

## Tips and strategies to prepare for your first year

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### FIRST DAY

**Introductory session** - A brief talk about the course and an opportunity to meet teachers and talk to other students. As an ice-breaker you may be asked to introduce yourself, where you are from, and say something interesting about yourself.

**Enrolment** - Typically takes place in a hall or main area of the building. You can arrange to enroll in a quieter room if it would be more comfortable. Make sure you bring proof of identity to enrolment, and afterwards check PIP and your Brookes email to keep updated with what is happening during induction week.

If you are worried about the enrolment and induction process there is plenty of support available such as having another student show you around and attend enrolment, meeting with disability services, or various help desks.

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### FIRST WEEK

During your first week there will be the opportunity to attend various **workshops** and **tours** to get to know the university. You will also attend a **subject meeting** where you will learn more about the structure of your course.

You will meet a lot of new people and it is a good opportunity to get to know other students from your class or halls. People will often ask you the same questions: What is your name? Where are you from? What halls are you staying in? What are you studying? Do not be afraid to introduce yourself and start up a conversation.

People may go out a lot during Freshers week – if you do it is important to be responsible. Do not worry if you are not interested in this, you may feel like the 'only one' but it is definitely not the case! There are lots of other ways to enjoy Freshers week. **Freshers fair** takes place on Friday 23 September in and around John Henry Brookes Building (JHBB) on Headington Campus. The fair is a great event to learn about the student union and sign up for many different types of **societies**.

Most classes begin with a lecture which outlines what you will be doing in that semester. Teachers often explain the structure of their class, how it will be assessed, and what topics you will be learning about.

**Remember:** Everyone is new and worried. There are lots of people to help during the first week if you ask.

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### FIRST SEMESTER

A **lecture** takes place in a large room with the other students from your course. It lasts around 2 hours, often with a break in the middle. A lecturer will give a talk, sometimes asking questions, and students take notes. Do not be afraid to ask questions – lecturers often say you can stop them to ask a question if you are confused. If you need to leave the room you do not usually need to ask permission, just do so quietly.

A **seminar** is a smaller class, often with 20-40 students, and is more interactive than a lecture. You may participate in discussions or work on activities guided by a teacher. A **tutorial** is even smaller, with around 10 students, and is often structured around learning skills such as writing an essay or getting feedback on your work.

You are expected to take **notes** during your classes. How you decide to make notes depend on what works for you. Some students write by hand, others use tablets or laptops. If lecture slides are available before the class, you may find it useful to look at them beforehand. You could print the slides or write down the main information.

## Using the library

- Computers tend to be busy at certain times, try getting there early or use the higher floors which tend to have fewer people.
- It is best not to leave printing until the last minute as printer queues can be slow, or try printers in other buildings.
- If you need help finding resources there are subject librarians. You can find out who the librarian for your subject is by going on the website.
- When using the library be mindful of which zone you are in. Some areas are allowed occasional talking but others are for complete silence.

## Organisation

- Use Google calendar to keep track of your classes and input any other events.
- Check your email regularly for information from teachers; this is especially important for deadlines and last minute room changes.
- Find a system for organising work and notes that works for you.
- Set regular times for studying so your workload is spread throughout the week.

## Coursework and Exams

- In your first lecture you are often told what week coursework is due so you can plan ahead.
- Ensure you attend the relevant lecture or tutorial as they give you the information and instructions on what is expected for the coursework.
- Keep referring back to the mark scheme.
- It can be helpful to break the work up into steps, and plan time for each component.
- If you need help use the Upgrade service.
- Regularly review notes, rather than revising everything again right before the exam.
- Ensure exam concessions are in place, if necessary.
- Adapt your revision to the type of exam.

## Socialising

Making friends can take time, so do not worry if you do not connect with people straight away.

- You have something in common with everyone in your class, what you are studying! This can be a starting point for conversations.
- Group work can be relaxed and informal, but ensure you stay on task and that everyone contributes equally.
- You can get to know people in your halls. Students often go out together or have meals together.
- There are many societies to meet people with similar interests.
- There are social groups in Oxford for people on the autistic spectrum, see [Afso.org.uk](http://Afso.org.uk).

## Sensory processing

University can be overwhelming at times for anyone, but if you have sensitivities you may be affected by this more than others.

- Identify your triggers and think of what you could do to manage it, such as bringing headphones or sunglasses, sitting in a certain part of the room, or having something to fidget with and help concentrate.
- Try building up your exposure (if an area of campus is loud go for only 10 minutes, the next day 15 minutes, etc).
- Identify quiet areas you can go to such as less busy areas of campus, study rooms, or the chaplaincy.

## Wellbeing

It is important to have a balance of studying and relaxing. University is about learning, but it should also be an enjoyable experience.

- Arrange time to do other hobbies, meet up with friends, explore Oxford, or just rest.
- Try to keep a regular meal and sleep schedule.
- Ask for help if you need it. There are lots of services that can help, such as advisers, chaplaincy, counselling, financial support, etc.