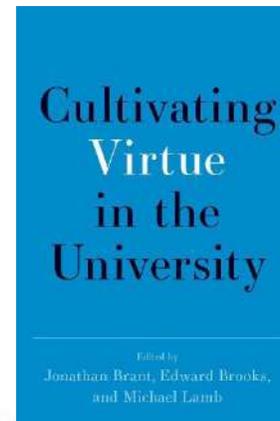
September 2020
Character and leadership in UK business

November 2020
Framework for character education in universities

December 2020
The Global Leadership Challenge

January 2022
SDG Impact Lab

June 2022
Character and leadership development in the Global South



Current activities

2021/22

- **250 students** from **50+ countries** in our education programmes in 2021-22 (selected from over 1,000 applicants)
- **30+ research and programme partners** including Legatum, TWCF, John Templeton Foundation, NatWest Group, Lloyds Bank, Arm, Ricoh, easyJet Holidays, LSE, Wake Forest University, University of Hong Kong, Harvard University, St Gallen Symposium, Ditchley Park, Forward Institute
- **4 global leadership education programmes** Global Leadership Initiative, Global Leadership Challenge, SDG Impact Lab, Leadership for Flourishing
- **2 major research projects** one focusing on UK business and another on character and leadership development in the Global South
- **longitudinal studies** of programme interventions
- **Theoretical and empirical research and publications** on aspects of leadership and leadership development

Our Research

Our interdisciplinary group of researchers are working on leadership-related projects in the humanities and social sciences.

- Character and responsible leadership in UK business
- The Arts of Leading
- Role models
- Hope and optimism
- Character education in universities
- Personal and organisational purpose
- Leadership and human flourishing
- Character and leadership development in the Global South

Framework for leadership education

- *Ethics*: Why do we want a particular impact?
- *Evidence*: What works to achieve that impact?
- *Engagement*: How do we make that happen?



Framework for character development



Based on Lamb, M., Brant, J., & Brooks, E. (2021). How is virtue cultivated? Seven strategies for postgraduate character development. *Journal of Character Education*, 17:1, 81-108.

Global Leadership Summer School

| | Mon - 27 th Jun (Worcester College) | Tue - 28 th Jun (Worcester College) | Wed - 29 th Jun (Retreat in Ditton Manor) | Thu - 30 th Jun (Worcester College) | Fri – 1 st Jul (Worcester College) |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Theme | Reimagining leadership | Leading yourself | Leading communities | Leading systems change | Leadership for flourishing |
| 9:30-10:00 | Presentation: Vision of leadership in a complex world | Presentation: Seven strategies for character development | Presentation: Leading with others | Presentation: Character, culture, and leadership | Presentation: A journey towards flourishing |
| 10:00-11:00 | Introductions and overview of the week | Discussion: Courage & humility | Discussion: Empathy & responsibility | Discussion: Hope & resilience | Discussion: Practical wisdom & love |
| 11:00-11:15 | Break | Break | Break | Break | Break |
| 11:15-12:30 | Discussion: What is good leadership? | Guest speakers: Leadership lessons from the world of sports | Case study and workshop: Empathy Mapping | Guest speakers: Leading change from within | Guest speaker: Personal experiences of leadership |
| 12:30-13:30 | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch |
| 13:30-14:30 | Leadership through the lens of arts (Ashmolean) and Storytelling workshop (Worcester College) | Identifying your core strengths | Group walk | Group walk | Self-project and action plan |
| 14:30-15:30 | | Peer coaching | Stories of leadership | Workshop: Systems Change | Guest speaker: Making impact in Oxford and beyond |
| 15:30-15:45 | Break | Break | Break | Break | Break |
| 15:45-16:30 | Stories of leadership | Peer coaching | Small group exercise | Small group exercise | Closing remarks |

Thank you

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