

Hertford College, Oxford

Freshers' Study Guide
2018

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1. Introduction

Hertford's primary purpose is to support the best academic research and teaching, and your primary purpose in coming to Hertford should be to develop your understanding, knowledge, and enjoyment of the subject you have chosen to read. 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 Hertford. Obviously, we can't offer a definitive set of rules because every student has their own approach to work and knows how they 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.

At the centre of Oxford undergraduate courses is the tutorial. You will meet your College tutors within your first few days at Hertford. 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, lecturers and advanced-level graduate students at other Colleges, when they have specialist expertise in areas which your College tutor(s) do not, or when your College tutor is on leave.

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 support

Additional study guides may also be provided by your Department or Faculty tailored to your subject needs: this Freshers' Study Guide is complementary to this information.

2. Teaching at Oxford

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

While organising tutorials is a College responsibility, **lectures** and **classes/seminars** are more often organised by Departments and Faculties. The lecturer will be an expert in the subject and will be able to collate both established knowledge and recent research, presenting it in a coherent form. Lectures provide information about the general scope of a subject and they often illuminate detailed and specialist areas within a subject. It is useful to attend a range of lectures so that you can encounter different intellectual approaches as well as experience

different lecturing styles - particularly if the lecturer concerned is renowned within their field or beyond.

Many subjects use **small group teaching** such as seminars and classes 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 enormously from the exchange of ideas with other students. You will be expected to contribute. 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 equipment. Some subjects also use field trips and excursions to reinforce teaching and show you the resources available within the University and further afield.

3. What happens in a tutorial?

Your tutorials will be organised by your Hertford tutor, with the first being arranged when you meet for the first time in 0th Week (or occasionally by e-mail). This will usually take place in the tutor's room in College but may take place in their departmental office. Undergraduates usually have one or more tutorials each week for the eight weeks of Full Term, each lasting approximately one hour. You will likely 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.

4. 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 related to 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. A supportive and collaborative peer group is one of the surest ways to encourage collective success. 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 may appear daunting and many students may feel they should read everything on the list in order to get to grips fully with a topic. This may be desirable but is not always possible. You will have a limited time in which to read and you may have to cope with competition from other students for the same texts. It is therefore necessary to be pragmatic and deal with your reading list in a manageable way. This can be achieved through some awareness of the purposes of reading and through 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 key references fundamental to the course which will be referred to at different times and may be essential reading. You may ask your tutor to recommend these key texts. 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.

Using the library

When you have your reading list, set aside some time to go to the library and seek out the works listed. 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 had tours of the libraries, including sessions on how to use the online 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.

There are three sorts of libraries in Oxford:

- College libraries (note: you may only use Hertford College Library, as a general rule other college libraries are for their own college members only.)
- subject-based departmental or faculty libraries
- the large central library, the Bodleian (known as ‘The Bod’), which is made up of the Radcliffe Camera, Old Bodleian and Weston Library buildings opposite Hertford College.

You will usually be able to borrow books from Hertford and from departmental libraries (with some restrictions), but all works in the Bodleian must be read in that library (remember that you can copy, scan or photograph within copyright limits). Most journals, and increasingly many other sources of information, are available online, so make the most of this too. All libraries share the same online catalogue called SOLO (<http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>). The catalogue gives the locations of printed books in libraries and access to ebooks and online journals. Your Single Sign-On login will allow you to access Oxford’s online resources from anywhere, even when you are not on campus.

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 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 – use the contents pages and indexes to aid your search for information, and remember that you are not expected to read every page! Your tutors will be able to suggest some key texts that are worth buying.
3. When buying books, buy second-hand wherever possible – the top floor of Blackwell's in Broad Street is a good source, as well as online suppliers via www.amazon.co.uk and www.abebooks.co.uk - but make sure they are the latest editions if this is likely to matter. You may find that the ebook versions are cheaper. You can also recommend the Library buys new books or extra copies of key texts (see below).

Hertford Library

Hertford Library aims to provide a comfortable and quiet place for members of Hertford College to work. The Librarian is here help you to understand your reading lists, search for material online and locate it in the libraries. If you have any library-related questions you can email library@hertford.ox.ac.uk, call 01865 279409 or come to the Library Office, 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

The Library's collections cover all subjects for which the college admits undergraduates and stocks many of the basic texts on reading lists, some in multiple copies. Students are asked to return books promptly in term-time so others can use them, and although there is no limit on the number which may be signed out, students should borrow only those books which they are likely to read. The Librarian welcomes book requests by email to library@hertford.ox.ac.uk. The removal of books without checking them out, for however short a period, causes great inconvenience, and students are expected to behave as responsible members of an academic community. Further information about the library is available on the website. *Please do not write on (or otherwise mark or annotate) books from the College or any other library.*

Reading lists, reading and note-taking

Your reading list will contain items which may be books, chapters in a book, or journal articles. The following might help you establish the difference and decide what to look up in the catalogue (see also: <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/assistant>).

1. Book with a single author or co-authors
 - Bennett, A. and Royle, N., *Introduction to literature, criticism and theory*, 2nd ed., Prentice Hall, 1999.

This a **book** authored by two people, and you can search for it by the **name of either of the authors** (Bennett or Royle), or by the **title of the book** (*Introduction to literature, criticism and theory*).

2. Edited book

- Benton, T., 'Realism, power and objective interests' in Graham, K. (ed.), *Contemporary political philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1982.

This is a **chapter** (Realism, power and objective interests) written by Benton, in a **book** (*Contemporary political philosophy*) edited by Graham. You can search for it by the **editor of the book** (Graham), or by the **title of the book** (*Contemporary political philosophy*). Do not search for it by the author or title of the chapter.

3. Journal article (journals are also known as serials or periodicals)

- Smith, M.B.E., 'Is there a prima facie obligation to obey the law?' *Yale Law Journal* 82 (1973).

This is an **article** written by Smith in a **journal**. You may need to search by the **title of the journal** (Yale Law Journal), rather than the title of the article or its author. 82 is the journal's volume number, and 1973 its year of publication. Online and printed books and journals can be search at <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>.

4. Shelf marks, call numbers and location marks

These all mean the same thing, and tell you where to look for items on the shelves in a particular library. Libraries in Oxford have many different classification schemes, so when you look on SOLO, the university-wide online catalogue, you might find the same book held in the college, faculty or university library, each with a different shelf mark. Some libraries use prefixes, such as **Oversize, Pamphlet, Stack**. The prefix matters, as it tells you that the item you are looking for is kept in a different place from the ordinary sequence of books.

If you are in any doubt about what to search for in the catalogue, or where to find an item, do ask library staff. They are keen to help you find what you need. You can also find subject specific library advice online at <http://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/oxford>.

Rather than just deciding to begin at the beginning, it is worth thinking about how to approach your reading.

1. Begin reading by browsing or surveying the book. Study the table of contents and index to see how the ideas in the book are presented and structured. From chapter headings and subheadings, you may be able to identify those sections that are most relevant for your purposes.
2. Check the publication date. This may alert you to the position of the book in relation to recent ideas, current data, or particular subject paradigms.
3. Read the abstract, foreword, preface and introduction, as these often explain the structure of the book and summarise the main themes.
4. The body of the text will (or should!) contain, in carefully arranged chapters, all the relevant material to support the themes and ideas.

5. Conclusions provide a summary of the main ideas and may point to a different perspective arising from the author's discussion of the material.
6. Using the index for references to a specific topic will prevent you wasting unnecessary time; be sure, however, to interpret individual sentences or sections in the book in the context of its overall argument.
7. For some types of information (e.g. facts or dates), it is often unnecessary to read the whole book. Carefully skim the table of contents and index to select the most useful parts.
8. 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.

Notes serve different purposes, and these different purposes will determine how much detail you need to take down. You might be tempted to try and write down everything you read, but this is rarely practical or 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 may the author's use of typographical variation (e.g. different sized text or text which has been italicised, underlined, or put in bold). Your record of main ideas should be supported with detail and this can vary according to the potential use of the notes. Academic writers should always provide evidence for their argument: if you are making use of their arguments, you should always also have a note of their evidence. You may well need to use them for revision a year or several months ahead, so they should 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 evidence deployed support the author's arguments?
- In what ways are the author's arguments skewed? This is not necessarily a question of overt bias, but the context in which a text is written will always be influential.
- How does the author's perspective compare with those of others who have written on the same subject?
- Why do authors disagree? Have they uncovered new and different evidence? Are they using the same evidence but in a different way? Has the context shifted?
- What is your perspective?

As you start to read, you can 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 understand what the tutor is looking for. It will also help you 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 you record (see '[Citing references](#)' below).
- Discussions with your fellow students over the week can be a 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.

There 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 will know 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 help you to identify grammatical errors.

Writing habits that you have acquired during your schooling, and which have served you well, may now have to be discarded. You may have been taught to complicate your writing, introducing adverbs, adjectives, conjunctive adverbs such as 'moreover' and 'furthermore'. These are too often redundant. At University level, clarity and precision in writing are prized more than complexity.

4. *Set your work out neatly.* Ensure your work is formatted with suitable margins and double spaced to allow your tutor to add comments. If submitting work by email ensure it is in a common file format, e.g. PDF, Word, so that your tutor can open it. A tutor's feedback is essential for improving your work.
5. *Practice writing by hand.* Remember that you will have to write your answers by hand for your examinations, so do some writing by hand to ensure you have the stamina to write legibly in exams. Length is not a guarantee of success in exams, but in most cases short answers will feel thin in terms of argument and evidence.
6. *Your introduction should be succinct.* Outline your understanding of the purport of the question or the scientific technique in this paragraph, demonstrating you have grasped the key terms and appreciate when concepts can be slippery or ambiguous.
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.

It is important to realise that question such as 'How important was religion to the political divisions of post-unification Germany?' is not asking for one paragraph on religion, and then half a dozen other paragraphs on all the other factors that affected political divisions. Always spend the greater part of the essay answering the specific question asked.

8. *Consider the style of language* that you are using and always check that your spelling, vocabulary and grammar are accurate. Remember, clarity and precision are the most prized qualities, after originality.
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. Ask your tutor how to do this. Quotes should normally be integrated into the text and not separated or indicated by italics.
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 address the question directly and explain how you have reached your conclusions. Do not be afraid to mention unresolved points or to raise them in the tutorial.

12. You should include a bibliography at the end of the essay, listing all the resources you have consulted in its preparation.
13. You will probably also be expected to cite the resources you have consulted in the text of the essay. Tutors and departments will have their own expectations about how and when to cite sources. Check your course handbook but also ask your tutors.
14. Essay writing at university level is different, and in some cases contrary, to practices you may have learnt during your school years. Be prepared to change your style under guidance from your tutors.

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

Different subjects use different systems of reference and practices can vary between footnoting and compiling a bibliography. Individual journals within a specialist field may also use different referencing conventions. Footnotes are used extensively in some subjects but never in others. **Refer to your course handbook and tutor for guidance on this issue, as there are too many different styles to enumerate here.** However, when you need to refer to a text, you should include the following information:

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

The Librarian recommends the following book:

A. Pears and G. Shields (2016) *Cite them right: the essential referencing guide*. 10th edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. (There are copies of this book and other referencing style guides in the Library's study skills section.)

Two 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). [The full citation as it appears below would then appear in your bibliography.]

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.

According to William Sewell, 'Historians working on peasants, workers, slaves, women, colonized peoples were limited to what was written down and saved in archives or libraries – often not in such people's own words but in those of their "betters" or governors.'⁵³ Faced with these voids in the sources, historians have become adept at 'oblique approaches', in Peter Burke's phrase.⁵⁴

⁵³ William H. Sewell Jr., 'Geertz, Cultural Systems and History: From Synchrony to Transformation', *Representations* 59 (1997), 38-9.

⁵⁴ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978), p. 77.

If you record all the necessary information for the reference (including page numbers, date and place of publication) whilst you are doing your preparatory reading it will be easy to reorganise into the format required by your tutor.

5. 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 in the context of the discipline but this should develop into a two-way exchange of ideas, resulting in the student (and ideally the tutor!) coming to a new understanding of the subject matter. This may seem like a daunting prospect, 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. Think about asking, as well as answering, questions. Listen hard. 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 more successful ones 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.
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 pen and paper. 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 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 from a fellow student who has produced work to the same title.
9. You must attend scheduled tutorials, so always have your diary with you when you arrange them.
10. After your tutorial, take a few minutes to write down what you have learnt while it is still fresh in your mind.

Problems with the tutorials?

Everybody who comes to Hertford experiences some academic difficulties at some point – that's a normal part of making the adjustment from more structured school/college studies into independent academic work. If you have difficulties in your tutorials, think again about the ways in which you are preparing for them, and discuss different techniques with other students, perhaps in the second or third years. Don't hesitate to talk to your tutor about any difficulties, by making an appointment to see them, or by sending an email. You can discuss any academic matter with the Senior Tutor (david.hopkin@hertford.ox.ac.uk).

6. Making the most of lectures

Lectures are organised by the faculties and departments for students from all colleges. 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: www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/lectures/.

In most 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 often more up-to-date than the textbooks (they have access to a wider range of source material and the latest ideas, often because they are doing the research themselves).
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. 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 a good way of meeting your contemporaries in your subject from other colleges, and of hearing their tutors holding forth. You may later regret having missed the chance of hearing a famous speaker or internationally renowned intellectual on your subject.

Take notes during lectures, if only to help you concentrate on what is being said. However, the first priority is to understand what is going on. Do not try to take over-detailed, hurried notes during the lecture. Take down major points and the overall thread of the argument. In most cases slides used in lectures are available on the weblearn pages dedicated to that course, so there is no need to copy them.

Do you feel that you are not getting anything out of the first lecture or two? Even so, you should persevere. 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 find the lecturer boring - but that does not devalue the content.

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 or concepts. 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 but you need to consider whether this is an effective use of your time.

7. 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 structured by your teachers. Here, you need to devise your own timetable. In order to get the most out of Oxford you will need to be **hard working** and **well organised**. These are extremely valuable skills to employers and will also help you to cope with the challenges involved in your later working life. The amount of work you will do will depend, to some extent, on the subject you do and the stage you are at in your course, but we expect all students who want to fulfil their potential to work something equivalent to a full-time week (35 hours) – which allows plenty of time for flexible timetabling and for other activities.

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 notepad and diary and/or set up a personal online calendar. 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 will need more than one folder. It may prove useful to have a file for each unit of your course, each divided into sections for 1: Lecture notes; 2: Tutorial work and notes; 3: Practicals or Miscellaneous, 4: Reading materials, 5: Source materials. Organise your electronic files into folders too and remember to make regular back ups on a secure external drive or cloud-based service.
- ☑ 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 put your phone on silent when you are working - everyone understands the need for periods of uninterrupted work!

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. The vacation is the time for reading large amounts of essential texts; it may also be 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. If you need to stay in College for part of the vacation to undertake academic study, you should obtain the permission of your tutor, contact the Bursary about accommodation, and complete a vacation grant form, as help with accommodation costs may be available. The forms can be found on the College website: <https://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/hertford-intranet/accommodation/useful-information-forms>.

8. Feedback on performance – ours and yours

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 comments on your submitted work. Your tutor will probably 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, and which you can find by logging in to your Oxford account at www.oxcort.ox.ac.uk. You will have an opportunity to discuss your term's work and any reports with one of your tutors at the end of each term.

Your progress will also be monitored through two kinds of '**Collections**'.

1. '**Collections**' are **examinations** that are set at the start of term. On Friday and Saturday of 0th Week, tutors may 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 wearing gowns under exam conditions – i.e. invigilated, timed

and in silence, in various locations around College. Timetables are put up on noticeboards in the Lodge in 0th Week. Collection scripts are marked by your tutors and should be returned to you in the first half of term. Please note, sometimes tutors may set a vacation essay instead of an exam-type Collection.

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.

2. You will also have an annual '**Principal's Collection**' usually in 8th Week of one of the terms, where you will discuss your academic and personal progress with the Principal, the Senior Tutor and your College tutors. All present, including you, wear their gowns. 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.

You will also 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. Departmental or Faculty questionnaires relate to lectures, practicals and other teaching organised centrally. At Hertford we run regular confidential feedback sessions for all subjects, organised by the JCR. You can also give feedback or raise any concerns, in confidence, via the JCR Academic Affairs rep, or direct to the Senior Tutor at any point.

9. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the copying or paraphrasing of other people's work or ideas into your own work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition.

Collusion is another form of plagiarism involving the unauthorised collaboration of students (or others) in a piece of work.

Cases of suspected plagiarism in assessed work are investigated under the disciplinary regulations concerning conduct in examinations (if plagiarism is detected in University exams) or under the College's Academic Discipline Procedures (if plagiarism is committed as part of your termly college work). Intentional or reckless plagiarism may incur severe penalties, including failure of your degree or expulsion from the University and College.

Plagiarism is not tolerated either within College or the University as a whole. If you are unsure how to acknowledge a source you use in your work you should speak to your tutor or refer to the section above entitled '[Citing references](#)'. 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 submitted work, whether done under examination conditions or not. Any submitted work may be checked for plagiarism.

The University regulations on plagiarism can be found in the Examinations and Course Requirements section of the 'University Student Handbook':

<http://www.proctors.ox.ac.uk/handbook/handbook/8examinationscourserequirements/>

For further information, including guidance on good academic practice and using sources, all new students should look at

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism>. You are also encouraged take the University's online course which has been developed to provide a useful overview of the issues surrounding plagiarism and practical ways to avoid it:

<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/:skills:generic:avoidplag>.

For information on copyright, there is a good set of guidelines on the Bodleian website at

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/using/copy/copyright>.

10.What kind of study support is available?

There are a large number of books with advice on how to develop your study skills in the study skills and welfare section of the Library. Blackwells Bookshop publishes a range of leaflets on different aspects of study, including 'How to write essays', 'Reading for study', 'Improve your memory', 'Citing references' and 'Taking notes from lectures':

<https://blackwells.co.uk/bookshop/search/?keyword=Palgrave+Study+Guides>.

Support for students with disabilities

A wide range of individual adjustments and support is available should barriers exist which have an impact on your studies. We encourage students to register any disabilities at the earliest possible opportunity, so support arrangements can be put in place in advance of the start of your first term.

1. If you have already declared a disability or chronic condition on your application form, you will have been contacted by the University's Disability Advisory Service (DAS) to discuss which arrangements and adjustments might be necessary for your individual condition(s). The DAS will work with you to produce a Student Support Plan, which sets out all agreed provisions including those relating to study, and is sent to the College and your course department(s).
2. If you have not been diagnosed, but think you might have a Specific Learning Difficulty (such as dyslexia or dyspraxia), then you need to discuss this with your tutors or the Welfare Coordinator so we can arrange for you to be assessed by a university-approved educational psychologist as the first step. If you think you have another undiagnosed disability, please contact the Welfare Coordinator or one of the College GPs.

Further information about disability support and how to access it is available on the Disability Advisory Service webpages:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/disability?wssl=1>. The College's Disability Coordinator is Yo Davies (welfare.coordinator@hertford.ox.ac.uk).

Alternative exam arrangements

If you require any alternative arrangements in your written examinations, for example on account of a disability, medical condition, or religious observance, the College has to arrange this in good time with the University. The deadline for making foreseen applications for alternative arrangements is the Friday of 4th Week of the term before your exams are due to take place. (For urgent reasons, requests may be considered nearer the time.)

Exam provision may include:

- extra time and / or the use of a word processor for students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) or physical or mental disabilities or illnesses that make writing difficult;
- enlarged font papers for those with a visual impairment;
- written instructions for those with a hearing impairment;
- ergonomic or other seating arrangements;
- scheduling of exams at a specific time of day or only one exam scheduled per day due to fatigue effects caused by some disabilities, or for religious observances; and
- permission to bring food and drink into an exam.

To discuss your requirements further, please contact Yo Davies (welfare.coordinator@hertford.ox.ac.uk), the Welfare Coordinator, if relating to a disability or medical condition, and Sue Finch (academic.office@hertford.ox.ac.uk), the Academic Administrator, if relating to religious observance or other issues.

Academic support

If you have academic or personal issues that you would like to discuss with someone, the first point of contact is your tutor. However, there are also a number of other people who you may feel are more relevant to your problem.

The Senior Tutor, Professor David Hopkin, has general responsibility for the academic administration of the College, including students' academic progress. You can contact him on any academic matter at david.hopkin@hertford.ox.ac.uk.

The Welfare team, including the Dean, Welfare Coordinator, Registrar, Chaplain, Junior Deans and JCR Welfare Officers are all potential sources of support. Their details, as well as other University services, are available via the Welfare section on the college website: <https://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/hertford-intranet/support-available>.

Revised D. Hopkin August 2018
