



# St Catherine's College Middle Common Room

Open Meeting

Minutes

Sunday, 15 March 2026 at 7:00pm

Hybrid: Middle Common Room, Ainsworth Graduate Centre and via Microsoft Teams

## 1. General Business

Item	Led By	Related Documents
<b>1.1   Welcome</b>	Co-presidents	
<b>1.2   Approval of previous Open Meeting Minutes</b>	Co-presidents	Pages 2-5
Members approved the previous Open Meeting minutes.		
<b>1.3   Associate Member Nomination <i>Felix Hambitzer</i></b>	Co-presidents / Nominee	Page 6
<p>Felix Hambitzer, a final-year medical student from Germany, was nominated for Associate Membership. He is currently based at the John Radcliffe Hospital and will be in Oxford for approximately two months. He stated that he is keen to become involved with the St Catherine's community.</p> <p>(It was also noted, by way of introduction, that his favourite football club is Bayern Munich).</p> <p>The Executive Committee and the Tutor for Graduates reviewed and approved the nomination, and his profile was circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>The nomination was approved.</p>		

## 2. Motions

Item	Proposed By	Related Documents
<b>2.1   Motion to elect selected MCR Executive Committee Roles in 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Trinity Term</b>	Lara Killham Walter, Sunny Pydugadu	Pages 7-8
<p>The meeting considered a motion to amend the MCR Constitution to provide for the election of selected Executive Committee roles in 4th or 5th Week of Trinity Term.</p> <p>It was noted that the Constitution had not been updated since 2021. While all committee members are currently elected in Michaelmas Term, the Constitution states that elections should take place in Hilary Term, Week 5, creating a discrepancy between constitutional provisions and current practice. Members noted that this inconsistency had raised concerns from the College and had begun to affect the organisation of Freshers' Week.</p> <p>The proposer explained that the matter had been discussed with the Tutor for Graduates, and that the Committee had been considering possible ways forward. Two principal options had been identified:</p> <p>Retaining elections in Michaelmas Term, which would require a constitutional amendment; or</p>		

Introducing elections for some Executive Committee roles in Trinity Term, in Week 4 or 5, while leaving the remaining roles to be elected in Michaelmas Term.

The proposal before the meeting supported the second option. Under this approach, key Executive roles, including the two Presidents, Treasurer, Secretary, one Social Secretary, and the Bar Manager, would be elected in Trinity Term, while all remaining roles would continue to be elected in Michaelmas Term.

The proposer noted that electing these roles in Trinity Term would help ensure that a new committee is in place and can prepare effectively for Freshers' Week, while also allowing time for training and handover from the outgoing committee. This was expected to reduce the burden placed on newly elected officers and support a smoother transition between committees. It was further suggested that this structure would allow second-year Masters students and final-year DPhil students to stand for the presidency. Overall, the proposal sought to strike a balance between established practice and the constitutional framework.

During discussion, members raised several questions and comments.

A member asked whether only some roles would be elected at this time and whether the elections would occur on the same date each year. The proposer confirmed that elections would take place in Week 4 or 5 of Trinity Term, allowing some flexibility. Only a subset of Executive roles would be elected at that time, broadly reflecting the format already referenced in the Constitution.

Members also asked what would happen if positions were not filled during Trinity Term elections. The proposer explained that if roles remained vacant, the current committee would organise Freshers' Week, and any unfilled positions could be filled in Michaelmas Term elections. Where necessary, the current Presidents would remain in post temporarily to ensure continuity.

Another member suggested the possibility of rolling elections each term for any vacant roles. In response, it was noted that this could create confusion regarding responsibility and terms of office, particularly for senior roles such as the Presidency. The proposed structure was considered clearer, as members would expect to begin and complete their terms in Trinity Term.

A further question asked whether holding elections in Trinity Term would meaningfully improve recruitment. The proposer acknowledged that filling roles would likely remain a challenge but emphasised that only a small number of positions would be elected at that stage.

Members expressed general support for having the Executive in place earlier but raised concerns about contingency arrangements should key roles, such as the Presidency, remain unfilled. The proposer stated that, in that event, the Executive would establish a Freshers' Committee, likely led by the outgoing Presidents, and that the motion had been drafted with clear contingency provisions.

Finally, a member asked why Week 4 or 5 had been selected rather than earlier or later in the term. The proposer explained that elections held later in the term would leave insufficient time for handover, while earlier elections might make recruitment more difficult. A mid-term window was therefore considered to provide the most effective balance.

The proposer noted that the motion had been discussed with the MCR Committee and Executive, and that feedback had been incorporated into the proposal.

The motion was then put to a vote (and later revised for a vote online).

**Result:** 21 in favour (84%), 2 against (8%), 2 abstain (8%). The motion **passed**.

**2.2 | No AI as Weapon of War**

Xiangyue Wang

Pages 9-10

The meeting considered two proposed motions that members wished to submit for consideration at a forthcoming Oxford Student Union (Oxford SU) meeting.

It was noted that, in order for a motion to be brought to Oxford SU, it must either be approved by the MCR or seconded by five SU representatives. The proposer clarified that a vote in favour at this meeting would not constitute endorsement of the motions themselves, but rather approval for the motions to be submitted for debate at Oxford SU.

The first proposed motion concerned the University's use of proprietary artificial intelligence services, including platforms such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, and Google Gemini.

The proposer noted that AI technologies are increasingly used in a wide range of contexts, including military applications, and that there has been growing debate within the research community regarding the ethical implications of such use. In particular, concerns have been raised about the potential for AI systems to be used in autonomous or indiscriminate weapons systems. The proposer further observed that AI technologies are reportedly being used in current conflicts, including Russia–Ukraine and Israel–Gaza, and argued that universities have a responsibility to advocate for ethical standards in the use of such technologies, particularly when procuring services from external vendors.

It was explained that Oxford SU motions are advisory in nature, and that where a motion is passed the SU President would typically advocate for the position expressed by the student body.

The proposed motion would ask Oxford SU to advocate for three principal measures:

1. That the SU Sabbatical Officers advocate that the University should prioritise AI vendors that maintain clear policies prohibiting the use of their technologies for military purposes.
2. That the SU Sabbatical Officers advocate that the University should audit existing AI services used by the University and advocate for the replacement of services that do not meet these standards where appropriate alternatives exist.
3. That the SU Sabbatical Officers advocate that, where AI systems are used within the University, particularly for academic or research purposes, the University should evaluate whether such use is necessary and conduct periodic reviews to ensure that the services being used remain appropriate. Where no suitable alternative exists, the University should review the position annually.

During discussion, a member questioned the practical impact of the motion, noting that many AI models are widely used and that open-source models cannot realistically be prevented from being used in military contexts. The member also noted similar proposals, such as divestment initiatives, had faced challenges in implementation, and asked whether substantive debate would occur at Oxford SU.

In response, the proposer clarified that the motion was intended to apply only to proprietary services licenced by the University, rather than open-source models. The motion would not require the University to audit the broader activities of AI companies or how their technologies are used elsewhere, but rather to consider whether vendors publicly commit to restricting military use of their technologies. It was further noted that SU motions generally do not have strong legislative force and are primarily intended to express student opinion and encourage advocacy.

A member asked whether there were specific alternative AI platforms that the University might adopt. The proposer suggested that services such as Cursor, which provide access to multiple AI systems through a single interface, might represent one possible approach, but emphasised that the motion would leave the choice of services to the University's discretion.

Another member asked how the motion would define circumstances in which no suitable alternative exists, particularly given the variation in performance between different AI models. The proposer explained that this detail was not specified in the motion and would likely be determined by the University, potentially in consultation with relevant academic experts.

Members also asked whether the proposal primarily concerned teaching or research uses of AI. The proposer indicated that the motion focused primarily on general educational AI tools, while acknowledging that if removing a service would significantly harm academic work, the University should be able to retain it until a viable alternative becomes available.

A member noted that access to frontier AI models can be particularly valuable for research and development, and suggested that the University should regularly review the services it provides to ensure that students and researchers continue to have access to the best available tools.

In response, the proposer observed that prior to 2024 several AI companies, including OpenAI and Google, had maintained explicit commitments not to support military use of their technologies, but that some of these policies had subsequently been revised. The proposer also noted that Oxford was among the first universities in the United Kingdom to provide AI services to students, and suggested that the University could set a positive example by adopting clear ethical standards.

Finally, a member asked whether the proposal had already been discussed with other student representatives. The proposer explained that the motion was first being brought to the MCR for discussion, and would subsequently be presented at Oxford SU if approved.

The meeting then proceeded to consider whether to approve submission of the motion to Oxford SU. Voting was conducted online.

**Result:** 17 in favour (68%), 6 against (24%), 2 abstain (8%). The motion **passed**.

### 2.3 | College Library Access

Xiangyue Wang

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The meeting considered a second proposed motion to be submitted to Oxford Student Union (Oxford SU) concerning access to college libraries across the University.

The proposer noted that there are approximately 66 libraries across Oxford, but that only around one third are accessible through the Bodleian Libraries system. As a result, many college libraries remain accessible only to members of their own colleges.

The proposed motion would ask Oxford SU to advocate for greater intercollegiate access to college libraries, including the possibility of allowing students from other colleges to enter and use those libraries. The motion also proposed exploring systems of reciprocal borrowing, whereby students could borrow books from any college library regardless of their college membership. Alternatively, a system could be introduced whereby books from other college libraries could be requested and delivered to a student's own college library.

During discussion, a member expressed scepticism about the likelihood of the motion succeeding, noting that it would effectively require colleges to permit students from other colleges to access their facilities, which may prove difficult to achieve.

In response, the proposer acknowledged that colleges often maintain exclusive access policies regarding their libraries and that the proposal could therefore face institutional resistance. However, the proposer suggested that the purpose of bringing the motion forward was to determine whether this was something students wished to advocate for, even if the proposal ultimately proved difficult to implement.

Another member commented that, while the proposal was interesting, it might be somewhat unrealistic given the resources already available through the Bodleian Libraries. The member suggested that advocacy for 24-hour library access across the University might be a more achievable objective.

A further member expressed support for the idea of being able to borrow books from other college libraries, noting that increased access to collections could be beneficial for students.

It was also noted that some borrowing arrangements and policies already exist that allow limited access to materials across libraries, though physical access to college library spaces remains more restricted. Members observed that individual colleges generally retain autonomy in determining their own library policies.

In response to these points, the proposer noted that if the proposal did not gain traction, it could nevertheless help raise awareness of library access issues and might lead to future advocacy efforts, such as campaigning for expanded 24-hour library provision.

The meeting then proceeded to consider whether to approve submission of the motion to Oxford SU. Voting was conducted online.

**Result:** 17 in favour (68%), 3 against (12%), 5 abstain (20%). The motion **passed**.

## 2.4 | Catz Need a Cat

Xiangyue Wang

Page 12

The meeting considered a motion proposing that St Catherine's College introduce a college cat.

The proposer noted that 11 colleges in Oxford currently have a college cat, which often becomes a well-known and popular feature of college life. The motion outlined several possible arrangements through which the care of such a cat could be managed at St Catherine's, based on practices observed at other colleges. These included arrangements where the Porters' Lodge oversees feeding, where the cat is cared for by senior members of the college such as the Master, Home Bursar, or Librarian, or where responsibility is shared among Junior Deans.

The proposer reported having spoken with one of the Junior Deans, who indicated that the idea was something the College might be receptive to. It was also noted that the current Junior Dean team is in the process of being recruited, which could provide an opportunity to establish a suitable care arrangement.

The motion proposed that:

1. The MCR Presidents advocate at the College level for the introduction of a college cat.
2. The MCR consider allocating a budget to contribute towards the care of the cat, including costs such as food, litter, and veterinary care.
3. The College determine the most appropriate structure for supporting and caring for the cat.
4. The Presidents report back to the MCR in Trinity Term regarding any progress on the proposal.

During discussion, a member asked whether the JCR or SCR would also contribute financially towards the cat's upkeep. The proposer responded that the JCR had passed a similar motion the previous year, suggesting that they may be willing to support the initiative. It was unclear what happened once the motion was passed.

A member raised the question of allergies and whether the cat would be allowed inside college buildings. The proposer replied that at many other colleges the cat is simply allowed to roam freely around the college grounds, and suggested that practical arrangements could be determined by the Junior Deans or College authorities.

Another member noted that the Master had previously expressed openness to the idea of a college cat.

A further question was raised regarding whether MCRs at other colleges typically contribute financially to the upkeep of their college cats. The proposer stated that they were not certain in all cases but noted that St Hilda's College, for example, maintains a donation fund to support the care of its college cat. The proposer explained that including a proposed MCR contribution in the motion was intended to strengthen the case when presenting the proposal to the College.

It was also noted that in many cases colleges make use of student funds to support such initiatives.

The meeting then proceeded to consider the motion. Voting was conducted online.

**Result:** 20 in favour (80%), 4 against (16%), 1 abstain (4%). The motion **passed**.

### 3. Committee Elections

Item	Led By	Related Documents
3.1   <b>Academic Officer</b> <i>Sara Bashir</i>	Co-presidents / Nominee	Pages 13-14

The meeting considered the nomination of Sara Bashir for the role of Academic Officer.

Sara introduced herself and expressed her enthusiasm for academic engagement and the organisation of academic events within the MCR. She outlined her interest in supporting initiatives that promote academic discussion and collaboration within the College community.

Sara noted that, if elected, she would aim to work closely with the College Registrar and the Library, with particular attention to issues relating to study spaces and research support for graduate students. She also expressed interest in introducing academic highlights or showcases to promote the work of graduate students within the MCR.

In addition, Sara indicated that she would like to facilitate meetings and academic discussions across disciplines, both within St Catherine's and potentially with graduate students from other colleges. She also mentioned she would be actively involved in organising the graduate seminar series in the following term.

During discussion, a member asked whether she anticipated being able to remain active in the role. Sara confirmed that she would be able to commit the necessary time and engagement.

A member asked for clarification regarding the responsibilities of the Academic Officer role. It was noted that the role typically involves attending library meetings and occasional meetings with academic staff or administrators, though these do not generally involve regular meetings with College Fellows.

Another member asked about Sara's experience with collaboration and event organisation. Sara responded that she is currently involved in organising similar activities within her department, and felt confident in her ability to coordinate events and work with others.

Following discussion, the meeting approved the nomination of Sara Bashir as Academic Officer.

### 4. Any Other Business

Item	Led By	Related Documents
4.1   N/A		

**Meeting opened:** 7:11pm

**Meeting closed:** 8:16pm