



Professor of Poetry: information for applicants

The Oxford Professorship of Poetry has long been regarded as one of the most prestigious and prominent posts in the field of poetry. It provides an exciting opportunity for a highly distinguished individual to be part of a lively and intellectually stimulating community, and to encourage the production, enjoyment and interpretation of poetry at all levels.

The Professorship is held for four years and the duties include delivering a number of public lectures and termly events and being an energetic advocate for poetry within the University and beyond.

The post is due to become vacant in Michaelmas Term 2023, when the current incumbent, Alice Oswald, reaches the end of her term of office. The appointment will be made by election of Convocation in Trinity Term 2023. Convocation consists of all the former student members of the University who have been admitted to a degree (other than an honorary degree) of the University, and of any other persons who are members of Congregation or who have retired having been members of Congregation on the date of their retirement. All members of Convocation are eligible to vote in the election.

Overview of the post

The Professor of Poetry lectures were conceived in 1708, as a result of a bequest by Berkshire landowner Henry Birkhead, who believed 'the reading of the ancient poets gave keenness and polish to the minds of young men as well as to the advancement of more serious literature both sacred and human'. Matthew Arnold, uniquely elected twice to the Professorship (in 1857 and 1862), created the Professorship in its modern form: Arnold spoke about literary matters of contemporary concern, and was the first Professor to deliver his lectures in English, as opposed to Latin. Previous incumbents have included Seamus Heaney, James Fenton, Paul Muldoon, Christopher Ricks, Geoffrey Hill and Simon Armitage. The current incumbent is Alice Oswald. The appointee will be the 47th Professor of Poetry.

The University has a long history of supporting the writing and interpretation of poetry. It continues to invest in the Humanities, and in 2025, the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities will open, offering new opportunities and spaces for collaborative and public-facing events.

All Souls College is the usual college of association for the chair. However, the University recognises that there may be occasions when for some reason (most obviously, a prior association with another college) the holder of the chair may be offered an association by another college. Under such circumstances, and provided that all parties are satisfied that an appropriate association will be provided, the Professor of Poetry may be held in association with a college other than All Souls.

Queries about the post should be sent to poetry.election@admin.ox.ac.uk. All enquiries will be treated in strict confidence.



Duties

The main duties of the post are as follows:

- to give one public lecture each term on a suitable literary subject (where the term "public lecture" does not include poetry readings or recitals or other such events)
- to deliver an inaugural lecture
- to offer one more event each term (which may include poetry readings, workshops, hosted events, etc.)
- to give the Creweian¹ oration at Encaenia every other year (a duty established by convention)
- each year, to be one of the judges for the Newdigate Prize, the Jon Stallworthy Prize, the Lord Alfred Douglas Prize and the Chancellor's English Essay Prize
- every third year, to help judge the English poem on a sacred subject prize
- generally to encourage the art of poetry in the University

The Professor of Poetry is a member of both the University and the College community and is expected to participate in the wider intellectual life of the University and to encourage the production, enjoyment and appreciation of poetry both within the University and further afield.

Eligibility

Beyond the requirement that candidates for election must not have previously held the post, the single criterion for eligibility is that candidates be of sufficient distinction to be able to fulfil the duties of the post.

In order to meet this criterion, the University is seeking candidates who can demonstrate the following:

- a track record of promoting poetry or the study of poetry
- being an energetic advocate for poetry
- able to deliver public lectures to a very high standard
- able to enhance the reputation of the University
- distinction in the writing or critical evaluation of poetry
- An understanding of, and empathy with, the University's commitment to an inclusive environment, which 'promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected'.

¹ The Creweian Oration is named after Nathaniel, Lord Crewe, and is delivered at Encaenia, the ceremony at which the University awards its honorary degrees, by the Public Orator or, in alternate years, the Professor of Poetry. The oration recounts the events of the past year and commemorates the University's benefactors.

The elected candidate will hold office for four years from 09 October 2023, the first day of Full Term, Michaelmas Term 2023. The Professorship of Poetry may be held in conjunction with another post within the University or at another University.

There is no residence requirement for the Professor of Poetry. If you do not currently hold the Right to Work in the UK, the University will support you to apply for an appropriate visa. Poets may write poetry or criticism in a language other than English although it is expected that lectures will be delivered in English.

Nomination process

Those interested in standing for election should complete the [online application form](#).

Proposals for nominations are also invited from members of the University and members of the public. Nominees should complete the [nomination form](#). Please complete the form online or send written details of your nominee, including their email address, to Louise Hasler, Secretary to the Professor of Poetry Committee, Planning and Council Secretariat, University of Oxford, University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2JD. Please note that nominations may not be submitted anonymously and only one nomination may be made per person.

The Professor of Poetry Committee may also approach potential candidates for nomination. An approach to enquire about interest in the post carries no guarantee of successful nomination.

The application form and nomination form will open on **10 February 2023**. The deadline for receipt of nominations is **24 February 2023**. The application form will close on **17 March 2023**.

The Professor of Poetry Committee will consider all nominations in accordance with the criteria above and draw up a shortlist to stand for election by Convocation.

Election

Members of Convocation who have registered to vote will be entitled to vote electronically for one of the shortlisted candidates. Key dates are as follows:

- **24 March** opening of voter registration
- **12 May** closure of voter registration
- **18 May** opening of voting
- **15 June (noon)** closure of voting

As part of the canvassing process before the vote by members of Convocation, shortlisted candidates will be asked to provide a written statement, of no more than 500 words, setting out how they would approach being the Professor of Poetry. The statement will be published online and may include links to websites, podcasts, or other social media, and a portrait photograph if desired. Further details will be provided to those candidates who are shortlisted.

University Benefits, Terms and Conditions

Salary

The Professor of Poetry receives a stipend (currently £25,000 per annum) which is increased in line with the annual cost-of-living increases for academic and related staff, plus £40 for each Creweian Oration.

Pension

The University offers generous pension provision. You will be offered membership of the Universities Superannuation Scheme. Details are available at

<https://finance.admin.ox.ac.uk/uss>.

Length of appointment

The Professorship of Poetry is a fixed term position, tenable for a single four-year term.

Residence

There is no residence requirement for the Professor of Poetry, although time spent in Oxford must be sufficient in order to be able to carry out the duties of the post.

Membership of Congregation

Oxford's community of scholars governs itself through Congregation which is its "parliament". You will be a voting member of Congregation.

See <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance> and <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/statute-iv-congregation> for further details.

Promoting diversity

The University is committed to recruiting and retaining the best people, whoever they are, to ensure equality of opportunity. The Vice Chancellor's Diversity Fund provides resources for innovative projects to promote diversity.

The Equality and Diversity Unit promotes good practice across the University by developing policies and offering training, and runs a range of support networks for staff. It works closely with Colleges, the Oxford University Student Union and external campaign groups.

Please see <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/home> for details.

Other benefits and discounts for University employees

The University has a range of facilities and benefits for its staff, including discounted health insurance, sustainable travel schemes, and discounts in local shops and restaurants. Details are available at:

<https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-benefits>

<https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/discounts>

Pre-employment screening

Your appointment would be subject to the University's standard pre-employment screening, as applicable to the post. If you are offered the post, you will be asked to provide proof of your right-to-work, your identity, and we will contact the referees you have nominated. You will also be asked to complete a health declaration (so that you can tell us about any health conditions or disabilities so that we can discuss appropriate adjustments with you), and a declaration of any unspent criminal convictions.

We advise you to read the notes for applicants at <https://jobs.ox.ac.uk/pre-employment-check>.

Equality of Opportunity

Entry into employment with the University and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and the application of criteria which are related to the duties of each particular post and the relevant salary structure. In all cases, ability to perform the job will be the primary consideration. No applicant or member of staff shall be discriminated against because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Data Privacy

Please note that any personal data submitted to the University as part of the job application process will be processed in accordance with the GDPR and related UK data protection legislation. For further information, please see the University's Privacy Notice for Job Applicants at:

<https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/job-applicant-privacy-policy>.

The University's Policy on Data Protection is available at: <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/data-protection-policy>.