

Internationalism and Diversity

Some Thoughts from the Chair of the Faculty of Oriental Studies

The regions and cultures covered in our Faculty comprise the majority of the World's population and include much of Asia, from the Middle East to China and Japan, as well as parts of North Africa and Europe. We look at a wide range of aspects, including the history, societies, art, archaeology, languages, literatures, religions and philosophies of these areas. Language is the backbone of many of our courses, and 25 languages are currently taught in our Faculty, from Akkadian to Yiddish (<https://www.orinst.ox.ac.uk/article/our-languages?page=0%2C0>).

But not only that: our Faculty itself is also home to a diverse and highly international community. About half of our student body is from outside the U.K.; in the past academic year 36% of our students were from overseas, and a further 13% from other EU countries. Especially among graduates the proportion of international students is significant, with typically around 60-70% coming from outside the U.K. Our staff comes from a highly diverse background as well, with slightly more than half coming from abroad, of which more than 30% are from overseas.

Statistics are not everything, and true diversity has to grow and be fostered on a day-to-day basis — in the way we interact, teach, study, and conduct our research. The Faculty of Oriental Studies understands itself to be a truly international community, and we regard the wealth of international experience among our staff and students as valuable and enriching.

At a time where many of us feel uncertain about the effects that Brexit may have on the U.K. (if it indeed goes ahead), it is particularly important to stand together and offer support to each other whenever needed. The University is aware of the challenges that lie ahead and is developing strategies to deal with the political aspects and the practical implications of the potential changes (see <http://www.ox.ac.uk/news-and-events/oxford-and-brexit>).

However, the most important message is that the University of Oxford and the Faculty of Oriental Studies welcome their international members and will support staff and students wherever they come from, now and in the future.

22 October 2018

Ulrike Roesler