

Cherwell
Freshers' Guide
2025

KEEP OFF
THE GRASS



OXFORD COMPSOC

WELCOME TO THE OXFORD COMPUTING AND TECHNOLOGY SOCIETY

“ LEARN TO CODE ”

WEEKLY LESSONS AND WORKSHOPS FOR BEGINNERS!

“ COMPETITIVE PROGRAMMING ”

COMPETITIONS AND BOOTCAMP EVENTS!

“ CYBERSECURITY ”

TRAINING AND CAPTURE-THE-FLAG (CTF) COMPETITIONS!

“ TALKS ”

SPEAKING EVENTS WITH LEADING INDUSTRY FIGURES!

“ SOCIALS (WITH PIZZA!) ”

FUN EVENTS AT ALL HOURS WITH FOOD AND SNACKS!

<-- SEE EVENTS AND SIGN UP WITH OUR QR CODE!



MEMBERSHIP JUST £1!

“ ox.compsoc.net ”



[ox.compsoc](https://www.instagram.com/ox.compsoc)



discord.gg/cUZFG5WZ6

Editors' note

Welcome to Oxford, and congratulations on getting into the best university in the country – and the world – despite what *The Times* would have you believe. Everyone says it, but it really is true: Oxford is a magical, captivating, and crazy place. The buildings are imposing, the libraries stunning, and the days jam-packed.

We can guarantee that Freshers' Week will be a hectic, stressful, and emotional time. Whether you're coming from down the road or halfway around the globe, everything feels new, intense, and (hopefully) exciting. You'll doubtless worry about not being smart enough, funny enough, and cool enough – but just remember that everyone else is thinking the same.

That being said, you'll get used to it all quickly. Walking through a porter's lodge will lose its novelty; having a crisis over an essay or problem sheet will become routine. By week 3, you'll look back at

Freshers' Week and not believe that there was ever a time that you weren't an Oxford student.

You've likely already been hit with endless streams of advice, folk wisdom, and stories about how to make the most of your university years. Lots of this can be unhelpful, but we'll offer some just the same. The most important thing is to try as much as you can. When you've not yet settled in or found your feet, the last thing you might want to do is show up to some event not knowing anyone. But making the most of every opportunity that you are presented with is the best way to find out what you like, meet people, and start to feel at home.

That's not to say that you should feel bad about not going out and having a quiet evening in – it's not possible to do everything, and the opportunities will still be there next week, term, year. But if you are unsure about something, not fully convinced you'll like it: just go. You'll only regret not going.

And if you aren't sure what you want to do, we can make one non-

biased suggestion: *Cherwell*. Student journalism is a great way to meet people, learn about the University, and, most importantly, have fun!

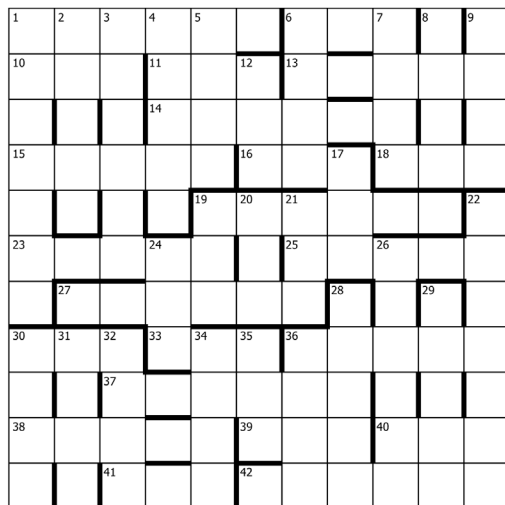
As a paper, we've been going since 1920, with alumni including Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. We remain thoroughly independent and committed to providing the best coverage of student life in Oxford.

You can write for us now – we have commissions groups on Facebook and weekly news meetings: check out our Instagram for updates.

We hope this guide will steer you on the right path for your time at Oxford (or at least provide a light-read in any down moments). But if it all gets too much, just remember, as the wise Polonius once said: "To thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man." Alternatively, find comfort in the timeless and wise(r) verse of Charli XCX: "I went my own way and I made it, I'm your favourite reference, baby, Call me Gabbriette, you're so inspired."

Crossword

ALESSANDRA EDWARDS



ACROSS:

6. Not quite a scout?
10. Genetic transport
11. Website address
13. Large artery
14. Capital of Taiwan
15. Largest city in Nigeria
16. Entz team's event
18. Slippery fish
19. Attack
23. Most frequent in data
25. Violet prefix
27. Someone that might call you out?
30. Largest Oxford library, familiarly
33. Oft-mocked degree subject
36. Sub fusc component
37. Lacking the means (to)
38. Sore in mouth
39. Short cut?
40. Pussycat's partner
41. P.E. necessity
42. Pines

DOWN:

1. First year exams
2. Available, like a guest ale
3. Well worn
4. Recipient of many an apologetic email
5. Taylor's tour
6. Guitar gadget
7. Soft French cheese
8. Lump on eyelid
9. Place for formal and informal eating
12. Place to study, familiarly
17. Buddy
19. Boxer Muhammad
20. Academic staff at college
21. Mel & —
22. Termly bills
24. Downloadable program
26. Couturier
28. Biblical quendum
29. Emma Watson's alma mater
30. Oxford sporting achievement
31. Capital of Norway
32. Batter's dismissal after scoring zero runs
34. Role in play
35. It goes with the flow?
36. Blackthorn berry

Find the answers in the
Week 0 print!

A brief history of Oxford

MAXIM VOROBEV

Nearly 1000 years of history, and being the second-oldest continuously teaching university in the world, has left a treasure trove of stories in Oxford

The earliest date of teaching at Oxford is 1096, although learning then was very informal and structured without the college system we know today. Students studied a liberal arts curriculum composed of “trivium” (logic, grammar, rhetoric) and “quadrivium” (music, geometry, astronomy, arithmetic).

When King Henry II prohibited students from the University of Paris in 1167, Oxford outgrew the University Church, where teaching was originally held, to form a new network of colleges. University College, Balliol, and Merton all vie for the title of oldest (the arguments for which its members will be happy to regale you with) but the now-familiar college structure of a quad with staircases surrounding it emerged from New College as the model.

Oxford was primarily a religious institution: its members would either enter the clergy, or become teachers, physicians, or lawyers. These religious ties granted the University special privileges, with students tried in clerical courts, which were often more lenient than civil ones. These unequal privileges began the long-running town-versus-gown antagonism, and Oxford became the “murder capital” of medieval England, the homicide rate reaching

four times that of London’s. This tense environment led some academics and students to flee in order to found *the other place* (Cambridge) in 1209. Luckily, the once-violent town-versus-gown rivalry is today invoked in more friendly scenarios, like half-marathons and sport matches.

Oxford would not be itself without its libraries. The oldest one, Duke Humfrey’s Library, was founded in 1447, after the Duke of Gloucester donated 281 books to add to the University’s meagre 20. These collections were so plagued by fire and errant sheep that only three books from the original collection remain. This is why you’ll find in Duke Humphrey’s a declaration which expressly forbids “kindl[ing] any flame”. The central Old Bodleian Library emerged later from the donations of Sir Thomas Bodley, and library facilities have been increasing ever since.

Oxford University is nothing without debate. Far more importantly, Oxford became the centre of theological and national debate during the Reformation, with a set of particularly gruesome burnings remembered by the Martyrs memorial on Broad Street. It was only in 1871 that Catholics were let back into the University! During the British Civil Wars, Oxford was a royalist bastion: colleges donated (or were supposed to donate) their silver to pay for the King’s armies, and some still boast war scars, like the cannonball St John’s College displays in its library.

The 18th and 19th centuries featured a resurgence of buildings, as Christopher Wren (the Sheldonian), James Gibbs (the Radcliffe Camera) and Thomas Jackson (Examination Schools, the Bridge of Sighs, Trinity and Brasenose College) all lent their architectural prowess to the place. It was during this period that the baroque sandstone now associated with Oxford emerged to replace the gothic styles of older buildings, like New College.

What defines the late 19th and 20th centuries in Oxford’s history, is the increasing influence of women. Women’s colleges like Lady Margaret Hall, Somerville, St Hugh’s and St Anne’s, started small and faced vast limitations, from restricted library use to the awarding of degrees. Women often studied with no official recognition: only in 1920, almost 50 years after being admitted to the University, could they receive degree certifications. The libraries of previously women-only colleges are often some of the most expansive, due to this historical lack of central resources. You’ll find your colleges often touting how early (or hiding how shamefully late) they let women in.

These brief snippets of history don’t even reveal the student-led protests, newspapers (like the brilliant *Cherwell*), Summer Viii, Ascension Day, May Day, irritating hacks, awkward tutorials, and infinite amount of academic breakdowns, that also truly define the University.

Image Credit: Grave Greaves.



Imposter syndrome

At some point during your time in Oxford, you will ask yourself: “How did I get here? Surely someone else deserves this place more than me.” That’s imposter syndrome, and it’s one of the few things in Oxford that is genuinely universal. It creeps in when you sit down for a tutorial and your coursemate delivers an answer to a discussion question so detailed and certain that you just know they’re heading for a First, while you are left staring empty-headed at the unintelligible notes you took from the textbook. It surfaces in your room at midnight when you’re reading the same line of an article for the fifth time and still have no idea what’s going on.

What you need to remember is that everyone feels it. Some mask it with bravado; others bury it under endless busyness. But no one is immune. If anything, the fact that

you feel like an imposter is proof you are in the right place. Only true frauds never question themselves.

Remember that Oxford is not a place where anyone arrives fully formed. The admissions process does not look for finished scholars but for potential: the capacity to grow, to adapt, and to withstand the peculiar pressures of this institution. The students who appear most self-assured are usually the ones bluffing most skilfully. Beneath the surface, they too are scrambling to keep pace, worrying they’re falling behind, questioning whether they measure up.

It is easy to imagine that you alone are treading water while everyone else is surging ahead effortlessly. The reality is simpler: Oxford makes everyone feel inadequate at times, because it is designed to challenge everyone simultaneously. This should feel liberating rather than daunting. When you stumble in tutorials or struggle with essays, you’re not

failing – you’re being stretched. That stretching is the very substance of an Oxford education.

When the doubt gets loud, know that your tutors – the people who interviewed you, admitted you, and continue to teach you – have seen this cycle countless times. Trust their judgment, even when you can’t trust your own.

You will never be cured of imposter syndrome entirely. In truth, the feeling lingers even for the professors at the very top of their fields. What Oxford can teach you is how to work alongside that feeling, how to function in spite of it, and how to see it not as an enemy but as a reminder of your own standards.

When the feeling resurfaces – and it will, it’s destined to – let it remind you not of your inadequacy, but of your humanity. Your self-doubt does not mean that you’re not good enough for Oxford – you have earned your place and will prove that you belong here, again and again.

DYLAN BRENNEN

ABI CHRISTIE

Welcome to Oxford, your home away from home for the next (few) year(s)! As one of the busiest tourist destinations in the UK, filled with a myriad of winding streets and a vast number of University buildings, navigating can be tricky.

It is imperative to know the location of your own college and accommodation relative to the rest of the city. Some freshers may be living in accommodation off site. If you find yourself in this situation, I would recommend getting familiar with the distance between these two locations; this might come in handy when you’re running late for a college-situated event.

Colleges can, at first, be a maze in themselves. Take some time in Freshers’ Week to explore your college at your own pace. After all, it is the place where you’re most likely

to be dining, studying, and partying for the rest of your degree. A pro-navigating tip is to get your hands on a map of the college. Most porters’ lodges will have a large-scale physical map very visibly displayed for your convenience.

Most colleges have multiple entrances (or “gates”), which are accessible from different streets, although not all entrances are open to students outside that specific college. So, if you have a tutorial or class at a college other than your own, do look on their website for their main entrance. Helpfully, this is also where the porters’ lodge will be situated.

38 college lodges are part of the University’s Safe Lodge scheme. This means that any Oxford student can seek support from a different college’s lodge, and the porters will arrange a safe return for you to your own

college. Participating colleges can be identified through a visible green circle at the lodge entrance.

With its ornate facade, you may be forgiven for mistaking the Examination Schools as yet another college. As the academic year progresses, however, the Examination Schools become just that – a maze of exam halls. Most undergraduate freshers will sit their Preliminary Examinations (Prelims) here in Trinity term.

Your faculty building will inevitably become one of your most frequented spots in Oxford. Though not everyone’s idea of fun during Freshers’ Week, it is a wise idea to locate your faculty building before your first lecture.

This might all feel overwhelming, but don’t fear, you will soon get the hang of it. Eventually, muscle memory will prevail.

A navigational guide around Oxford

An introvert's Freshers' Week

JESSICA GREGORY



Joining societies, guilt-free clubbing nights, a chance to explore yourself and your city – on the face of it, Freshers' Week is the most incredible opportunity. A chance to delve into the city around you. A chance to meet your friends for the next three years. A chance to let your hair down before the work starts piling in. However, this isn't, in my experience, the reality.

This article is for the people who don't want to stay up until 3am clubbing but rather stay up until 11pm with a hot beverage and a good book, snuggled under a blanket. For the people who imagine Freshers' as a week of nightmares rather than a week of liberty: I hear you.

What a rush it all was! I, like many people I knew at the time, was not emotionally ready to move into university. My life at home was cosy, I was confident in the groups and settings I'd created for myself. I genuinely believed that I was a sociable person. So, I thought that Freshers', whilst not being completely easy, would at least be somewhat familiar.

What I could not have been prepared for was the rush, the urgency, the desperation from everyone to meet anyone. The first couple of days are like trying to catch confetti cannon – you have dozens of people throwing their names and subjects at you, and you're desperately trying to grab onto at least one of them so you can pin them down as your new friend.

It's like waiting to start a 100m sprint, seeing that everyone is "in the

same boat as you are", all of us being given the same opportunity to meet new people with new experiences. The trophy is establishing yourself as a social human being with a group of people to carry with you through your degree. For social butterflies in the race, they sail through to the end with no problem. You watch them reach the end and find their people and celebrate with pure joy.

On the other hand, for the introverts, the more awkward people who loathe introductions and have their social battery zapped in half an hour, when the starting gun fires, it feels like it's shot you in the leg. And then you have 100 hurdles to overcome as well. Everyone else is sailing past and celebrating, but you're labouring through, trying to get to the same place but struggling in the process.

This is, just to clarify for upcoming students, a mass-exaggeration. But it is still something to be considered. I can recall the fear of turning up late to a casual brunch and therefore walking around college gardens a few times to just summon up the courage to enter.

The most terrifying part of it all must be moving day. The rush of emotions – for any student, not just introverts – is a lot. There's a mix between excitement and fear, joy and sadness. But, in my experience, with the added inner conflict of wanting to hide away in your room for eternity compared with the necessity of going outside and meeting anyone, it can feel like an increased internal pressure

as well as a slight social one.

The demand of it all can amount quickly, and surprisingly so. After all, think of the number of people who were too scared to even go in their kitchen initially. It may remain unspoken but just know that there are students who hide away in their room, terrified to socialise or even set foot into the library, no matter how simple this may seem to others.

In fairness, the effort from universities works wonders. Many people find their first-year friends during Freshers' Week and by attending these activities with others. Plus, it's a chance to engage in activities that just don't come up in your day-to-day life like hanging with alpacas (which would be amazing if it was part of our everyday!).

This is the point where I'd like to give a shout-out to the extroverts. There's something to be said for the fact that we introverts get adopted by you. I can recall on the first night at university, my flatmates knocking on my door to invite me to dinner with them. And it's people like that who help us leave our comfort zone and meet new people.

I would recommend trying to leave your comfort zone yourself, though. Try and reach for a piece of confetti yourself, be the first one to message or invite someone to something. Because, as cliché as it is, everyone quite literally is in the same boat and whilst they may be better at hiding it, they're also nervous on the inside.

Image Credit: Grace Greaves.

Sports in Oxford

Oxford offers a wide range of opportunities to get involved in all kinds of sports, whether you have years of experience or are a complete novice. The collegiate system allows you to get involved with a generally lower level of commitment and less expectation of prior experience, while the University teams tend to cater to the more experienced athletes and those seeking a high-performance environment.

More serious athletes will often seek out the much-coveted Blue. These are generally awarded to those who represent Oxford at the highest level in the Varsity Match against Cambridge, although the criteria vary slightly from sport to sport. The most prominent sports, such as football or hockey, award their players with a Full Blue, while more niche sports, including kickboxing and Ultimate Frisbee, can award

players with a Half Blue, which is still considered a significant achievement.

For those seeking less commitment, or just a more casual sporting experience, college sports is the place to look. Each college has a wide range of sports teams, particularly in popular sports like football, cricket, netball, or rowing. Smaller colleges often combine to form joint teams. For the most part, these teams will have a limited number of training sessions (although there are some exceptions) and a stronger focus put on enjoyment.

Colleges compete in both league and knockout (known as “cuppers”) competitions. Although the standard varies greatly and matches are generally quite casual, the final rounds of cuppers in the most popular sports, such as football or rugby, can draw spectators and bring a more competitive atmosphere.

There is no doubt, however,

CHARLIE TOWLE

that the pinnacle of college sports' atmosphere is Summer Eights, a four-day rowing event held in Trinity term each year. The college rowing clubs usually have a very friendly atmosphere and the majority of members will have learnt to row at the club. Clubs tend to run taster sessions early on in Michaelmas, and a novice training program which culminates in a novice regatta at the end of term.

Both college and University sports teams will regularly run socials, either just within members of that team or run jointly with another team. These joint socials are called “crewdates” and involve plenty of games and drinking for those who wish to drink (juice, milk, or even hot sauce are common non-alcoholic alternatives). Whatever it is that you're looking for in a sports club, the chances are that you will be able to find it in Oxford, so don't shy away from trying something new!

Guide to welfare resources

The first few weeks of university are chaotic in the best way – at the same time, it is natural to feel overwhelmed at points. It's worth remembering that all transitions are hard, but temporary, and that Oxford's college system provides a friendly network of support.

The college parents that all freshers are assigned are a great place to start if you have any concerns. Your parents will likely study the same subject as you so they can help out with any academic concerns.

One of the best things about Oxford is the college community. It allows you to connect with a variety of people from the minute you enter. The events put on by colleges are a great way of meeting like-minded individuals in a relaxed setting.

The role of Welfare Officer varies slightly from college to college, but

generally the representatives will organise free events every week. These are a great chance to get to know people in your year better (and to enjoy free food!). Most colleges organise a regular Welfare Tea, where a frankly unreasonable amount of welfare's allocated budget is spent on a trip to Tesco, and people from all year groups come along to relax after lectures. At Keble College (where I was one of the Welfare Officers last year) it happened at 4:30pm every Wednesday, and Krispy Kremes were a staple.

College welfare officers are also responsible for connecting students to support when they need it. At most colleges, conversations you have with them will remain confidential, apart from cases where it is considered necessary for your safety to communicate with another member

CHARLIE BAILEY

of the college welfare team. To look for specific welfare resources, a good place to start is the college welfare's Instagram page, or by reaching out to the team.

It's good to remember that, should you need it, many college welfare teams allow you to be reimbursed for pregnancy tests and sanitary products (such as menstrual cups). Additionally, don't be afraid to use free contraceptive supplies, often kept in the Porters' Lodge.

Lots of colleges have an LGBTQ+ or Pride Society that allows you to meet other people in college, while some even have LGBTQ+ College Parents and the Oxford University LGBTQ+ Society runs Tues-Gays every Tuesday.

Lastly, most colleges have BAME reps who are there to support you and some offer BAME college parents.





join
neuroinfinity :3

Oxford neurodivergent
student society



we need graphic
design/social media
people!!!!!!1!!!
(sign up below)






@neuroinfinityoxford



website yippee!




Oxford energy society



OXFORD STRATEGIC STUDIES GROUP



SEMINARS BY
ESTEEMED SPEAKERS
ON DEFENCE, SECURITY,
AND FOREIGN POLICY

**TUESDAYS 8.30PM, ALL SOULS
COLLEGE**



Visit oussg.uk or @oussg_ on instagram



Oxford University Dancesport Club



Ballroom, Latin, Salsa, Bachata, Swing, and Zumba

Ballroom, Latin, Salsa, Bachata, Swing, and Zumba



Free Dance Classes for EVERYBODY

Tuesday 14th October:

Ballroom & Latin (6pm),
Salsa (8pm), Bachata (9pm)

Wednesday 15th October:

Ballroom & Latin (6pm),
Zumba (8pm), Swing (9pm)



**Catholic
Chaplaincy,
St Aldate's,
OX1 1RD**

SELINA CHEN

College-marry “someone you won’t fight with and won’t f**k” – that was the advice I received during Freshers’ Week. As the college child of a divorced college father, I went on to win Best College Marriage at Halfway Hall, so I’d say they are wise words.

Oh sorry, did you think I was talking about romantic love? In that case may I direct you to Cherpse, the *Cherwell* match-making scheme. This article is quite the opposite.

College marriage is fundamentally a mentorship scheme. Your college parents, in the year above, are the people you can turn to for advice on everything from academic hurdles to personal issues. Next year, it will be your

turn to offer that for your college children.

It’s always better to have multiple mentors with diverse perspectives. As my college husband wrote in his introductory email to our college children: “I’m more of a clubbing type, while Selina prefers teetotal fun ... the great thing about this is that at least one of us will usually be found awake at any point of the day or night.” It happens that one of our daughters takes after myself while the other is more similar to my college husband, so we found it natural to offer relevant advice.

Your college spouse is someone you have a choice in, and you should opt for stability over volatility. Don’t marry your newest romantic

partner thinking it’d be a cute way to start, because relationships may end in heartbreak, and it’s simply unfair to subject your college children to your drama. In the same vein, don’t hastily marry a friend with whom you may later have a massive fall-out – lesson learned from the hush-hush matter of my single college father’s divorce.

Your foremost priority should be finding a good co-mentor. Then within those parameters, feel free to college-marry with as much flourish as you’d like. My college wedding took place in the chapel with satirical vows, guests in black-tie, and organ music played by my college brother. It’s one of the highlights of my time at Oxford.

How to find ‘college love’

Read up and settle in: Oxford’s best libraries

POLINA KIM

Whether you’re struggling through an essay crisis, want extra motivation to study, or just need to leave your room, *Cherwell’s* got your back. Here are Oxford’s best libraries to study in, with places for every occasion.

For the intense lock-in: The Law Faculty Library

Nothing gets more sleek, modern, and, frankly, corporate, than the Law Faculty Library. Equipped with sockets everywhere, a strong internet connection, and an open, office-style layout, this is the place to go if you want to be your most, productive self.

For the traditional experience: The Radcliffe Camera

In the heart of the city, this iconic location is a must for freshers just starting their Oxford journey. Have you even been to Oxford if

you haven’t been to the Rad Cam? You have to come at the crack of dawn to get a seat, but after the early start this is a great place to stay.

For the undisturbed, cosy flow: The Japanese Library

This is an underrated gem, particularly in the colder months. There are very few seats, but they’re all comfy, and next to the heaters. There is bamboo outside and the whole place is built according to Japanese principles, so the atmosphere of the room is not just aesthetic, but extremely inspiring and calming.

For the Instagram: Duke Humfrey’s Library

This place has the most gorgeous ceilings, oak bookshelves, and window views. The library has some incredibly old and rare books, which are alarmed, so be mindful of not touching the tomes, no matter how aesthetic they seem! Given the no bag policy,

this might be a better library for quick tasks you need a short burst of motivation to complete. Or for pictures to prove Oxford is as #darkacademia as they say it is.

For the social feeling: The Taylorian Library

The Taylor Institution is right next to the Ashmolean Museum, so you can pop out on a study break to go and look at the wonderful collection and feel more sociable. The tables are also round and wide, meaning you feel close enough to fellow students to avoid loneliness, but not enough to be distracted.

Oxford is home to so many brilliant libraries, and exploring them all is one of the greatest gifts that your student experience will provide. Start with our list and then branch out: there is endless potential for discovery amongst the winding, cobbled streets of the city we are privileged enough to call our home, even if only for a little while.

Sub-par sub fusc? The ins and outs of Oxford fashion

ANTONIA ROGERS

Oxford has many strange traditions and events, which can make the question of what to wear (and what to pack) a difficult one. Freshers, do not fear, we have come up with an easy guide to avoiding the most common fashion faux pas at Oxford.

Matriculation is a formal ceremony where you become an official member of the University. For this, you will need to wear sub fusc. This comprises a dark suit or skirt (most people go for black), a white shirt (with a collar), and smart black shoes. Students wear a black skirt and tights or opt for suit trousers. White or black bow ties are both fine.

During Freshers' Week, colleges usually organise a trip to one of the specific sub fusc stores in Oxford – either Shepherd and Woodward, Ede and Ravenscroft, or Walters of Oxford – to pick up a cap, gown, and tie or velvet bow. The majority of students get a commoner's gown, but organ and choral scholars sport a scholar's gown. This all costs around £40, but it's a worthy investment, as you will need to wear sub fusc for exams, and many colleges require you to wear a gown to formals. If you are worried about the price, the Student Union campaign Class Act runs a scheme to supply incoming freshers with free sub fusc: applications are open until the 8th October on their Instagram, @oxfordclassact.

On the subject of formals, colleges all do things slightly differently. Formals are three or four-course dinners which are treated as special occasions, and opportunities for students to dress up for a fine dining



experience. Some colleges hold them weekly, others multiple times a week, and some, like Christ Church, hold them every day after the usual hall dinner. As a general rule of thumb, the more times a week formals are held, the less 'formal' they become.

For everyday formals, many just turn up in jeans and a shirt, with their gown over the top. Less regular ones will have a 'formal' dress code, which usually means a suit and tie or a dress (either short or long). There are also black-tie formals, which require wearing a long dress or a tuxedo or dark suit with a black bow tie. These informal rules of dress, however, are not enforced, and only some colleges require you to wear your gown to dinner. Most students love a chance to dress up, so people usually dress more formally than they need to. I would suggest bringing a couple of suits or dresses that you could wear both to formals and black tie events.

Events range from BOPs (Big Organised Parties organised by your college's entz, or entertainment, team) to black-or white-tie balls, and everything in between. BOPs are just within

your college, whereas Mega Bops often involve multiple colleges in a bigger venue. The general gist stays the same: each BOP will have a theme and people dress up, often to quite extreme lengths, to match it. Last year at the 'S for Somerville BOP', one fresher turned up as a Smurf, painted fully blue – the face paint went everywhere... Bring any miscellaneous party outfits and accessories you have in your wardrobe – think funky glasses, feather boas, and cowboy hats.

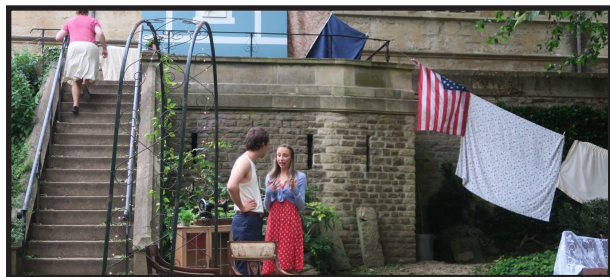
Some BOPs are black-tie events, such as balls held with other colleges. Large college balls are mainly in Trinity term – most of them have a black-tie dress code (just like formals), but a few are white-tie. This means a black tailcoat, white dress shirt, and waistcoat, or a floor length dress. However, if you want to go to a white-tie ball, they often have deals with local providers for hiring the correct attire, which most people use, seeing as not everyone has white tie lying about.

However daunting these dress codes may appear, everyone is in it together and so you'll quickly get the hang of it!

Image Credit: Éilis Mathur.

Drama in Oxford

LEON MOORHOUSE



The drama scene at Oxford is far more than just a student society. Whether you're looking to star in a Shakespearean tragedy, design intricate sets, or are just craving the buzz of getting involved, there's a place for you in Oxford theatre.

Oxford University Drama Society (OUDS) is the central society for everything drama-related at Oxford. It provides funding for shows, runs social events and workshops, shares audition and crew calls, and supports students with every level of experience. For many students, especially freshers, getting involved with drama is a grounding experience. It's a great way to meet people outside of college, forget about academic pressures, and find a community.

Actors can dive into auditions straight away. Different productions will use their own methods, but usually they will either ask for a self-tape or for you to prepare a monologue, followed by call-back auditions. Once the casting process is over, the fun can begin, with rehearsals as well as socials to help boost welfare.

But drama at Oxford isn't just about the performers. Behind every great show is an even greater production team, composed of directors, producers, designers, marketers, sound and lighting technicians, and stage managers who pull everything together. For many of these roles there is a separate soci-

ety – Oxford University Technical Theatre Society (OUTTS) – who run workshops on set, lighting, and sound design, and how to produce a show.

Oxford drama is more than just putting on plays. It is also a space for writing, experimenting, and exploring. Students are encouraged to write original plays, musicals, and films. There are plenty of opportunities for writers to share their work, so if you've got an idea, there's a high chance someone else will want to help workshop it and make it happen. OUDS offers informative events and talks, from budgeting workshops to visits from acclaimed playwright and actors, ensuring students have the tools and inspiration they need to thrive.

While the drama scene is generally inclusive and supportive, it's not without flaws. Nepotism can crop up, with roles sometimes passed informally between friends. However, there are plenty of production companies that remain active and welcoming, and hard work is always recognised.

The key is persistence and passion. Many students who now run production companies or direct major shows started out with no experience, just a love of theatre and a willingness to get involved. Start small, take risks, ask to shadow people, and keep going even if your first audition doesn't go your way.

Image Credit: Exeter College Drama Society.

The Oxford coffee guide

ROSA MOORE

For those who prefer atmospheric background noise, a study buddy that you can actually talk to, or simply a cup of coffee not in a keep cup, then this guide to the coffee shops of Oxford will come in useful.

Common Ground

A part-time music venue and community space with a bookshop hidden downstairs, Common Ground is probably Oxford's coolest coffee shop. They are very laptop-friendly with lots of plug sockets and a top-tier playlist on top of good coffee.

Jericho Coffe Traders and The Missing Bean

Both Jericho Coffee Traders and the Missing Bean are centrally located on and just off the High Street and both serve up house-roasted coffee widely regarded as some of the best in Oxford. Their popularity means that seats go pretty quickly, especially around the coveted tables outside JCT.

The Weston Library Cafe

The cafe at the Weston Library is, in my opinion, an underrated banger amongst Oxford's coffee shops. While not the best for a long study session as laptops are banned during the lunchtime rush, they have a great student discount and are perfect for a post-lecture catch up with a friend.

G and D's

G and D's is, in their own words, "Oxford's own ice cream cafe". Their late closing time at 11pm – long past the doors of the Rad Cam shutting for the day – makes G and D's an ideal spot for grinding out an essay due the next morning.

Understanding Oxford student politics

NOAH ROBSON

The world of Oxford student politics is a strange and at times confusing one. It certainly isn't for everyone, attracting with it a healthy mixture of both attention and controversy (much of which you can read about in *Cherwell*).

To some, it is the centre of their Oxford experience. To others, it is an occasional distraction they may hear about over dinner in Hall. Whichever way you end up falling on this matter, there's little doubt that you will become aware of those involved when a practice known as 'hacking' begins. For the uninitiated, this involves candidates in elections going around and – for want of a better word – begging for their peers' votes. You will wonder how this person even knows you (answer: they likely don't), but it does serve as a reassuring reminder that you are approaching the end of term, given that most elections tend to take place in and around Week 7.

Closest to home are college

JCR elections. These are (usually) less high-profile, often seeing candidates run against the infamous 'RON' (reopen nominations). Occasionally, someone will lose to RON – this can be quite funny.

Next up is the Student Union – a slightly bizarre middle ground between JCRs and the University. Given the collegiate system at Oxford, the SU is often bemoaned for lacking any real power, particularly compared to SUs at other universities. Nevertheless, those who are elected receive a full-time salary while they take a year out from their studies for the positions, so it's not to be sniffed at.

There are also elections for more overtly political societies, which ascribe themselves to a particular ideological viewpoint. The largest of these are the Oxford University Conservative Association (OUCA) and the Oxford University Labour Club (OLC). There is also the more recently established Oxford University Liberal Association

(OULA).

Finally, there is the Oxford Union. Unique in its reputation for being one of the few student societies that can genuinely claim to be known around the world, it certainly splits opinion. The best way to understand the Union is to think of it as 'normal' student politics on steroids – strong ones. It boasts by far the largest budget of any society, even having its own grand buildings in the centre of the city. A debating society on the face of it, the Union attracts many high-profile figures – in recent times this has included Tom Hanks, Nancy Pelosi, and John Legend. It also tends to attract the most controversies, the nature of which can often lead to national (or even international) attention.

Whether you choose to get involved in all, some, or none, it is almost certain you will hear about student politics during your time here. It might be a big speaker. It might be a new scandal. Or it might simply be a hack in week 7.

Aren't you 'grad' you came? A love letter to postgrads

CONOR WALSH

When I arrived in Oxford last year, it felt almost insulting to be called a "fresher". As far as I was concerned, I'd been there and done that. Sure, I was certainly fresh-faced (in fact, I still am). But arriving as a Postgrad you just feel... different.

With the way the University is structured, the whole place can seem very undergrad-centric. Undergrads get taught in their colleges, live (mostly) on site, and have free rein over societies. Postgrads, meanwhile, whether you're an MSc, MPhil, DPhil, or some other combination of letters, are normally shunned to their departments, and housed off-site. As a result, it's easy to feel

a bit lost, forgotten or overlooked.

Despite that, Oxford postgrad life isn't all that bad. In fact, it's pretty damn brilliant. Whilst the city might feel overrun with eighteen year-olds, the reality is that postgrads make up over half of the student population. And our accommodation contracts tend to be for entire academic years. So not only do you avoid the pain of moving in and out for eight weeks at a time, you also get to enjoy the city at its quietest, most peaceful moments – before the tourists arrive, at least.

The point is that being a postgrad doesn't mean that you're a second-class citizen. You won't be overlooked, forgotten or sneered at because you did

your Bachelor's somewhere else. Instead, you are very much part of the Oxford community.

If anything, having spent three or four years somewhere else will make you more appreciative of the experience on offer. During your undergrad days elsewhere, you were no doubt accustomed to mould-ridden housing, dirty dorms, and bad food. In contrast, the halls and rooms of Oxford are a lap of luxury.

The beauty of being a postgrad here is that you can immerse yourself into the Oxford 'experience' as much or as little as you want. Even if you don't think it's for you, give it a go – at least once. I promise you, it's worth it.



Have a listen!

The Oxford Gargoyles

Oxford's leading jazz acappella group

[@theoxfordgargoyles](https://www.instagram.com/theoxfordgargoyles) oxfordgargoyles@gmail.com [theoxfordgargoyles.com](https://www.theoxfordgargoyles.com)

'Charm personified'
— *The Times*

'They are simply
terrifically talented and
dedicated performers
with great instincts and
excellent musicianship'
— *FringeReview 2023*



The Oxford Gargoyles have been running since 1998 as a group of 12-14 singers that share a passion for jazz and close harmony. We rehearse twice a week and perform multiple times a term. We have performed at Edinburgh Fringe for almost 15 years, but we can also be heard around Oxford throughout term time.

On the 10th and 11th October, we are auditioning Oxford-based singers of all voice types. If you are interested, please scan the QR code to sign up!



Please get in touch if you have any events that could be jazzed up with some acappella!

Are you the next Christina Lamb? Want to see
your name on a byline?

PICK UP A STORY AT



Cherwell

NEWS MEETING

EACH SATURDAY 5.30PM
@ CHERWELL OFFICE



Directions: Google Maps 'Oxford Student Publications Ltd' -
cross Folly Bridge - down the stairs at Salter's Streamers - up the blue stairs to Evelyn
Wagh room

O.U.S.S.C.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY SHI &
SNOWBOARD CLUB



JOIN NOW





Editors-in-Chief: Éilis Mathur
and Morien Robertson

Art: Archie Johnston

Published by Oxford Student
Publications Ltd

