



Welcome to Oriel!

Dear Freshers,

Firstly, please do allow me to congratulate you on your fantastic exam results and on taking up your offer to study at Oriel College, Oxford! Each one of you has been individually selected by, what I believe to be, the best Oxford college by far, and it is my great privilege to welcome you into our College community. What awaits you over the coming weeks, terms, and years will most likely be one of the most exhilarating, demanding, occasionally chaotic, and (I promise!) fun periods of your lives, one which I hope you will one day look back on with real fondness.

My name is Richard and I'm a third year student studying Law. I will be your Junior Common Room (JCR) President over the coming year. The Oriel JCR refers to the collective student body comprising all Oriel undergraduates (now all of you!), and the JCR Committee consists of your fellow students, elected to organise undergraduate events and affairs throughout the year. Most importantly for the weeks ahead, the Committee will be running most of the student-led events during Freshers' Week (timetable enclosed). You will have received an official Quick Guide which outlines the important things to bear in mind when you arrive at College, so please do take the time to read it carefully beforehand. In this letter I have included some additional guidance and advice not included in the Guide. Before that though, some messages from other Committee members:

Message from Sam (*JCR Returning Officer and Freshers' Representative*)

Hi gang!

Many, many congratulations on making objectively the best decision of your lives ;))

My name is Sam Schwarting & I'm your Freshers' Representative & JCR Returning Officer; this means I'm your point of contact for any general concerns or questions you might have about joining Oriel, as well as the person yapping at you during JCR meetings (which you should totally come to we have snacks & pizza).

You'll hear a lot of people talking about the quality of the community at Oriel & how tight-knit we are, but I know that doesn't get rid of all the nerves about coming to a new place. Genuinely the best advice I can give you is blind faith - put your trust in that community net & throw yourselves into Freshers' Week because I promise you not only is it there, it is *strong*. The events are there for you, not for the sake of the activity; I didn't want to go to my first Freshers' event, but I did, and when I ended up not liking it I climbed out the window with the first two people I met, they are now my best friends. Everyone is nervous, even if they don't seem it, so be genuine, be yourselves & people will respond to that.

I can't wait to meet you all! If you need anything before you arrive, please, shoot me a message: sam.schwarting@oriel.ox.ac.uk

Sincerely,
Sam

Message from Petro and Nadia (*JCR Welfare Representatives*)

Hello freshers :D

We're Petro and Nadia, your Welfare Officers this year. If you ever have any concerns about your welfare or simply need someone to talk to (though we're sure you'll have an amazing time!), we're here for you.

Throughout Freshers' Week and beyond, we'll be doing our best to help everything run as smoothly as possible, supporting you through the exciting — and sometimes overwhelming — experience that is Oxford with weekly events that will give you the opportunity to take some time for yourselves and be together with the Oriel community.

Specifically during Freshers', we'll be hosting a daily 'Tea and Toast' in the evenings, where you can unwind after a night out, meet new people, have a chat with some friendly faces, or simply enjoy a warming cuppa.

We'll introduce ourselves properly again in October, but in the meantime, enjoy the rest of your summer! We can't wait to meet you all.

Keep well!

Arriving at Oriel

The arrival date for new undergraduates is Sunday 4th October 2026. You will be notified in advance of your specific arrival window and are asked to arrive within this period to ensure a smooth process for all students. Most students choose to arrive by car, though train and coach are also straightforward.

On arrival, collect your room key from the Porters' Lodge (located at the main entrance) before proceeding to your accommodation. Students will be on hand throughout the day to direct you to your staircase, assist with luggage, and answer any questions. Parents, family members, and friends are more than welcome to help with moving in.

Parking

Cars may park directly outside College in Oriel Square, subject to a **45-minute time limit**. A parking permit must be collected from the Porters' Lodge and displayed clearly in your vehicle's windscreen. Once this period has elapsed, vehicles must be moved to free up space for other arrivals. Alternative (though limited and costly) pay and display parking is available on King Edward Street, Merton Street, the Westgate Shopping Centre car park, or via the Park & Ride service, which regularly runs into town.

Route guidance

Please note that the section of the High Street between King Edward Street and Merton Street is a **bus gate**, and driving through it will result in a fine.

- If approaching from the east (i.e. from the direction of Magdalen Bridge, Headington, Iffley, or Cowley), turn down **Merton Street** to reach Oriel Square.
- If approaching from the west (i.e. from the direction of Westgate Shopping Centre, Abingdon Road, or Botley), turn down **King Edward Street** instead.

Oxford also operates a Zero Emission Zone and a congestion charge covering certain city-centre roads. These schemes are subject to change, and it is recommended that you check the Oxfordshire County Council website for current details before travelling.

Arriving by alternative modes of transport

Oxford railway station is approximately a 20-minute walk from College. Buses run regularly from the station to the High Street. Coaches to Oxford (e.g. from London, Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton or Stansted airports) terminate at Gloucester Green Bus Station, approximately a 15-minute walk from College via Cornmarket Street and up the High Street. Buses also run regularly from Gloucester Green to the High Street. Note that coaches often also stop at the much closer Queen's Lane bus stop, roughly a 7-minute walk from College.

What to bring

For most of you, moving to Oriel will be the first time you have lived away from home alone. Your room is at once a home, a workspace, a hideout, and, most importantly, it is YOURS to enjoy. It is thus recommended that you make your living space as personal and comfortable as possible. Please note that most of the rooms are accessed via steep, narrow staircases, so do pack accordingly, and be prepared for a lot of climbing!

Below is guidance on items to consider when packing:

- **Passport/ID documentation:** it is strongly advised to bring your passport, ID card, immigration/visa documents if applicable. Crucially, you will not be served alcohol in the local pubs or permitted entry into the nightclubs if you cannot prove you are over 18!
- **Key documents:** You will have been given a number of documents and forms to read, fill out and return to College in advance of your arrival. It is helpful to bring these, including Student Finance documents if applicable, for reference, whether electronically or printed.
- **Clothes:** bring the clothes that you feel comfortable and confident wearing. Contrary to popular belief, most Oxford students don't dress up in ties and tweed suits (though some certainly do!).
- **Sub fusc:** required for Matriculation and exams. Available to purchase in Oxford from *Shepherd and Woodward*, *Walters of Oxford*, or *Ede and Ravenscroft* (some sell gown/cap/tie bundles), or second-hand (check it's the shorter undergraduate gown, not the longer postgraduate one). The full requirements can be found at: ox.ac.uk/students/academic/dress
- **Formal wear:** Oriel's formal dinners are easily among the best at Oxford, not least because of the dress code. As tradition dictates, Oriel students are required to wear jacket and tie or equivalent and their academic gowns (part of sub fusc). Note that all Freshers are expected to attend the Freshers' Dinner during Freshers' Week.
- **Party wear:** College BOPs (Big Organised Parties) take place throughout the term and normally follow a specific theme, so do bring a few items to build outfits around. Charity shops nearby are good for last-minute costumes, so no need to spend much in advance. Follow @oriel.entz on Instagram for this term's themes.
- **Technology:** do bring any laptops, iPads, PCs, smartwatches etc that you rely on for work and daily life, as well as UK plug adapters if necessary.
- **Bedding:** a duvet, pillow, and mattress topper are provided by the College, though you may prefer to bring your own. You will need to bring your own bedsheets (we recommend two sets).
- **Cleaning:** scouts clean rooms weekly, but do bring anti-bacterial wipes if you like to keep things tidy day-to-day.
- **Bathroom:** do bring your own towels. A bathmat and a toiletry organiser are also worth bringing, and of course your personal toiletry items. Toilet roll is stocked and provided to students by the scouts, though you may wish to use your own higher quality rolls.
- **Laundry:** bring a laundry bag plus your own detergent and/or stain remover. The College uses the Circuit-Go laundry app to book machines and can pay for washing/drying.
- **Cutlery and tupperware:** it is worth bringing a set or two of cutlery, mugs/glasses, plates, bowls etc should you wish to dine in your room. However, the most convenient food available will be the meals served in Hall by the College (at a very reasonable price too!).
- **Kitchen extras:** a kettle and toaster are allowed in your room. A mini-fridge is also permitted for a modest fee and can remain in your room over vacations. There are kitchens dotted around the College site should you wish to cook, however try to keep kitchenware, pots, pans, utensils etc to a minimum as the kitchens tend to be rather cramped. Two particularly useful items for the kitchens, though, are air-fryers and rice cookers.
- **Room decorations:** pictures, fairy lights, posters, blankets, cuddly toys etc make your room feel like home. Do bring pins for your noticeboard to stick things to the provided pin boards, as it is forbidden to stick anything to the actual walls of the room.
- **First aid, medicine and well-being:** painkillers and/or cold remedies are worth having on hand for the notorious and dastardly Freshers' Flu. Herbal teas are also recommended.

- **Other useful items:** extension cords, hangers, reusable coffee cup (the only container other than bottles permitted in libraries), water bottle, sports- and swimwear, portable charger, speaker, electric fan/air conditioning, reed diffuser (candles/incense sticks are not permitted), iron and ironing board, small sewing/repair kit, umbrella, bicycle and lock.

Please do note that there are a vast number of shops in Oxford, including the Westgate Shopping Centre, from which it is often more prudent to simply purchase items once you have moved in properly over the course of Freshers' Week, especially stationery, toiletries, cutlery/tupperware, sub fusc, consumables etc. This has the additional benefit of giving you time to figure out whether you will actually require a given item rather than, as so often happens, having to live with an awkward pile of useless things that an over-zealous parent insisted you bring!

Getting your bearings during Freshers' Week

Freshers' Week is a hectic time. There are countless things happening simultaneously, and a lot of new things to adjust to. Below are some helpful things to bear in mind:

- First and foremost, I strongly encourage you to throw yourselves into Freshers' Week headfirst, and to make the most of the events and activities on offer. Rest assured, there will be plenty of opportunities to drink alcohol, though never any expectation or pressure to do so! The JCR Committee has worked hard to put together a varied and exciting schedule, and there will be countless opportunities to make friends, join societies, explore Oxford, and generally find your feet. So take up as many opportunities as you can.
- Freshers' Week and adapting to life away from home can be difficult and exhausting, both mentally and physically. Prioritise your own wellbeing before all else; missing one event or taking a quiet night in will in no way detract from an exciting Freshers' Week experience.
- Please take note of the strong welfare support available for you. If things are becoming a little confusing or overwhelming, whether you are experiencing imposter syndrome, feeling a bit lonely and disoriented around the College, or are worried about academic work, please do not hesitate to speak to, email or contact one of the JCR Committee members, Welfare Deans, tutors, or staff around the College. Alternatively, you may prefer to contact the excellent welfare support provided by the University at <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare>. The support systems provided at Oxford are highly efficient, personal, and effective, no matter how vast or insignificant you may feel your issue is. Please do not suffer in silence if a matter is troubling you; instead, get in touch and let us know about what you are experiencing. The Counselling Service has also produced some excellent podcasts addressing some of the particular concerns raised by Oxford students. These podcasts can be accessed at: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling/podcasts>.
- You should register with Oriel's affiliated GP practice as soon as possible. If you take regular medication, bring at least a month's supply with you, and book a routine appointment with the GP. The College Nurse is usually your best port of call for any minor issues, and the NHS non-emergency number, 111, is there for anything more urgent.
- On academic work, you will, at some point during Freshers' Week, receive your first reading list or problem sheet. Don't panic! Though submitting your first assignment will invariably prove at least somewhat daunting, you must remember that you are NOT expected to, and in fact will not be able to, compose a *magnum opus* in your first week! Do not worry yourself about something as trivial as a mark or grade in your first weeks of study at Oxford. You are here to learn, improve and refine your skills as a scholar in your given subject. This takes time. A lot of time. Do not expect to have mastered your craft on the first attempt!
- Moreover, if you have any questions, difficulties or confusion regarding work, email your tutors! Many students starting at Oxford believe that, as at school, your tutors are mortal enemies, placed by an insidious hand for the sole purpose of making your life miserable. The reality is very different! Your tutors are wonderfully bright, passionate, and understanding teachers who are here to help you do the best you can. If you need clarification on a task, perhaps require a little more time to finish that essay, or are struggling with a question on a problem sheet at 4am, please do just be upfront and honest with your tutors. You will not be punished, but rather offered compassion, advice and assistance.

- On College life, you will find that there are a great number of things to learn about Oriel as you go about acquainting yourself with the College, though arguably the most important thing you should get to know is your year group. One of the best things about Oriel is the modestly-sized years, making Oriel one of the most tight-knit colleges at Oxford. Aside from Freshers' Week events, the best way to meet and talk with new people is at mealtimes. During the first few days of Freshers' Week, you should be able to dine in Hall during breakfast, lunch and informal dinner without needing to book your place (you will learn about the meal booking process later). It is a good idea to attend as many of the College meals as possible, not only as part of a solid Freshers' Week routine, but also as a way to socialise throughout the day.
- On social media, please make sure to join the official Oriel JCR Facebook and Instagram pages! Though a little old-fashioned perhaps, Facebook is the main space for Oriel students to make posts/announcements about events happening around College, some of which are also posted on the JCR Instagram. The Facebook page is "*Oriel College JCR*" and Instagram is *@oriel_jcr* and *@oriel.entz*. For further information about how the JCR operates (though you will also have a JCR introduction session during Freshers' Week), our JCR website is *orieljcr.org*.

Some final remarks

An alumnus who had studied at Oriel from 1969 to 1972 once told me that for him, Oriel was a place of great personal and intellectual development. Having spent some years here myself, I've found those words to ring true for me, and I suspect you will too. In this vein, as you settle into Oriel, try not to measure your progress against those around you. Oxford is a truly remarkable university, not least because a vast number of highly-talented people are gathered into such a small place. It is very easy, especially at the start of your journey, to set overly lofty and noble ambitions for yourself, to feel as if everyone has it figured out while you're still finding your feet, and despair over the various challenges you will inevitably encounter. In these trying moments, remember that these struggles are universal, despite what appearances suggest, that growth is uncomfortable, and that resilience and perseverance can overcome any obstacle you face. Be kind to yourselves, and to each other.

My final piece of advice can be boiled down into one word: 'do'. Do throw yourself into student life at Oriel. Do go to that event. Do introduce yourself to someone new. Do ask questions, of each other, of older students, of tutors. Do join a society you know nothing about. Do explore Oxford beyond the confines of Oriel's walls. And do, occasionally, get some good sleep.

If you do have any questions or queries, please do get in touch with any of the JCR Committee members below:

Richard (<i>JCR President</i>)	jcr.president@oriel.ox.ac.uk
Sam (<i>Returning Officer, Freshers' Rep</i>)	sam.schwarting@oriel.ox.ac.uk
Nadia (<i>Welfare Rep</i>)	nadia.sun@oriel.ox.ac.uk
Petro (<i>Welfare Rep</i>)	petro.melnik@oriel.ox.ac.uk

As you prepare to embark on this new chapter, I hope, above all, that you have a wonderful time here in Oriel, not just during Freshers' Week, but over the entirety of your degree. I very much look forward to meeting each and every one of you at the start of term.

Best Wishes,



Mihai Richard Stancu

Oriel College JCR President 2026-27



Appendix: A brief glossary of Oxford vocabulary

Over the coming days and weeks, you will come across a plethora of strange and funny words unique to Oxford...

- **Battels** — your college bill, covering accommodation, meals, and other charges.
- **Blue** — the top sporting honour at Oxford, awarded to those who compete for the University against Cambridge in a Varsity Match.
- **Bod card** — your University ID card.
- **Bodleian ("the Bod")** — the University's main library, and among the oldest in Europe.
- **Coming up / going down** — arriving at Oxford at the start of term, and leaving at the end of it.
- **Collections** — informal college exams at the start of term, testing what you covered the previous term.
- **Commoner** — a student without a scholarship or exhibition (i.e. most students).
- **Don** — an informal term for a professor, lecturer, or Fellow.
- **Finals** — your final end-of-degree examinations, which largely determine your degree classification.
- **First Public Examination** — your first-year exams (either Prelims or Mods, depending on subject), which you must pass to continue your course.
- **Formal Hall** — a sit-down college dinner, typically requiring gowns and/or smart dress.
- **Fresher** — a first-year student.
- **Full Term** — the eight-week official teaching period each term.
- **Gaudy** — a college event for old members (alumni).
- **High Table** — the table, often raised, where the Head of House and Fellows dine.
- **JCR (Junior Common Room)** — both the undergraduate student body of a college and the room itself.
- **Long Vac** — the long vacation between Trinity and Michaelmas Terms (i.e. the summer break).
- **Matriculation** — the ceremony formally admitting you as a member of the University.
- **MCR (Middle Common Room)** — the graduate student body and common room (fourth-years get MCR membership too).
- **Michaelmas, Hilary, Trinity** — Oxford's three terms: autumn, winter, and summer respectively.
- **Mods (Moderations)** — first-year exams for some subjects, an alternative to Prelims.
- **Noughth Week** — the week immediately before Full Term officially begins.
- **Oxbridge** — Oxford and Cambridge, collectively.
- **Pigeon post** — the free internal mail system, and by extension your pigeonhole.
- **Prelims** — first-year exams for most subjects, marked pass/fail/distinction rather than classified.
- **Provost** — the official head of Oriel College, currently Lord Neil Mendoza. Other colleges may refer to their head as Warden, President, Rector, Dean etc.
- **SCR (Senior Common Room)** — the Fellows' equivalent of the JCR/MCR.
- **Schools** — shorthand for Finals, or the exam building on the High Street where many exams are held.
- **Sub fusc** — the required formal academic dress for Matriculation, exams, and graduation.
- **Torpids / Eights** — Oxford's two intercollegiate rowing regattas, in Hilary and Trinity terms respectively.
- **Tutorial ("tute")** — small-group teaching, usually comprising one tutor and two students.
- **Vac** — short for vacation, i.e. the breaks between terms.
- **Viva** — an oral examination.