

REALISING THE POTENTIAL



The UNIQ scheme allows academically able students from state schools to experience student life at a top research-led university

Transcript of interviews

Alistair (mentor):

UNIQ's been running five years now and I was a student on the very first year. I've now been a mentor for two years. There are lots of lectures, which are a bit like the ones you would have in Oxford as an undergraduate; lab work as well, with similar experiments; and a lot of social activities as well with the other students.

Fiona (mentor):

The summer school was in fact way more packed into a week than I actually find myself doing in a week at Oxford.

Selina Todd, lecturer in history:

The culmination of the week was finishing and handing in – and having marked – your first Oxford history essay. And then on the last day you have a tutorial and then a fantastic awards ceremony, by which time the awards are richly deserved.

Fiona:

I certainly loved my time at UNIQ. I loved it so much I wanted to do it once I got to university and I really feel like I've gone some small way to helping students in deciding whether Oxford's for them or not. And hopefully it is, and hopefully they all apply – and get in.

Selina Todd:

What's amazingly rewarding from my point of view is watching how students develop over that one week. People begin to grow in confidence. They realise that they're not alone in their passions and in their enthusiasm. Oxford can appear very intimidating to people when they first come here and it's our job, really, to stop that from being any kind of barrier to having the most enthusiastic and passionate students apply to us.

The Humanities UNIQ course and other themed courses allow students to dip into history and English and whatever they want. Or general science UNIQ courses, where they can actually spend a week deciding which of these disciplines suits them most, or maybe they want to do a joint or combined honours course.

Fiona:

When I was 17 doing UNIQ I thought the 21-year-olds running the course, assisting on the course, were so old. I thought they'd got everything together, they were so mature, they were all going to go and have jobs. It's quite nice that they must see me in the same way, as someone who's been through it, and got their act together. I think the chance to come to Oxford for a week and immerse yourself in all that Oxford, the city and the University, has to offer – for free – is just such an invaluable experience.

Selina Todd:

I hope and I believe that what they also gain from UNIQ is a sense that there are many of us here who not only think that going to a comprehensive or a state school is not a disadvantage, but that it can actually be beneficial. One of the things that really comes out of UNIQ is that very often it's students from those kinds of schools – who've had the experience of independent learning, who've had the experience of mixing with a diverse peer group – have a kind of empathy and an insight into other cultures and other ways of living that sometimes students from other backgrounds don't have.

So UNIQ is not about saying, 'You are disadvantaged and you need us to bring you up to standard.' It's about us saying, 'We need you. We need you because you could be the historians of the future.'