Recognised Independent Centres: Q&As

What is a Recognised Independent Centre (RIC)?
An educational charity in the Oxford area which is not part of the University, but works with the University in research and teaching and has had the status of ‘Recognised Independent Centre’ conferred on it in recognition of this.

Why has the status been introduced?
In recognition of the associations between certain independent centres and the University in teaching and research. There is a growing number of collaborations between independent centres and higher education institutions, which are helping to inject new resources and perspectives into the academic world. The Recognised Independent Centres make valuable contributions to the University in research, teaching and the funding of academic positions.

How many RICs are there?
Five so far: the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, and the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies.

Are students at RICs also members of the University of Oxford?
No, being a student at an RIC does not entitle someone to membership of the University.

Do they have access to University facilities in the same way as Oxford students?
No; however, some of the academics at the Centres will be joint appointments between the University and the Centre, or Professors of the University whose Chair has been endowed by the Centre. These academics would be members of the University and so have access to the University’s facilities. They would also be members of Congregation, the University’s sovereign body which acts as its ‘parliament’.

Non-members of the University can apply to use many of the University’s facilities, and such applications are generally granted (subject, sometimes, to appropriate conditions); students and visitors of the Centres who are not members of the University can of course apply in the same way.

Do RICs and the University share staff?
Yes, the RICs can make joint appointments with the University.

What is the benefit of RICs to the University?
By establishing the status, the University of Oxford is continuing its age-old commitment to innovation and co-operation in scholarship, but also affirming a support for greater diversity. Such Centres can help link distinct communities and cultures with scholars, the government and the media in a critically sophisticated way.

There used to be references to ‘associated institutions’ – what is the difference between those and RICs?
The term ‘associated institutions’ has in the past been used rather loosely to cover a whole range of situations and had no formal meaning. The term will no longer be used and is replaced, for those institutions granted RIC status, by the term ‘Recognised Independent Centre’.
What happens to those institutions formerly referred to as ‘associated institutions’ which don’t have RIC status?
There will still be co-operation and liaison under whatever documentation covers each relationship with the University; but without the potentially misleading label ‘associated institutions’.

What sort of institutions would be eligible for RIC status?
Educational charities in the Oxford area which, although not part of the University or matriculating students into the University, provide teaching and research within the University and employ or sponsor academics who teach on University programmes.

Can any eligible institution be given RIC status?
It is not automatic. The University has to make a proactive decision to award the status.

Does an RIC have to make certain commitments to the University?
Each RIC must be committed to carrying out disinterested and objective research and teaching; the University must be represented on the Governing Body of the RIC; the RIC will have to ensure that its activities are complementary to those of the University; RICs must submit an annual report to the University; RICS must not bring the University into disrepute; and the RIC must adhere to the University’s standards of practice in terms of research, teaching, and equal opportunities. The full terms are set out in a contract between the University and the RIC.

WD26-027