

Wadham College: Statement on collections

College collections play a vital role in undergraduate education at Oxford, since they provide a means of assessing progress throughout a student's course; of identifying problems in understanding and gaps in coverage; and of giving opportunities for practice at sitting examinations in advance of the FPE or FHS, for improving examination technique, and for understanding methods of assessment and marking criteria. In respect of the marking of tutorial essays, practice can vary considerably: in particular, a number of tutors feel that it is not appropriate to put a mark on a tutorial essay, and that, since its form and function are different from those of an examination, written comments and corrections alone are the appropriate form of feedback for this type of work. In those circumstances, collections can be all the more important in providing an indication of a student's progress.

The Conference of Colleges has agreed that colleges should use collections or some other form of assessed work systematically as a significant element of formative assessment. Collections should be marked as promptly as possible, and collection marks should be recorded and monitored by Organising Tutors and/or the Senior Tutor. Students who miss collections should be followed up. In addition colleges should regularly review whether each subject is receiving enough formative assessment.

The norm at Wadham is to set collections at the beginning of each term, on the previous term's work or on vacation reading, for all students who have not taken University or departmental exams in the preceding term. In view of the role of collections as a form of exam practice, the College attempts to replicate formal University examination conditions as far as possible, including in the provision of special arrangements (but without requiring students to wear sub-fusc). All subjects should offer such exam practice at least once a year, except in those cases where it has been agreed in consultation with the Senior Tutor that the opportunity for exam practice is not best provided in this form. Students should be advised about any collections at the end of the previous term. Collections are normally sat on the Friday and/or Saturday of 0th week, since all students are obliged to be in residence by 2pm Thursday 0th week.

Tutors are advised that scripts from collections sat at the beginning of term should be returned with marks and feedback as soon as possible in the term in which they are sat; in the case of those taking University examinations in that term, this should be before the end of 2nd week. Where possible, other collection scripts should be returned by the end of 4th week. Where the return is going to be delayed beyond this point, tutors are expected to warn students of this so as to minimise frustration on the part of the students.

Collections marks are a helpful indication of a student's progress, and a poor collection performance may trigger more formal academic procedures. The marks may be used, with appropriate contextualisation, in such procedures. However, the College recognizes that collection marks alone can be a misleading indicator of a student's overall progress, or given exaggerated importance. Accordingly, tutors are encouraged to add comments on collection performance on OxCort alongside collection marks, as appropriate. Some tutors provide opportunities for oral feedback to be given to students on collection performance in addition to written feedback.

In a review of collection practices conducted in Trinity 2015, tutors and SU reps acknowledged reciprocal obligations in the practice of collections: students must be prepared for and recognize the place of collections within their course of studies, and tutors must provide academically useful feedback on them. College tutors should explain to their first-year undergraduates both the purpose and the importance of collections before they sit their first

collection in Hilary Term. Students should also be made aware of the criteria against which they will be assessed, and of the approach that will be adopted in the marking of their collections (explaining, for example, whether a mark in a collection in Hilary Term of the first year indicates the mark which the script would have obtained if produced in the FPE, or rather the mark which the marker, on the basis of this performance, thinks it likely that that student will go on to obtain in the FPE given the stage in the course at which the collection was taken).

Agreed by Tutorial Board, June 2015