



# Oriel College

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Study Guide

For Undergraduate Freshers

Michaelmas 2025

## Contents

|                                                |    |
|------------------------------------------------|----|
| SENIOR TUTOR'S WELCOME .....                   | 3  |
| INTRODUCTION .....                             | 3  |
| TEACHING AT OXFORD .....                       | 4  |
| WHAT HAPPENS IN A TUTORIAL? .....              | 4  |
| HOW DO I PREPARE FOR A TUTORIAL? .....         | 5  |
| USING THE LIBRARY .....                        | 6  |
| OBTAINING BOOKS .....                          | 6  |
| READING AND NOTE-TAKING .....                  | 7  |
| WRITING YOUR ESSAY .....                       | 8  |
| SOLVING A SET OF PROBLEMS .....                | 9  |
| CITING REFERENCES .....                        | 10 |
| GETTING THE MOST FROM A TUTORIAL .....         | 11 |
| MAKING THE MOST OF LECTURES .....              | 13 |
| MANAGING YOUR WORKLOAD .....                   | 14 |
| A FEW TIPS .....                               | 14 |
| USING YOUR VACATIONS .....                     | 15 |
| FEEDBACK ON PERFORMANCE .....                  | 15 |
| PLAGIARISM .....                               | 16 |
| WHAT KIND OF STUDY SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE? ..... | 17 |
| SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES .....           | 17 |
| WELFARE SUPPORT .....                          | 17 |

## SENIOR TUTOR'S WELCOME

Congratulations on obtaining a place at Oxford, and welcome to Oriel College. You are now embarking on three or, in some cases, four years of study that will have a powerful impact on you, your interests, and your future career. Everyone here is keen that you get the most out of your time here; and this guide, designed to introduce you to the world of study at Oxford, is an important part of achieving that. It will be supplemented in your first few weeks by numerous meetings and discussions in College, about all aspects of your life and work here. We, in turn, look to you for commitment to your academic studies and for the highest aspirations, to use your place here to discover as much as you can about your subject and, thereby, realise the potential which gained you a place here. In the process, I very much hope that you will have a fascinating, challenging and enjoyable time here.



John Huber  
Senior Tutor

## INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended to introduce you to how to get the most from your teaching while at Oxford. We have tried to answer the questions that are likely to arise in the first few weeks of your time at Oriel College. It is not intended to be a definitive set of rules because every student has his or her own approach to work and knows how to study to best effect. Part of the challenge of moving to University is learning how to manage your time to fit the demands of your course. You will find that different courses have different work patterns, in terms of both the kind of work and how many hours of formal teaching/practicals you receive and spend in personal study.

Teaching at Oxford is very different from most universities in the UK, with the tutorial at the centre of all undergraduate courses. You will meet your College tutors within your first few days at Oriel. Some subjects have one College tutor whereas others, particularly the joint schools, will have several. Your College tutor may be either a Fellow of the College or a College lecturer, who has expertise in a specific area. During your time at Oxford you should also expect to be taught by Fellows and lecturers at other Colleges, when they have specialist expertise in areas which your College Tutor(s) do not.

This guide will: -

- Explain the teaching system and its requirements
- Suggest ways to manage your work effectively
- Provide information on sources of feedback
- Provide information on academic and personal support

A study guide or handbook may also be provided by your Department or Faculty tailored to your subject needs.

## TEACHING AT OXFORD

This ranges from large classes to individual sessions with your tutor. Each course at Oxford places a different emphasis on lectures, seminars, classes, practicals and individual teaching. Your Department or Faculty will run introductory sessions in the first few weeks of term to explain the emphasis within your subject.

The *tutorial* is central to teaching at Oxford. It normally involves a tutor and two undergraduates (or occasionally one undergraduate) and you will normally have at least one tutorial a week for the eight weeks of Full Term, each lasting about one hour. This will require you to prepare work either to submit in advance or to take to the tutorial. At the tutorial you will either read your work out loud or the tutor may start a discussion of the prepared work and its wider implications with both you and the other student present (your tutorial partner).

While organising tutorials is a College responsibility, *lectures and seminars* are organised by Departments and Faculties. These are given by Oxford academics and sometimes highly respected guests from other institutions. The lecturer will be an expert in the subject and will have researched in that area, collating even the most recent information and presenting it coherently. The lecturers will be able to provide you with an analysis of the subject matter enabling you to understand the breadth of your subject, thus allowing more informed specialisation in later years. It is also useful to hear information delivered in different ways, particularly if the lecturer is renowned within their field or beyond.

Many subjects use *small group teaching* where you get more individual attention from lecturers than in a formal lecture, but less than in a tutorial. In these classes you will benefit from the exchange of ideas with other students. In the Sciences, you are likely to have practical classes each week. These are essential to help you develop your knowledge of the subject and become adept at handling 'the tools of the trade', be they pipettes or theodolites. Some subjects also use field trips and excursions to reinforce teaching and show you the resources available within the University and further afield.

## WHAT HAPPENS IN A TUTORIAL?



Your tutorials will be organised by your Oriel College tutor, with the first being arranged when you meet for the first time in 0th Week. This will usually take place in the tutor's office or study in College, or it may take place in their office in their department. Your first tutorials are likely to be with a Fellow of Oriel College or a College Lecturer, but later on they may be with a specialist in your subject who is associated with another College. All undergraduates usually have one or more tutorials each week for the eight weeks of Full Term, each

lasting approximately one hour. You may be required to produce work in advance or to take it along to the tutorial for marking afterwards. Your tutor will tell you what they want you to do.

In the Arts, Social Sciences and Life Sciences the work will normally take the form of an essay. Mathematicians and Physical Scientists will usually have a set of problems to solve, but they may also be given essays in some topics. Some tutors like students to read their work aloud, summarise the main arguments of the piece or work through a problem on a board, whereas other tutors simply like to hold a discussion on the work. It depends on the tutor and the subject matter. If you are unsure what is required of you, ask your tutor when they set the work.

## HOW DO I PREPARE FOR A TUTORIAL?

It is important to be well prepared for a tutorial. As soon as you receive the reading list and essay title or problem sheet, read through the instructions thoroughly and think about the questions or title. Essays and sets of problems are often based on the lectures you have received or on key texts from your reading list.

If you are unsure what is required of you (including the length of the essay) or have any difficulties, contact your tutor as soon as possible, do not be afraid to ask for guidance.

If you have an essay to produce, most tutors will give you a reading list to help you get started, or they will be able to recommend texts that will help you to target your reading effectively. Try to discuss the work with other students in College and your Department or Faculty. They may have some useful ideas or perspectives. You will need to organise your time to produce your work, maybe in less than seven days, whilst attending other lectures and classes. For advice on how to do this, please see the separate section on 'Managing your workload'. At first, reading lists always appear quite daunting and most students initially feel that they need to read everything on the list in order to get to grips fully with a topic. Although this may be partially true, you will have a limited time in which to read and may have to cope with competition from other students for the same texts. It is therefore necessary to be pragmatic and make reading lists manageable. This can be achieved through some awareness of the purposes of reading and careful selection of the texts.

There are different types of reading lists. At the start of a particular course, you may be given a list of basic references fundamental to the course which will be referred to at different times and may be essential reading. You may then be given supplementary reading lists for specific essay topics: there is often one or more basic texts that is essential reading. Ask your tutor to recommend these basic texts and a few supplementary ones. If this is not possible, do a quick survey of some texts to find the ones most relevant to the subject or essay in question. It is considered good practice for any items from a reading list which do not make it into your essay prep work to be earmarked for vacation consolidation. Tutors for certain courses are likely to set vacation reading in preparation for the essay work due to take place in the following term.

## USING THE LIBRARY

When you have your reading list, set aside some time to go to the library and seek out the literature. You may find that you need to consult more than one library to find all of your key texts. During Freshers Week you will have tours of the libraries, including sessions on how to use the computer-based catalogues. If you need further assistance with a catalogue, please ask at the Information Desk in any of the libraries. Take some time to explore the libraries in your first week here. A few minutes spent orientating yourself now could save you hours of frustration in the future. A full guide to the College Library can be found Here:

<https://www.oriel.ox.ac.uk/life-at-oriel/library/>



There are basically three sorts of libraries in Oxford

- College libraries
- subject-based departmental or faculty libraries
- the large central library, The Bodleian (known as 'The Bod')

You will usually be able to borrow books and journals from the Oriel College and departmental libraries (with some restrictions), but all works in the Bodleian must be read in that library (remember that you can buy photocopies). There may be more than one type of subject-based library (e.g. the Taylorian and the Modern Languages Faculty Library; the Radcliffe Science Library, the Hooke Lending Library and Departmental/Faculty Libraries for the sciences). Tutors will advise on when to use these. Many journals are now available on-line, so make the most of this too. Oriel will usually buy multiple copies of standard texts and loan them to you for the relevant period.

## OBTAINING BOOKS

1. Plan your work sensibly in the light of library opening Hours. In particular, do not count on being able to read works at the last minute: they may be out to someone else or otherwise unavailable. If an important work is unobtainable, ask your tutor or the College Librarian for advice.
2. When you go to the library, do not be tempted to pick up the first book on your reading list and take it back to your room. Take a moment to find your way through the text – it is recommended to use the contents pages and index to aid your search for information, you are not expected to read every page of a reference text! Your tutors will be able to suggest some key texts that are worth buying.
3. When buying books, it is OK to buy second-Hand books, but make sure they are the latest or prescribed editions if this is likely to matter.

## READING AND NOTE-TAKING

Rather than just deciding to begin at the beginning, it is worth thinking about How to approach reading a book.

1. Begin reading by browsing or surveying the book. Study the table of contents to see how the ideas in the book are structured. From chapter headings and subheadings, you may be able to note those sections that are most relevant for your purposes.
2. Check the publication date. This may alert you to the position of the book either in relation to recent ideas, current data or particular subject paradigms.
3. Read the abstract, foreword, preface and introduction, as these tend to contain the structure of the book and a summary of the main themes.
4. Indexes are located at the back of some books. They should not be ignored. They list the topics covered in the book with appropriate page numbers for each subject. Using the index for references to a specific topic will allow you to focus your first reading.
5. For factual information, it is often unnecessary to read the whole book. Carefully examine the table of contents and index to select the most useful parts.
6. If you have a particularly difficult piece to read, you may need to read it more than once – first to understand the basic ideas, then more closely to get answers to the specific questions you have in mind. You may need to go back and read a simple text as an introduction to the more difficult piece.

Notes are taken for different purposes, and those purposes determine the amount of detail required. You might be tempted to try and write down everything you read. This is often just not practical or even desirable. When making notes look for the key points or main ideas. These may be summarised in the preface, introduction, and at the beginning of each chapter. Headings and subheadings may be useful indicators as well as where the author places stress on particular words, by italicising, underlining or putting into bold. Main ideas have to be supported with detail and this can vary according to the potential use of the notes. You may well need to use the notes for revision a year or several months ahead, so they will have to contain sufficient detail and be organised in such a way that they can make sense at a later date. Generally, detailed information should support, clarify or illustrate the main ideas.

At university, tutors are definitely not looking for a regurgitation of your notes. Be critical when you read. Ask yourself some of the following questions:

- Is the material well presented?
- Do the facts support the main ideas of the author?
- Is the author biased?
- Does the material support the conclusion?
- How does the author's perspective compare with those of others who have written on the same subject?
- What is your perspective?

As you start to read, you should begin to develop the arguments for your essay or start to think about how to solve the problems. Remember always to bear in mind the questions you have been



asked, as this will help you to understand what the tutor is looking for and it will also help you to focus your reading and note-taking.

In some subjects, it can be useful to take notes under broad subject headings on separate pieces of paper, rather than to separate your notes by virtue of which text they were taken from. Use sub-headings, coloured ink or highlighting to make your notes easier to navigate. Try to avoid overlong notes; you should be creating a précis of the ideas.

This will also help you to avoid unintended plagiarism (see 'Plagiarism' below). Always note down the source of the information (see 'Citing references' below).

Discussions with your fellow students over the week can also be a very valuable way to learn and can help develop your understanding and arguments.

## WRITING YOUR ESSAY

Once you have thought about your essay title and collated the notes from your reading you will be ready to start. Everyone takes a different amount of time to write an essay but as a guide, you should allow at least a morning or afternoon for planning and the same for the writing process. As each subject will have a different style of writing your tutor will be able to advise you appropriately and give you specific tips.

Here are some general guidelines that apply to all subjects:

1. *Write a plan of what you intend to include.* This is vital to writing a good essay and worth spending time on. It will help you not only to digest the information, but also to organise your notes and ideas into a reasoned argument. Ensure there is unity in each paragraph (it may help to deal with each point in a separate paragraph) and a logical order to your ideas. Once you have done this, re-read the essay title and ensure that you are about to answer the question in full.
2. *Consider your audience.* You are writing for an intelligent person who knows at least as much if not more than you do about the subject. Some background material may be superfluous but take care not to cut out relevant information. Ask your tutor if you need advice on how much background information to include. Remember that when you come to revise you will be able to use your notes as well as your essay, so you do not need to include everything you have read in your essay.
3. *Clarity of expression is essential in any essay.* Do not use overly long sentences and avoid cumulative dependent clauses. Try reading your essay aloud, as this will also help you to identify grammatical errors.
4. *Set your work out neatly.* Do not overcrowd a page or start quotations near the end of a line. If you are quoting verse, ensure it is in verse form. If you are quoting a formula, ensure it is clearly separated from the text. You could consider only writing on one side of the paper, to allow you to take notes during the tutorial. Ensure you leave enough



space around the text to allow your tutor to add comments if they take the work in for marking. A tutor's feedback is essential to improving your work.

5. *You are likely to use a computer*, but legible Handwriting is also fine.
6. *Your introduction should be succinct*. Outline the main points of your argument or the scientific technique in this paragraph. Analyse the question, explain any difficult or ambiguous concepts and then outline your proposed answer.
7. *Do not stray from the title*. If interesting ideas come to light during your reading, note them down and discuss them during the tutorial: do not include them if they are peripheral to the subject. These additional notes may be useful for revision.
8. *Consider the style of language that you are using* and always check that your spelling, vocabulary and grammar are accurate. Punctuation is very Helpful indeed.
9. *Only include relevant references and quotations*. If you are quoting work, ensure that you cite the source. Further details on How to do this are given below. If you are quoting from a poem or text in one of the arts subjects, you should also give a page or line reference. If in doubt, ask your tutor How to do this.
10. *Be analytical*. Do not just write a survey of the literature. If you disagree with a published opinion, justify your disagreement with evidence and argument. Be objective in your analysis.
11. *Try not to run out of steam before you get to the conclusion!* You need to include a carefully set out conclusion in which you should restate the arguments or main points of the essay and explain How you Have reached your conclusions. Do not be afraid to mention unresolved points Here - or to raise them in the tutorial
12. *Consult your tutor about* whether you should include a bibliography at the end of the essay, listing all the books you Have consulted in its preparation.

## SOLVING A SET OF PROBLEMS

Everyone takes a different amount of time to solve a set of problems but as a guide, you should allow at least a morning or afternoon for the process. If it is a topic that you find particularly difficult, it would be wise to allow longer. The type of problem set will vary considerably. You may be presented with a set of maths problems, reaction equations or questions which will need a written paragraph to answer them. If you are unsure on How they need to be answered, ask your tutor for advice. Here are some general guidelines that apply to all subjects:



1. Read the problems thoroughly. This should be done as soon as possible after they are set so that you can ask your tutor about any sections which you do not understand.
2. The problems may relate to a specific set of lectures or a chapter in one of the key texts. Your tutor will be able to advise you on where to look for information. Spend some time reading the relevant texts or lecture notes, to Help you to clarify the ideas in your mind.
3. Annotate your lecture notes or create supplementary notes if this helps you but do not lose sight of the task in hand.
4. Set your work out neatly. Do not overcrowd a page; writing on one side of the paper allows you to take notes during the tutorial. If you are quoting a formula, ensure it is clearly separated from the text or your other workings. Ensure you leave enough space around the text to allow your tutor to add comments, as their feedback is essential to improving your work.
5. Write legibly or type your work. Remember that you will have to write your answers by Hand for your examinations so it can be good practice to do so for some of your tutorial work.
6. Include all your workings unless your tutor Has specifically said not to. If you are uncertain how many of the intermediary steps to include, ask your tutor.

## CITING REFERENCES

There is no exaggeration in saying that every subject cites references in different ways. Individual journals within a very specialist field will also vary enormously from numbered lists to alphabetical list, with different permutations of bold and italic type.

Footnotes are used extensively in some subjects but are never used in others. You should ask your tutor for guidance on this issue. However, when you need to refer to a text, you should include the following information:

1. Author's name, generally in the format of 'surname, initials'
2. Year of publication
3. Title of chapter or paper
4. Title of book or journal
5. For books: publisher, place of publication and edition number
6. For journals: volume, issue and page numbers of articles

Examples:

"Two distinct outbreak patterns have been reported for microdochium patch disease on golf turf, suggesting that *Microdochium nivale* may not be the sole disease causing organism (Gange & Case, 2003)."

Gange, A.C. & Case, S.J. (2003). Incidence of microdochium patch disease in golf putting greens and a relationship with arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi. *Grass and Forage Science*. **58** (1): 58-62.

Stéphane Mallarmé said: 'To suggest that is the dream. That is the perfect use of mystery that constitutes symbol' (quoted in *Impressionist & Post-Impressionist Masterpieces: the Courtauld Collection* 40).

*Impressionist & Post-Impressionist Masterpieces in the Courtauld Collection* (Yale University press, 1984)

This myth, told originally by the ancient Greeks, describes a blessed island 'beyond the north wind,' a paradise of plenty, a land of perpetual Spring 'with a delightful climate, exempt from every harmful blast,' where everyone was healthy and happy.

(Pliny, *Natural History*, 4, 12, 26.)

If you record this kind of information whilst you are doing your preparatory reading it will be easy to reorganise into the format preferred by your tutor. Ask your tutor for advice on citing references as each subject area can vary.

## GETTING THE MOST FROM A TUTORIAL

The main aim of tutorials is to provide a forum for the discussion of ideas. A tutorial may begin with the tutor explaining some of the more difficult concepts and placing them into the context of the discipline but this should develop into a two-way exchange of ideas, resulting in both tutor and student coming to a new understanding of the subject matter. This may seem like a daunting prospect at first

and some of your early tutorials will almost certainly involve your tutor helping you to bridge the gaps between your school

experience and university course. However, as you begin to take in new concepts and ideas you should be able to engage in debate with your tutor and tutorial partner.

Use the opportunities presented by the tutorial to increase your in-depth understanding of the subject. Question your tutor until you understand each concept in full. Make sure you take good notes but do not spend the whole tutorial writing. It may be more productive to write down general headings in the tutorial and add in full notes immediately afterwards while the ideas are fresh in your mind. This will help you to develop your critical understanding of the topic in a constructive way. Another aim of the tutorial is to improve your written work by developing your organisational skills and strengthening the force of your arguments. Your tutor will be able to suggest ways to improve your work and, through the tutorial itself, provide you with a framework for your studies. You can also learn from your fellow students when reading essays, debating points or working



through a problem on the board. By observing their techniques you can incorporate the most successful into your own repertoire.

Here are some good general rules for getting the most from your tutorials:

1. Always prepare the work you have been asked for. Additional work may help you to gain different perspectives but it can also be counterproductive if it is untargeted.
2. Always hand in the work on time.
3. If you have any difficulties with the work, contact the tutor in advance. Hand in your work with an explanatory note if necessary.
4. Always arrive for the tutorial in good time.
5. If you have a problem in attending the tutorial, let your tutor know well in advance. Tutors will try and adjust meetings to accommodate illness or other similar difficulties, but they have busy schedules and cannot alter arrangements merely for your convenience.
6. Always actively participate in the tutorial. Remember to take a pen and paper, or a laptop or tablet. You will not gain the full benefit of your tutor's experience if you treat it like a personal lecture. Ask your tutor to explain any concepts that you are unsure of and be prepared for a debate!
7. Do not worry about disagreeing with your tutor: so long as your argument is well reasoned they will respect your opinions. You should also be prepared to discuss ideas with your tutorial partners both inside and outside of the tutorial. Be prepared to speak up in a discussion and enjoy yourself!
8. The input your tutor gives you will depend on how you approach the tutorial. This is the benefit of the tutorial system, which is the most flexible method of teaching. The tutor can respond to your needs for clarification and your opinion on the subject. This means that you may cover different subject matter to a fellow student who has produced work with the same title.
9. After your tutorial, take a few minutes to write down what you have learnt while it is still fresh in your mind.
10. You must attend scheduled tutorials, so always have your diary/personal organiser with you when you arrange them.
11. If you are experiencing particular difficulties with your work or feel that for one reason or another you are not best suited to your tutorial partner, make a separate appointment with your tutor to discuss this. If you feel reluctant to speak to your tutor, then arrange to talk to the Senior Tutor (see the 'Welfare support' section at the end).

## MAKING THE MOST OF LECTURES

In 0th Week of each term, your tutor will advise you about the lecture programme, which lectures and how many you should be attending in a week. You should also be able to look up the lecture lists on the web at: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/lectures/>. In all subjects, lectures form an integral part of the course and are viewed as complementary to tutorials or classes. In a few subjects they are intended to be the main form of teaching. Lectures also have the following advantages:

1. The lecturer is sometimes more up-to-date than the textbooks or your tutor. In subjects where the source material is diverse and scattered, the lecturer will have spent time and energy on searching out material, sifting it and ordering it. Why repeat all that hard work yourself?
2. The lecturer may have a different viewpoint or a different way of explaining things from any text or your tutor (and you may learn more from comparing different approaches than by relying on a single source).
3. The lecturer may just be very good at making their subject interesting, exciting and/or relevant.
4. Examiners may use the lecture courses to decide on the sorts of things they will set questions on and the depth of knowledge they expect in the answers (i.e. use the lectures to define the exam syllabus), as well as basing specific questions on material that they know has been covered in detail and is available to all students (unlike material covered in college tutorials).

Take lectures seriously and get into the lecture Habit early. They are also a good way of meeting your contemporaries in your subject from other colleges.

Taking notes during lectures may be a good idea, if only because it may Help you concentrate on what is being said. However, the first priority is to understand what is going on. Do not try to take overdetailed, Hurried notes during the lecture. Take down major points and the overall thread of the argument.

Do you feel that you are not getting anything out of the first lecture or two? Even so, it is worth persevering. You may Have done the work already - but you will probably understand the subject better for Having gone over it twice. You may feel that the lectures are not relevant to work you are doing at present - but they may be relevant to work that you will be doing in the next term or next year. You may Have difficulty understanding what is going on - but even if you understand only 10% of the ideas, that still gives you a 10% start if you Have to tackle the subject later in tutorials or classes. You may find the lecturer boring - but that does not devalue the content: give lectures a chance to warm up before you decide to drop them. In the sciences, don't drop any lectures lightly – check with your tutors first. Scientists will also be busy with practical classes, so should appreciate the time saving aspects of lectures all the more!

Every lecturer Has their own way of organising information, but you are likely to encounter two types of lecture and you will develop a different style of note taking for each. In the first kind, the lecturer gives an overview of the subject material and in the second kind you will be given an

introduction to specific techniques. Often the second kind of lecture is more structured than the first. Be prepared to change the way you take your notes during the course of the lecture. It is often worthwhile to read through your notes immediately after the lecture so that you can Highlight the key points and annotate where necessary. Some students re-write all their lecture notes afterwards or go over them again in the following vacation. You need to find out what suits your preferred way of studying best.

## MANAGING YOUR WORKLOAD

Effective time management is one of the most important skills to develop during your time at Oxford. University is not like school, where your time was well structured by your teachers. Here, you need to devise your own timetable. In order to succeed at Oxford, you will need to be **Hard working** and **well organised**. These are extremely valuable skills to employers, - and they will also Help you to cope with the challenges involved in your later working life. When you first arrive, it can be daunting to see the number of lectures, tutorials, seminars, classes and practicals that you need to attend. You need to remember **to allow yourself 'thinking time'** so that you can digest the information you are being given and **make a note of questions you would like to ask your tutor**.

Of course, it is also important to allow yourself time to relax and enjoy the opportunities presented by life as a student in Oxford. But how can you balance these demands?

## A FEW TIPS

Buy a diary/personal organiser and notepad. Enter all of your academic commitments into this diary so you can see where you need to be and when.

Keep an up-to-date copy of this information in your room (lots of places give away free wall planners at the start of term – Freshers Fair is a good source for your first one), then you can book in times for major tasks such as preparing for tutorials or writing up your laboratory notes. Being organised will help you to make the most of your relaxation time, because you should have fewer of those nagging feelings that you should be somewhere else.

Keep on top of your filing. You may wish to begin with a single large folder with coloured paper dividers for each subject, but you will soon find that your work outgrows this. It may prove useful to have a file for each unit of your course, each with three sections 1: Lecture notes; 2: Tutorial work and notes; 3: Practicals or Miscellaneous.

It is worth considering when you are at your most productive to get the most out of your work. Most people have a time of day when they know they produce their best work.

Try to schedule preparation work for tutorials during your most productive part of the day and use your less productive times for more routine tasks such as checking your emails. Remember to include breaks in your schedule. It is important to take a break away from your desk if you are becoming unproductive – a five-minute break may be enough to get you back into optimal working mode. If you have problems deciding what to do when, consider whether the task is important or unimportant, urgent or non-urgent. Do not be afraid to put a 'Do Not Disturb' sign on your door or to ignore the telephone and emails when you are working - everyone understands the need for periods of uninterrupted work! You may also want to establish where you do particular kinds of



work best – e.g. in your room, in the college library, in a department or central library.

**Remember that amidst the social, sporting and other College and University attractions, your first and overriding responsibility is your**

**academic work, and you should expect this to take the majority of your time.**

*The key to success is planning your days, and sticking to your plan!*

## USING YOUR VACATIONS

Both on the academic and non-academic side, you're likely to find yourself very pressed for time in Oxford during term. You can remove some of this pressure by making good academic use of the vacations. In a number of subjects the vacation is the time for reading large amounts of essential texts; in others, it is the time for extended essays or projects. It is most important not to neglect this work since failure to cover the texts or other preparatory work in vacations can seriously impede your tutorial work in the following term.

Vacations are also a very good time for general background reading and for tidying up work left over from the previous term. Your tutor may also set specific vacation work. If you leave this until you come back to Oxford at the beginning of the next term, then you will just create more problems for yourself. You need to plan your vacation work before you leave Oxford to make sure that you have available all the information and resources that you need (e.g. borrowing books you need from Oxford libraries or arranging the use of a library close to where you will be staying during the vacation). Of course, we are aware that vacations are important for seeing family and friends, re-charging your batteries and probably earning some money. But you should be aware that you will need to set aside a reasonable proportion of them for your academic work.

## FEEDBACK ON PERFORMANCE

Feedback from your tutors is one of the most effective ways to develop your study skills whilst at Oxford. Most of the feedback on your work will be given verbally during tutorials and some will appear as marks on your submitted work. Your tutor may not give precise grades for each essay or



set of problems; constructive criticism and advice is more helpful than placing you in a league table. If you would like more detailed feedback during term, ask your tutor. Each person who has taught you during term will write an end-of-term report on your performance, which your College tutor will discuss with you at a meeting at the end of each term. Your progress will also be monitored through three kinds of 'Collections'.

1. 'Collections' are examinations that are set at the start of term. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday of 0th Week (the week before the start of full term), tutors regularly set examinations which are designed to test either or both of a) work done in the previous term and b) vacation work done to prepare for the term ahead. At the end of term, your tutors will give you notice of what sort of Collections you will be set and you should plan your vacation work accordingly. Collections are taken under exam conditions – i.e. invigilated, timed and in silence, in various locations around College. The College Academic Office will notify you of the dates and times of your Collections. Collection scripts are marked by your tutors and returned to you in the early part of term.

Collections are valuable for consolidating a topic through revision, giving continuous exam practice through your time at Oxford, and providing you with an idea of the standard of your work in terms of the standards used in University exams.

Sometimes tutors may set a vacation essay instead of an exam-type Collection.

2. You will also have an annual 'Provost's Collection' in 8th week of one of the terms, where you will discuss your academic and personal progress with the Provost. The occasion is informal. During the short meeting there will be a brief discussion of your progress, your future study plans and your plans for the coming vacation. The meeting provides an opportunity for you to have a discussion on the year's work, and to make any comments that you think appropriate.
3. At the end of each term, the tutor(s) in charge of your degree will have a meeting with you, often called "end of term collection", where they will briefly review your performance during that term and plan the next term. This is also an opportunity for you to raise any questions you may have about your studies.

You will have the opportunity to give your feedback on the performance of your lecturers and tutors. This will generally take the form of questionnaires sent out by the College or Department. The Oriel College questionnaire is sent out towards the end of each term. The questionnaire is circulated by Academic Office and is available on-line towards the end of each term. It is in your interest to complete and return these forms, so please try to do so.

## PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the term used to describe the quoting or paraphrasing of another person's work without acknowledging the source. It is not tolerated, neither in College nor in the University as a whole. If you are unsure how to acknowledge a source you should first refer to the section above entitled 'Citing references' - or alternatively speak with your tutor. During Freshers' Week you should attend the Study Skills session as timetabled for further information.

The University monitors a range of essay sources (e.g. online databases and personal essay writing services), and penalties for plagiarism are severe. The regulations apply to all work either in examination conditions or not, and any submitted material may be checked for plagiarism, whether it has been done in examination conditions or not. Note that this includes work submitted for your tutorials.

The University regulations on plagiarism can be found in the Conduct in Examinations section of the 'Essential Information for Students (Proctors' and Assessor's Memorandum) which every student is issued with when they commence their studies. An online version is available at <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/student-handbook>.

Oriel's regulations on plagiarism can be found in the Student Handbook available via: <https://www.oriel.ox.ac.uk/official-information-and-foi/> or <https://www.oriel.ox.ac.uk/undergraduate-fresher-pack/>

## WHAT KIND OF STUDY SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?

The College can provide additional Study Skills support on a range of topics from: note-taking and essay writing to preparing for your Final exams. If you would like help with a particular aspect of your studies, please contact your tutor (or the Senior Tutor) in the first instance or note your request via the tutorial feedback form.

## SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

If you have been diagnosed with a Specific Learning Difficulty, for example dyslexia or dyspraxia, please contact Mr Joseph Cole ([academic.registrar@oriel.ox.ac.uk](mailto:academic.registrar@oriel.ox.ac.uk)) as soon as possible, and ideally before you arrive. The earlier we can get support in place, the easier it will be for you to get on with your studies. You will find, as you settle in, that alternative exam arrangements are quite common (for example you probably won't be the only person who needs extra time in exams, or needs to use a laptop), and the Academic Office will always be friendly and discreet about your needs. You can find more information on the sorts of support available here: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das/>

## WELFARE SUPPORT

If you have academic or personal issues that you would like to discuss with someone, the first point of contact is your College tutor(s) or your College Advisor. However, there are also a number of other people who you may feel are more relevant to your problem. The Senior Tutor has general responsibility for the academic administration of the College, including students' academic progress. An appointment to see him can be made by contacting the Academic Registrar, [academic.registrar@oriel.ox.ac.uk](mailto:academic.registrar@oriel.ox.ac.uk). The Chaplain (Rev'd Dr Robert Wainwright) is available to talk to all students whatever their religious affiliation. The Provost (Mr Neil Mendoza) is also available to see students on any matter, by appointment with his secretary. Remember too that help is available from the Deans, the College Nurse and the College Doctors. Full details of these people are listed in [the Student Handbook](#).

The Junior Common Room (JCR) has two dedicated Welfare Officers (one male and one female) who can offer help. The JCR also runs a 'Peer Support' programme where you can talk to other students in confidence about your difficulties. The Welfare Support offered by the JCR is detailed at: <http://www.orieljcr.org/>.

Students can approach the University Counselling Service independently. Full details of University run welfare schemes are detailed at: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/counselling/>

You can also find support and information about transitioning to life as a student at Oxford here: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/oxford-transition-support>

OUSU also runs a full range of welfare support schemes: <https://www.oxfordsu.org/advice-wellbeing/>

Nightline, run by students, offers support and advice between 8pm and 8am from 0th to 9th Weeks on (01865) 270270 (just dial 70270 from any University telephone). Further information is available at: <https://oxfordnightline.org/>.

If you do experience difficulties, there really are many sources of help, so please never be afraid to ask for help.