



WADHAM COLLEGE
OXFORD

Undergraduate Study Guide 2023-24

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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 Wadham College. It is not intended to be a definitive set of rules, because every student has their own approach to work and methods for effective studying. 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 the first few days at Wadham. 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.

In this guide you will find a description of the teaching system and what it will require of you, along with suggestions of ways to manage your work effectively. There is also information on sources of feedback, and both academic and personal support. You may also receive a study guide from your Department or Faculty which will be specifically tailored to your subject needs: the Wadham College Freshers' Study Guide is intended to be complementary to this information.

Study Advisors

Each year, the College appoints a number of Study Advisors (SAs) who offer one-to-one study skills sessions for undergraduates. Such support is not intended to replace tutorials, nor to supplant subject-specific advice; it is intended to help you make good use of the written feedback that you have received on submitted work, or to develop general study skills, such as time management, structuring of essays etc. If you would like to schedule a session please contact April Gilling (graduate.admissions@wadham.ox.ac.uk).

Beginning your work

Weeks in Oxford are numbered, including the preliminary week of term, which is known as 0th week. Freshers are required to come up on Sunday of 0th week of Michaelmas Term (also known as Freshers' Week), to spend several days in social and orientation activities. The question then arises: when to start your academic work? Some freshers say that they would rather start studying immediately, partly to balance the socialising, and partly because having to wait until the end of the week before being given any work can make them feel frustrated or anxious. Others have said that being given work to do straight away, before they had discovered how to access the libraries and computer facilities, put them under pressure.

Taking both sets of experiences into account, Wadham allows flexibility by making reading lists and practical sheets available to students early on, setting work according to the timetabling demands of each subject (in some cases ahead of freshers' arrival in Oxford),

and retaining a compassionate understanding of the fact that students must prepare the first piece of work whilst they are still in a process of orientation.

Teaching at Oxford

Just as at other universities, at Oxford each course 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. This may be in large classes or in individual sessions with your tutor.

The **tutorial** is central to teaching at Oxford. Your first tutorials are likely to be with a Fellow of Wadham College or a College Lecturer, but later on they may be with a specialist in your subject who is associated with another College. Tutorials normally involve a tutor and two or three undergraduates (or sometimes, 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. You will normally be required to prepare a piece of written work for each tutorial, to be submitted before or at the tutorial. You might then read it aloud or the tutor may take you straight into a discussion of the work and its wider implications. Note that each tutor may have different styles and approaches to their tutorials, so make sure you are clear with what each tutor expects from you.

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.

Your tutorials will be organised by your tutor/s at Wadham (they will also manage any tutorials that take place at another College), whereas **lectures** and **University 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 of the lecture and will have conducted research 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 that will help you understand the breadth of your subject, thus allowing your specialisation in later years to be more informed. It is also useful to hear information delivered in different ways and to be exposed to different perspectives on contested academic questions, particularly if the lecturer is particularly renowned within their field or beyond. For some courses, lectures will deal with topics or issues not covered in the tutorial series. For others, lectures will provide a complimentary review of questions covered in the tutorial. In both circumstances, attendance will enrich your understanding of your subject.

Many subjects use **small group teaching**, where you get more individual attention from lecturers than you would 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. 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.

How to prepare for a tutorial

It is important to be well prepared for a tutorial. As soon as you get the reading list and essay title or problem sheet, read through the instructions thoroughly and think about the question or title. The sooner you review the tutorial task, the better. Starting early allows you to identify if you are uncertain about what you are supposed to be doing. If you are unsure what is required of you or have any difficulties, contact your tutor at the earliest possible opportunity. Try to discuss the work with other students in College and your Department or Faculty. They may have some useful ideas or perspectives. Reviewing the tutorial task immediately will also begin the process of workload management: what materials do you need to find, download, photocopy? When do you need to begin preparing in order to be completed on time? During term at Oxford, you will need to organise your time very carefully from the outset, as you may be asked to produce work in less than seven days, whilst attending other lectures and classes. At 8 weeks in length, terms at Oxford are short and it can be easy to fall behind. Diligent use of timetables and a diary from the outset is without question the best way to avoid missing deadlines, falling behind and getting stressed. For advice on how to do this, please see the separate section on 'Managing your workload'. The Study Advisors can also assist in helping to design a balanced and effective work routine.

If you have a set of problems to work through, they will often be based on the lectures that you have received or on key texts from your reading list. If you are uncertain of how to start, ask your tutor for advice. 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. **Do not be afraid to ask your tutor for guidance.**

First reading lists always appear quite daunting and most students initially feel that they may have to read everything on the list in order to come to a full understanding of a topic. Although this may be partially true, you generally have a limited time in which to read. Additionally, all the materials may not be available as other students may need the same materials, and library resources are not unlimited (a good way to manage this common issue is to organise with the other students in your group who will get access to a text at a particular time). It is therefore necessary to be pragmatic and make reading lists manageable. You should aim for an awareness of the purposes of reading and select carefully from the recommended texts.

There are different types of reading lists. At the start of a course you may be given a list of basic references, fundamental to the course, which may be essential reading or which will be referred to you at different times. You may then be given supplementary reading lists for specific essay topics. For each topic, there is often one or more basic texts that are essential reading. If they have not already done so, ask your tutor to highlight these 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.

Off to the library

When you have your reading list, set aside some time in your timetable/diary to go to the library and seek out the relevant material. You may find that you need to consult more than one library to find all of your key texts. During Freshers' Week (0th week of Michaelmas Term), you will have had tours of the libraries, including sessions on how to use the computer-based catalogue. If you need further assistance with the 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, subject-based departmental or faculty libraries and the large central library, The Bodleian (known as 'The Bod'). You will usually be able to borrow books and journals from the Wadham 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, and Departmental/Faculty Libraries for the Sciences). Tutors will advise you on when to use each of these. Many journals are now available on-line, and most permit individual downloads of articles, so make the most of this. Further information about the Oxford libraries can be found here: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/research/libraries>. You can always check the individual library's website.

Plan your work sensibly in 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 tutors for advice – do not just leave them to discover from your essay that you have not been able to find it.

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 that you use the contents pages and index to aid your search for information. You are not expected to read every page of a reference text! Use the tutorial essay or problem, or the general themes or descriptions in your reading lists to help guide and focus your research. A useful task to help concentrate your mind on the most relevant information for your tutorial is to have the essay question written down in front of you as you read – ask yourself if the information in front of you can help answer that question. Similarly, write a very short summary of the key issues in the topic that you can discern from the reading list, and use these to focus your reading of the materials set.

Your tutors and second-year students in your subject will be able to suggest some key texts that are worth buying. When buying books, buy second-hand wherever possible, but make sure they are the latest editions if this is likely to matter. If you are considering buying older editions, it can be helpful to consult your tutor to see if they are still appropriate.

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. It is very important to structure your reading of what are often very large amounts of information. Structure helps maintain your attention and critical faculties as you read – this is sometimes referred to as 'active reading'. There are a variety of ways you can structure your reading, such as using the essay question to focus your review – "how does this information help answer the question/problem?"

2. Begin your reading by browsing or surveying the book. Study the table of contents and index 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.
3. 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.
4. Read the abstract, foreword, preface and introduction as these tend to contain the structure of the book and a summary of the main themes.
5. The body of the text will contain, in carefully arranged chapters, all the relevant material to support the themes and ideas.
6. Conclusions provide a summary of the main ideas and may point to a different perspective arising from the author's discussion of the material.
7. Indices 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 prevent you wasting unnecessary time.
8. For factual information, it may be unnecessary to read the whole book. Carefully skim the table of contents and index to select the most useful parts.
9. 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 are taken for different purposes and these will determine the amount of detail that is required. You might be tempted to try to 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 boldening. 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. Finally, good note-taking (i.e. notes that help embed knowledge and understanding of a topic in your memory) is a creative process and requires concentration and energy. It can be difficult to take notes when you are tired or distracted, and the quality of your notes should be something you reflect on as you do your research. As with your use of a highlighter or underlining (to highlight particularly relevant pieces of text), if you find yourself noting all or most of what is in the text, you probably need a break, or something to focus your analysis.

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:

1. Is the material well presented?

2. Do the facts support the main ideas of the author?
3. Is the author biased?
4. Does the material support the conclusion?
5. How does the author's perspective compare with those of others who have written on the same subject?
6. 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. It is helpful then to focus some (though not all – as you want as broad an understanding of the topic as possible) of your notes on answering the questions in the assigned essay or problem. This will help focus and structure your reading and analysis of the materials, while also giving you an understanding of what your tutor is looking for. 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 very long 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 'The Essay'

Once you have thought about your essay title and collated the notes from your reading, it will be time to write your essay. 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. Your tutor will be able to advise you on appropriate timescales. Each subject will have a different style of writing and specific tips can be obtained from your tutor. However, 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 a unity among the material in each paragraph (it may help to deal with each point in a separate paragraph) and give 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 in your essay everything that you have read.

3. Clarity of expression is essential in essays. 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. Number the pages in your essay. 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 a hard-copy essay, 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 the work is taken in for marking. A tutor's feedback is essential to improving your work.
5. You will probably want to type up your essay on a computer, but legible handwriting is also fine. Remember that you will have to write your answers by hand for many of your examinations so it can be good practice to do so for some of your tutorial work.
6. Your introduction should be succinct. Outline the main points of your argument or the scientific technique. Analyse the question, explain any difficult or ambiguous concepts and then outline your proposed answer.
7. Answer the question asked, or the discussion suggested in the title of the tutorial assignment. 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. A useful exercise that helps you to both answer the question while also focusing your reading and note-taking is to try to write a short and rough 75–120 word paragraph on what the essay title or problem is about. Set out the working definitions of relevant terms in the essay question or title that you will use throughout.
8. Consider the style of language which you are using and always check that your spelling, vocabulary and grammar are accurate.
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.
10. You are expected at this academic level to provide critical analysis along with accurate and well-written descriptions of the literature. But you must base your critical reflections on well-argued and reasoned positions. If you disagree with a claim or position in your reading materials, it is not sufficient to merely say so. You must explain why, and that explanation must be logical and compelling.
11. Beware of the risk of running out of steam by the time you get to the conclusion! You need to include a carefully set out summary of the arguments or main points of the essay and explain how you have reached your conclusions. You can also use 'scholarly caution' in this section by employing words such as 'perhaps' and 'possibly' in association with your ideas. Do not be afraid to mention unresolved points or to raise them in the tutorial.

12. Consult your tutor about whether you should include a bibliography at the end, listing all the texts you have cited and/or consulted in preparing your essay.
13. Finally, try to get into the habit of editing your submitted essays. Editing will help you improve and refine your writing skills, as well as developing a more sophisticated understanding of complex concepts in your subject. Your tutor will also appreciate it! Aim to finish a full draft of your essay in time to give yourself at least an hour break from writing, before giving another hour to edit before submission. This is easier to do if you type your essays on a computer than if you hand-write. If you prefer the latter, try leaving a few lines between paragraphs to allow for later editing – this is also a helpful strategy for exams!

Solving 'The 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 more time than that. 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. Annotate your lecture notes or create supplementary notes if this helps you but do not lose sight of the task in hand.
3. Set your work out neatly. Do not overcrowd a page; writing on one side of a hand-written piece of work 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.
4. Write legibly or type your work. Remember that you will have to write your answers by hand for many of your examinations so it can be good practice to do so for some of your tutorial work.
5. Include all your workings unless your tutor has specifically asked you not to. If you are uncertain how many of the intermediary steps to include, ask your tutor.

Citing references

Every subject uses a different method for citing references. Even individual journals within a very specialist field will also vary enormously from numbered lists to alphabetical lists, with

different permutations of bold and italic type. Footnotes are used extensively in some subjects but are never used in others.

You must 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, number of pages, edition number
6. For journals: volume, issue and page numbers

If you record this kind of information whilst you are doing your preparatory reading it will be easy to reorganise it later into the format preferred by your tutor.

How to get the most from a tutorial

The main aim of a tutorial 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 or college 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 fill 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. Do not record the tutorial unless you have sought express permission from your tutor (or have prior permission to do so from the University's Disability Advisory Service) and your tutorial partners.

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 for you 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 also 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 with attending the tutorial, let your tutor know well in advance. Tutors will try to adjust meetings to accommodate illness or other similar difficulties, but they have busy schedules and cannot alter arrangements merely to suit your convenience.
6. Always actively participate in the tutorial. Remember to take a 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! Do not worry about disagreeing with your tutors: 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!
7. 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 to the same title.
8. You must attend scheduled tutorials, so always have your diary/personal organiser with you when you arrange them.
9. 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 Tutor for Undergraduates or Senior Tutor (see the 'Welfare support' section at the end).
10. Tutorials can be a vibrant and intellectually stimulating environment, but remember to be respectful in discussions and debates with your tutorial partners.
11. After your tutorial, take a few minutes to write down what you have learnt while it is still fresh in your mind.

Making the most of lectures

In 0th Week of each term your tutor will advise you about the lecture programme and also which and how many lectures you should be attending in a week. But you are strongly encouraged to be proactive about this and work out for yourself which lectures to attend. You can look up the lecture lists on the web at:
<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/lectures>
or on your department's pages.

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. In subjects where the source material is diverse and scattered, the lecturer will have spent time and energy 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. Some lecturers may be so well known in your subject that it is interesting to hear them live and find out what sort of person they are.
5. 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). Examiners may base specific questions on material that they know has been covered in detail, and is available to all students (unlike material covered in college tutorials).

All this means that you should take lectures seriously and get into the lecture habit early. Apart from anything else, it is a good way of meeting your contemporaries in your subject from other colleges, and of hearing their tutors. You may later regret having missed the chance of hearing that lecturer speak on your subject.

It is a good idea to 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 too detailed, hurried notes during the lecture. Take down major points and the overall thread of the argument.

If you feel that you are not getting anything out of the first lecture or two 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 in later tutorials or classes. You may find the lecturer boring—but that does not devalue what they tell you. Give lectures a chance to warm up before you decide to drop them. In the Sciences, don't drop any lectures lightly.

All lecturers have their own ways 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 but you need to consider whether this is an effective use of your time.

Finally, if you prefer to take your notes on your computer, turn off your internet access during the lecture so you can give the lecture your full concentration. Engaging with a lecture while also writing good useful notes is a demanding exercise – scrolling through social media, your emails, YouTube, or news websites is *not* conducive to either. Having these kinds of things on your screen can also be very distracting for people sitting behind you in lecture theatres.

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 or college, where your study schedule may have been strictly timetabled. Here, where much if not most of your working week is self-directed, you need to devise your own timetable. Oxford terms are comparatively short and intense in terms of workloads; in order to succeed here you will need to work hard and be 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.

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 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. Balancing your demands will be your main challenge.

Make sure you keep 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 (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 will have fewer of those nagging feelings that you should be somewhere else.

Another facet of organisation is 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 out-grows 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.

When you are planning your work, it is worth considering when you are at your most productive. 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 to take a stroll outside for some fresh air, and to grab a cup of tea, 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 your phone, email and messages when you are

working. Everyone understands the need for periods of uninterrupted work, and constantly checking your messages is a drain on your attention and time.

Good timetabling and diary-keeping is also a reflective process. It is often hard to judge how quickly you work, and many of us under-estimate how long a task might take us to complete. Try to take a note of how long a particular task actually took you – and then incorporate this valuable information into future timetabling and organising of your work.

Remember that amidst all 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.

Further information from the University can be found here:
<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/time?wssl=1>

Using your vacations

Both on the academic and non-academic sides of your life, 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 breaks between terms are generous compared to the length of the terms – longer than you will need to rest and recover from term-time. 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. This is also a very good time for general background reading, for catching up on work and filling gaps in your reading lists 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 portion of them for your academic work.

What is expected of you

All undergraduates are required to maintain a 'satisfactory academic performance' while on course. This means that students will:

- (i) Keep the residence requirements laid down by the University except where formal permission is obtained from the Senior Tutor in advance.
- (ii) Pass the First Public Examination by, at least, the second attempt.

(iii) Attend all tutorials, classes, lectures and other required academic engagements, including practicals, except where permission is obtained, preferably in advance, from the tutor(s) concerned. In particular, students are expected to attend start-of-term and end-of-term meetings with their tutors (as required). If you are prevented from attendance by illness or other urgent cause, please tell your tutor as soon as possible (preferably in advance).

(iv) Maintain open and honest communication with tutor(s), College Officers and College staff at all times.

(v) Produce all academic work with the regularity required by the tutor(s), except where permission is obtained, preferably in advance, from the tutor(s) concerned.

(vi) Sit one or more collections (College Examinations) at the beginning of each term, as required.

(vii) Produce work of a standard commensurate with their individual ability and circumstances and appropriate to the stage they have reached in their course. In most cases, this will be of at least 2.1 standard. Continued work of a low 2.2 standard, or below, may trigger the College's academic monitoring procedures (see the [online student handbook](#)).

Students are expected to recognize that they are engaged in full-time study, and other activities (sporting, social or work experience) should not be prioritised above academic work. Any request to re-arrange a tutorial time can only be accommodated in exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of individual tutors. Students are further reminded of the common courtesies expected of them in classes and lectures. They are asked that where they wish to use electronic or smart devices in classes for genuine academic purposes (e.g. note-taking) they request permission from the tutor beforehand. They should reply to any email correspondence from their tutors swiftly, meaning at least within 24 hours during term.

Academic progress

A conscientious commitment to academic work is expected throughout a student's time here and is a condition of continued membership of the College.

Participation in an academic community, both at Wadham and at the University, is designed to enable students to fulfil their intellectual potential and, as such, students are admitted as active citizens who have both responsibilities and duties towards a shared goal. All students should therefore produce work of a standard appropriate to their particular level of academic ability and attend all tutorials and classes fully prepared. This means participating in tutorials to their full potential, as well as producing evidence of preparation and written work carried out before the tutorials and classes which their tutors consider to be completely satisfactory in both quality and quantity.

Progress is checked regularly, by tutors in weekly tutorials and termly examinations ('collections'). You will be kept informed of how you are doing by your tutors throughout the term and, more formally, at end-of-term report meetings.

Feedback on performance

Feedback from your tutors will be valuable to the development of your study skills whilst you are at Oxford. Most of the feedback on your work will be given orally during tutorials and some will appear as marks on your submitted work. Your tutor may not give precise grades (or any 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 normally discuss with you at a meeting at the end of each term.

Your progress will also be monitored through collections. 'Collection' is a term used in some Colleges to describe formal report meetings with the Head of the College. At Wadham, meetings with the Warden can be to discuss individual progress, but might also be arranged as an opportunity for groups of students to talk together with the Warden about their perceptions and experiences of the College.

'Collections' is also the term used for examinations that are set at the start of term. On Friday and Saturday of 0th Week, 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. As far as possible, collections are taken under exam conditions: invigilated, timed and in silence, in various locations around College. Timetables are e-mailed to all students in 0th Week. Please note that sometimes tutors may set a vacation essay instead of an exam-type Collection.

Collections sat at the beginning of a term will 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 the return is going to be delayed until the later parts of term, tutors are expected to warn students of this.

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.

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 Wadham College questionnaire is sent out towards the end of each term. In asking for this feedback, we are aiming to ensure better communication on academic matters between students and tutors, and to help the college to attain the best practice in teaching and other academic provision. This is not of course intended as a substitute for other means of providing feedback. It is hoped that you will regularly talk to your tutors, and also feel able to bring any concerns to the Tutor for Undergraduates or Senior Tutor during the term.

The College also asks you regularly to complete a self-assessment form. This gives you the opportunity to assess your own progress after each term, and to reflect on how you have worked that term. This self-assessment form, which is circulated by e-mail towards the end of each term, should help to enhance the value of end-of-term report discussions with your tutors, and aid your academic development in general.

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 either within College or the University as a whole. If you are unsure how to acknowledge the source you should refer to the section above entitled 'Citing references' or alternatively speak with your tutor.

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 whether or not it is completed in examination conditions, and any submitted material may be checked for plagiarism.

Please do have a look at <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism> to find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it.

You are also expected to produce your work yourself. In particular, unless advised otherwise by your tutors, you are not permitted to use AI tools (such as ChatGPT and others) to produce work that you submit for tutorials or classes or for examination, whether it is the entire piece of work or some part of it.

Study support

In addition to the College's Study Advisors (see page 3 of this document), there are a large number of books with advice on how to develop your study skills and the study skills section of your Departmental or Faculty library will have materials relevant to your subject. Similarly, the College library has a number of study skills texts in Section Z. One good general text is:

Northedge, A. The Good Study Guide (2005). The Open University Press

Blackwells Bookshop also 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'. At the time of writing, these are not available to purchase online, but can be purchased from Blackwells in Oxford at £1 each.

Oxford Student Union (Oxford University SU) also has information on study skills:
<http://www.oxfordsu.org>

The University Counselling Service also has a useful section on revision and exams which can be found at the website: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/revision>

Specific Learning Difficulties (including Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADD and ADHD)

If you are dyslexic or dyspraxic, or have another specific learning difficulty, there is a range of support that the University and College can offer. We encourage you to come forward, as

several students do every year, so we can work out the best ways to offer any help you need.

1. If you have already been diagnosed with either or both of dyslexia or dyspraxia, then you need to let your College tutor know, and make an appointment with the Academic Administrator (Dr Mike Froggatt), based in the College's Academic Office, or with the University's Disability Advisory Service (DAS).
2. If you have not been diagnosed, but think you might have either dyslexia or dyspraxia, then you need to make an appointment to see the Academic Administrator (Dr Mike Froggatt), or directly with the University's Disability Advisory Service (DAS) so we can arrange for you to be assessed.

If you need any special provision in exams, the College has to arrange this in good time with the University well before you are due to sit your exams, so do not delay taking the action in the numbered points above. Arrangements made by your school or college will not be automatically transferred to Oxford, and so please act in Michaelmas Term if at all possible (all arrangements must be confirmed before exam entries are submitted and later requests for adjustments might not be possible).

If, having been diagnosed with a specific learning difficulty, it has been recommended that you be supplied with a desktop or laptop computer you may be charged a £200 contribution towards this. If this presents a financial hardship, please contact the Academic Administrator in the first instance, who will be able to advise on sources of financial support within College to assist with covering this cost.

If you would like to look up more information about dyslexia and dyspraxia at Oxford, please see: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/disability>

If you have any complaints about the provision that has been made for a specific learning difficulty these can be raised via the College's Complaints Procedure, which can be found in the appendices of the online Student Handbook:

<https://www.wadham.ox.ac.uk/current-students/student-handbook>

Welfare 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 can provide more relevant assistance for your problem. The Tutor for Undergraduates oversees student progress and academic monitoring, and may be consulted on academic or personal matters by any undergraduate. The Senior Tutor is also concerned with academic welfare and, with the staff of the Academic Office, for arranging support for students with special needs, and again is available to give advice on academic or personal concerns. The Chaplain, Jane Baun, is available to talk to all students whatever their religious affiliation. Remember also that you can make an appointment to see one of the following staff members, depending on the issue at hand: the College's Welfare Lead, Welfare Advisor, the Tutor for Women, Tutor for Equality & Diversity, Tutor for Race, Peer Supporters, Harassment Advisors, the College Nurse, and the College Doctors. Full details of these people are listed on the Wadham website:

<https://www.wadham.ox.ac.uk/current-students/student-welfare>

The Students' Union (SU) has dedicated Welfare Officers who can offer help. The SU also runs a 'Peer Support' programme where you can talk to other students in confidence about your difficulties. Details of this are on posters located around College. The Welfare Support offered by the SU is also detailed in your SU Freshers Guide.

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

Oxford SU also runs a full range of welfare support schemes: <http://www.oxfordsu.org> and 'Student Minds' (<http://www.studentminds.org.uk/>) is also a well-regarded source of support and advice.

The University-affiliated Oxford Mindfulness Centre each term offers a tailor-made Mindfulness course for Oxford University students to help students develop stress-management skills, and improve concentration and organisation. The courses cost £70: <http://oxfordmindfulness.org/course/oxford-students/?src=event>

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 don't ever be afraid to ask for help.