

The search for knowledge is central to British life. In fact, four of the world's top ten universities can be found here. Every year, huge amounts are invested in science and research in this country... so why is knowledge so important to Great Britain?

Oxford has been a place of learning for hundreds of years and more world leaders have been educated here than any other university. This is the Old Schools Quad, which is part of the famous Bodleian Library, at the heart of this historic establishment.

A quad or quadrangle is a courtyard with buildings on all sides. Oxford University is made up of thirty eight different colleges. There are twenty thousand students studying here, from nearly a hundred and fifty countries.

Dr. Sally Mapstone is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Education.

Richard: Sally. Tell me about Oxford University.

Sally: Oxford University is one of the world's leading universities. It's highly international, it's very modern and it has a great sense of history.

Richard: And how old is it?

Sally: The university has been here for 900 years. Many of the colleges are almost as old as that too, though some of them were established in the twentieth century.

Richard: You've had a lot of famous names here over the years.

Sally: Yes, we've had a lot of famous people at Oxford, from prime ministers such as Margaret Thatcher, Harold Wilson, David Cameron, US presidents, such as Bill

Clinton, writers, such as Oscar Wilde and even film stars, such as Hugh Grant.

Richard: So why is it, do you think, that the search for knowledge and education is so important to Great Britain?

Sally: Great Britain and universities like Oxford have always had a rich interest in critical enquiry. By that I mean the search for knowledge, the investigation of truth, the asking of questions. Whether it's to do with drama, to do with development, or even to do with disease, we're always asking the big questions to try and change things for the better.

There are universities all across the UK but they're not the only places where you can gain knowledge.