**Climate Change on the Curriculum: Open Letter**

The growing impacts of climate change are of paramount concern to today's generation of students. Climate change is the defining issue of our time, posing new and growing challenges with which we will be faced throughout our lives. In coming decades, we will see large changes to human societies, both as a result of increasingly dramatic changes to the Earth's climate, and efforts to mitigate climate change.

Understanding and taking action to minimise the impacts of climate change is of the utmost importance and requires highly skilled and knowledgeable politicians, scientists, teachers, engineers and professionals. The University of Oxford is a world leader on climate change research and is well positioned to spread this expertise among its students. Yet current students may study politics, economics, law or natural sciences with limited engagement with climate change, the defining issue of our time. It is the University's responsibility to futureproof its curricula and we expect the University to enable us to deal with changing environments and societies, in the UK and around the world. Climate change belongs on the curriculum!

**Climate change and current University curricula**

We appreciate that the University of Oxford offers a number of postgraduate courses with an emphasis on climate change. However, the undergraduate curricula of degree courses at the University of Oxford largely neglect the issue of climate change, which we contend should be integrated within broader subject areas, particularly within undergraduate courses. For instance, despite the reasonable expectations employers might hold of Oxford Geography graduates in having at least a basic grounding in climate change issues, the core of this course touches only very briefly on this. The majority of Geography undergraduates may only ever have had two lectures on anthropogenic climate change. In Chemistry, the compulsory syllabus excludes climate change, and none of the third year optional subjects specifically address climate science. The Politics component of PPE and of History and Politics neglect discussions of climate change. While optional subjects do tackle climate change on a policy and normative level, core papers do not address environmental issues at all, meaning there is no compulsory exposure to one of the most pressing global political, economic and ethical issues of our time.

These examples are not exhaustive, but they illustrate the lack of consideration of the intersection of climate change science, impacts, and policy within core Oxford curricula. This is despite the large number of leading researchers and expertise on climate change issues at departments across the University, and the high level of interest among the student body. For example, the Oxford Climate Society's student-run eight-week seminar series, the *Oxford School of Climate Change*, covers a wide range of topics on climate change. The inaugural edition of this course received four times as many applications as there were places on the programme.

**Educating climate leaders**

Climate change is a complex and multifaceted problem, the different components of which need to be addressed in a wide range of courses. In the natural sciences, the foundations and implications of climate science need to feature more prominently. For students of social sciences, the relevance of knowledge about climate policy and economics cannot be overstated. Equally, environmental law should be given greater focus within the jurisprudence course.

Certain elements of the study of climate change will be particularly relevant for specific departments. Nonetheless, we believe that there are some key topics that are relevant regardless of academic alignment, such as the globally differentiated impacts of climate change, their mitigation and possible adaptation measures. Case studies on topics like transport, food and energy can serve as windows into the broader study of climate change.

As a forward-thinking 21st Century institution, the University of Oxford is rightly concerned with the employability of its graduates and strives to enhance their personal and professional development. The inclusion of climate change into a variety of curricula would provide an opportunity for students to acquire the necessary problem solving skills and develop the leaders to take on this defining challenge of our generation.

Signed: Stephan Mohr

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