

### **Balliol College Graduate Studies: Professor Elena Lombardi – video transcript**

The praefectus, Professor Elena Lombardi, is seated, facing the camera. The praefectus' name and course subject are shown the first time they appear. The praefectus answers the questions that are displayed on screen.

>> PROFESSOR ELENA LOMBARDI (PROFESSOR OF ITALIAN LITERATURE AND PROFESSORIAL FELLOW): I'm Elena Lombardi, I am a Fellow of Balliol College, and I am currently the Praefectus of Holywell Manor. Praefectus is a funny Latin title for what I consider to be the best job in the world. I have the care of a large and vibrant community of graduate students who are doing their Masters and PhDs at Balliol in a vast array of disciplines, in the sciences and the humanities.

Oxford is a truly global academic body – undergraduates, graduate students and academics – and we are committed to attracting the best, brightest, most devoted to their studies graduate students from all over the world. In my position, I give support and advice to graduate students. I organise academic events, I am interested in all sorts of things – in gardens, buildings. I facilitate conversations. Most importantly, I see students thrive. I see them and support them through a time in their life that is certainly one of the most exciting, but also one of the most intense. I see them succeed, and become the thinkers, the leaders, the movers and shakers of tomorrow.

[Question displayed on screen:]

#### **How do you apply for graduate studies at Balliol College?**

>> PROFESSOR ELENA LOMBARDI: Graduate applications first take place in faculties and departments. You choose a course, and apply to a particular faculty or department. Then, you need to check whether Balliol offers this particular course, and at this point put Balliol as your College of preference. Once you have been accepted by the faculty or the department, the application will be passed onto your College of preference and they will go through the list of applicants only then. So, accepted applicants have a place in the University first, and *then* to the College.

[Question displayed on screen:]

#### **Please can you explain the relationships between the University, departments and the college?**

>> PROFESSOR ELENA LOMBARDI: All students at Oxford are members both of the University and their College. The University awards qualifications, such as PhDs and Masters. A lot of your time will be spent in faculty and departments, whether that is independent resource work, or classes, tutorials, lab work or hospital work. College *may* offer accommodation, *will* offer academic and pastoral support, and in certain cases it is able also to offer financial support. Now, College is much more than that. College is the place where your ideas and your ethos are shaped and transformed by radical interdisciplinarity, by unexpected encounters, by friendships, by one of the most exciting academic environments in the world.

[Question displayed on screen:]

#### **How would you describe the graduate community at Balliol?**

>> PROFESSOR ELENA LOMBARDI: The graduate community at Balliol is an incredibly diverse, vibrant, young, fun community, and very much attentive and responsible towards all that matters in the world today.

[Question displayed on screen:]

**What is Holywell Manor?**

>> PROFESSOR ELENA LOMBARDI: Holywell Manor is the heart of the graduate centre. It's the students' social and academic hub, and it is hosted in a beautiful medieval manor house and surrounding buildings, which are set in beautiful gardens. Importantly, Holywell Manor is where the MCR is.

[Question displayed on screen:]

**What is the MCR?**

>> PROFESSOR ELENA LOMBARDI: The MCR, or 'Middle Common Room', is, as you can imagine, much more than a room. It's the name of the graduate community. An independent and active community who organises all kinds of things around graduate life, academic and social life. There are parties, memorable parties indeed, seminars, music, sport, cinema, formal dinners, cultural outings – all sorts of things that sustain graduate life. The Balliol MCR – I may be a little partial here but I think I'm very close to the truth – is known, at Oxford, to be the best of all MCRs.

[Question displayed on screen:]

**What accommodation is available to graduate students?**

>> PROFESSOR ELENA LOMBARDI: Balliol is very lucky, because it is able to offer quite a lot of accommodation to its graduate students. About two thirds of our graduate students live in College – either at Holywell Manor, or in the nearby Master's Field new developments. Both buildings are very close to the city centre. It's just a ten-minute walk from the College's main site at Broad Street, where the library and the dining hall are.

[Question displayed on screen:]

**What types of support are there for graduate students?**

>> PROFESSOR ELENA LOMBARDI: Balliol prides itself on the level of support that it provides to its graduate students. Alongside University scholarships, we have our own scholarships that are aimed at fostering excellence and diversity. Importantly, Balliol is able to give a lot of support to our students throughout their graduate life. We have some fantastic teams that work tirelessly to support graduate life. We have a very sound academic team who make sure that the milestones are in order, that there is communication between departments and College and so on. We have a very solid and active system of college advisors. These are fellows and lecturers who are able to support and advise our graduate students on academic matters. We have the domestic management team, that, with great flexibility and generosity, helps us with accommodation. There is a very tireless, indeed, financial support team who is always ready to help with research grants, hardship grants, you know anything that life might throw in the way of your studies. Likewise, the welfare team is always ready to see students with all sorts of activities and initiatives aimed at their wellbeing, as well as individual meetings and individually tailored solutions, you know, for whatever problems may arise.

[Question displayed on screen:]

**How would you sum up Balliol?**

>> PROFESSOR ELENA LOMBARDI: Balliol's graduate community is a diverse, vibrant academic community which is sustained by a College that, you know, believes in the values of inclusivity, excellence and social responsibility.