The following Oration was delivered in Congregation on 15 March by the following on demitting office: M Whittow, MA DPhil Oxf, Fellow of Corpus Christi, Senior Proctor; Elizabeth Gemmill, BA PhD Manc, Fellow of Kellogg, Junior Proctor; and Luke Pitcher, MA Oxf, PGCert Durh, Fellow of Somerville, Assessor.

Senior Proctor: Insignissima Vice-Cancellaria, haec oratio ita divisa est ut primum dicat Assessor.

Assessor: Annus habet finem; crescit tamen inde camena.
sic canat ut docili mollis amica Numae,
pauca quidem loquimur; micat et scintilla favillis
impositis, si vult mittere flabra Pater,
da, Domine, indoctis lumen, precor, atque peritis;
tam novus est nemo qui sciat omne puer.

[The year has its end, but a Muse rises from it. May she sing as his sweet friend sang to studious Numa. We are saying few words, it is true, but even a spark swamped by ashes shines, if the Father is willing to blow the coals. Grant light, Lord, to those who know and those who don’t; we are none of us infallible, not even the youngest among us.]

Senior Proctor: Insignissima Vice-Cancellaria, reliqua oratio ita divisa est ut Procurator uteque vicissim loquatur.

Insignissima Vice-Cancellaria, licetne anglice loqui?

Vice-Chancellor: Lictet.

Senior Proctor: You will have realised already that this year we have broken with tradition. Rather than the Senior Proctor speaking for all, we have decided to share the oration - to do anything else would not be an accurate representation of a year in which Assessor, Junior Proctor and Senior Proctor have acted as a close team.

We have also tried to reflect the experience of the year by structuring what we have to say round a series of FAQs. Not just because this has been a year of acronyms - how many people in this room, we wonder, have the meaning of BSC, BESC, PRAC, PCMI, DPAG, SWSS, BDI, EPS and OSCAR at their fingertips? (And if you know those, we can come up with many, many others; indeed, the Assessor has come up with a list, and it runs into the hundreds.) No, our FAQs are the Frequently Asked Questions that really do come up - often several times a day.

The first, especially these last few weeks, starts with 'You must be so glad it is coming to an end; isn't being proctor a dreadful chore?'

To which the answer is no. It has been a hugely entertaining and interesting year; and an enormous privilege, for which we are very grateful to our respective colleges who elected us. It is always a privilege to be a member of this great and ancient university, but it is particularly so to spend a year at its heart, having access to all aspects of its work, and to spend time with the extraordinarily able and committed people who at every level devote themselves to its success: from the Registrar - and I am particularly impressed to have the real Registrar here present, rather than an Assistant Registrar substituting, given that he has come directly from dealing with pressing matters of great importance - from the real Registrar to the gardeners and arborists of the University Parks team, from the heads of division to the staff of the Examination Schools, the Sheldonian, and the University's box manufactory. Indeed how many of you knew that existed? It has been a privilege to sit on the Investment Committee and to appreciate the quality of advice we receive from external members, leaders in the sector who give their time for free; to sit on the Finance Committee of OUP, and see at first hand exactly why the press is the world's leading academic publisher. A privilege, too, to work with the sabbatical officers of OUSU, whose energy and dedication to doing good deserves to be widely recognised. All of this is driven by a commitment to Oxford that visibly goes far beyond any tangible reward. In all corners and at all levels we have seen people willing to work long hours, for which they have no contractual obligation, because they believe the University and what it represents is something that really matters. If you feared we were becoming a less altruistic world, the University of Oxford would prove you wrong.

Junior Proctor: The second FAQ, which follows from that, and is asked every day, is 'What do the proctors do?' The title, it is true, doesn't help you much: dictionary definitions speak of agents in courts of law or of those in charge of enforcing discipline. But we have whittled our answer to the question down to this: our role consists of substituting, given that he has come directly from dealing with pressing matters of great importance - from the real Registrar to the gardeners and arborists of the University Parks team, from the heads of division to the staff of the Examination Schools, the Sheldonian, and the University's box manufactory. Indeed how many of you knew that existed? It has been a privilege to sit on the Investment Committee and to appreciate the quality of advice we receive from external members, leaders in the sector who give their time for free; to sit on the Finance Committee of OUP, and see at first hand exactly why the press is the world's leading academic publisher. A privilege, too, to work with the sabbatical officers of OUSU, whose energy and dedication to doing good deserves to be widely recognised. All of this is driven by a commitment to Oxford that visibly goes far beyond any tangible reward. In all corners and at all levels we have seen people willing to work long hours, for which they have no contractual obligation, because they believe the University and what it represents is something that really matters. If you feared we were becoming a less altruistic world, the University of Oxford would prove you wrong.

Junior Proctor: You must be so glad it is coming to an end; isn't being proctor a dreadful chore?
proctors' officers, the University's events staff, and the care and commitment of the Vice-Chancellor, and the heads of houses, and other Pro-Vice-Chancellors and of course the deans of degrees. Time and again we have heard the praise at Encaenia, at degree ceremonies, at memorial services, sermons, and at events such as the Queen's ninetieth birthday and the enthronement of the new bishop of Oxford: the University does these things so well. Long may it continue.

Senior Proctor: Hearing complaints and appeals, and overseeing the examination system, also matter; though these are the aspects of the Proctors’ duties which are likely to appear most off-putting to any potential Proctor. Before this year I confess I had imagined the Proctors as something akin to a team of junior deans, but one acting at the level of the University rather than the college. When I was first asked to stand for election as Proctor I confess that my instant reaction was to say no. What I had not appreciated was that everything the Proctors do rests on the support and advice of the highly professional clerks of the Proctors’ Office: headed by the supremely efficient Douglas Thornton, and the Deputy Clerks, Esther Villiers and Stephen Hearn. There have been occasional moments this year, when the Proctors have felt as if they were part of an extended episode of Yes Minister, with Douglas as Sir Humphrey, but the reality is that the Proctors you see are akin to ministers backed by a formidable civil service. Proctors bring experience and knowledge of the academic world; the clerks bring continuity, and a command of the University’s regulations, and of the law – and whenever there is doubt, we can also draw on professional advice from the University’s outstanding legal and welfare services. It adds up to a powerful system for ensuring the smooth running of the University; and, we have come to realise, for doing good. A summons to see the Proctors does sometimes quite usefully put the fear of God into members of the University at all levels, but it is always with the aim of making things better. Often the Proctors are too tactful to say in public exactly what they think of the Proctors, but on our side we have no such hesitation. We see her, as the Senior Proctor said last year, every term there are requests for candidates to stand for position after position, ranging from Council to Curators of the Parks. To all postholders, the message must be this year as last, stand up and be counted: take charge of your university.

Junior Proctor: Oxford is an ancient institution: more than 800 years old as we remind graduates in this building at every degree ceremony. The rituals of the ceremony provide a continuity with the past. The University has witnessed crisis and change, as its rich archives housed just a few yards from here attest. Last year - this proctorial year - the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. It is safe to say that if the decision had rested with the regent masters of this University we would not be going. But we have trodden this path at least twice before. The University in some ways owes its existence to a medieval Brexit: in 1167, 850 years ago this year, King
Henry II forbade English scholars to study at the University of Paris. That fostered the development of opportunities for scholarship in this country that had not previously existed. And the break with Rome and much of Europe in the sixteenth century - whose effects on the landscape in Oxford we see all around us - spurred the development of a distinctive Anglophone intellectual culture. Perhaps Oxford would not have chosen to leave on either occasion. But following such earlier Brexits, and in the face of many other adversities, perceived and genuine, Oxford has adapted and flourished. Clearly if we are to do so again, and if we wish to be here for centuries to come, we cannot look to a dea ex machina. One final question, then: 'Where is the locus of decision-making in the University?' The answer is that it lies with each of us, individually and collectively: the regent masters of the University.

### Proctorial Year 2016–17

#### Summary of Complaints Cases

University regulations for complaints, including academic appeals, changed during the proctorial year. For all cases in hand at the start of the academic year and all those submitted thereafter, the changes introduced a three-stage process (an informal first stage, a formal second stage and a review stage).

No information is collected centrally about the majority of matters resolved informally (ie directly with the provider of a service). Certain matters - such as administrative results checks - are handled via the Proctors' Office in view of the requirement for students and examiners not to communicate directly about an examination. The handling of such matters does not result in a proctorial decision and does not preclude a subsequent appeal against results; they thus form part of the informal stage. However, in previous years these matters were included in the overall total. This year’s figures are reported in alignment with the new regulations and so the overall figure no longer includes informal action. The prior-year figures have, where relevant, been restated for comparability (prior-year statistics in brackets).

During 2016–17 the Proctors received 113 complaints and appeals, of which 12, or 5.7%, were upheld in whole or in part. The great majority of these complaints and appeals - 96, or 85% - related to examinations and research student candidatures.

- Taught-course examinations (undergraduate and postgraduate): 83 (109)
  - 6 of these cases were upheld in full or in part.
- Research student candidatures: 13 (9)
  - 3 of these cases were upheld in full or in part.
- Taught-course non-examination: 
  - teaching and supervision: 9 (6)
  - feedback: 1 (0)
  - discrimination: 1 (0)
  - other: 3 (1)
  - 2 of these cases were upheld in full or in part.

### Research student non-examination (other): 3 (1)

1 of these cases was upheld in full or in part.

Some complaints/appeals remain in progress at the year end.

#### Summary of Disciplinary Cases

##### BREACH OF STATUTE XI CODE OF DISCIPLINE

- Engaging in offensive behaviour or language: 2 (2)
- Breach of IT regulations: 2 (0)
- Breach of Library regulations: 2 (0)
- Dishonesty: 1 (3)
- Other: 1 (2)

##### BREACHES OF THE PROCTORS’ DISCIPLINARY REGULATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS

- Academic misconduct (plagiarism): 36 (30)
  - Of these cases, 21 were referred back to the examiners. None were referred to a Student Disciplinary Panel.
- Academic misconduct (other than plagiarism): 8 (4)
  - 1 case was taken to a Student Disciplinary Panel.

Some disciplinary cases remain in progress at the year end.

##### HARASSMENT

- Non-sexual harassment: 6
- Sexual harassment: 4