**Annex A Course handbook template**

This template sets the content which should be contained in all course handbooks. The order and format of the handbook is to be determined by individual departments. Additional sections may be added if felt to be useful.

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|  | **Section title** | | **Description / *suggested text*** |
| **1** | **Foreword** | | |
| 1.1 | Statement of coverage | | Explain whom the course handbook is for. A handbook should be provided for each cohort of students (see paragraph 4.4).  Include the following text:  *This handbook applies to students starting [the course in Michaelmas term [20XX]/Final Honour School in Michaelmas term [20xx]]. The information in this handbook may be different for students starting in other years.* |
| 1.2 | Version | | There should be a clear version numbering system in place, i.e. 1.0, 1.1 etc. where minor changes have been made; becoming 2.0 when a major change has been made (see paragraph 4.7). A list of any changes, noting the date of publication of each version, should be included. |
| 1.3 | Disclaimer | | The following text should be included at the start of all handbooks. This wording must not be altered:  *The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available at (insert course specific link). If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations then you should follow the Examination Regulations. If you have any concerns please contact (insert name at department and email address).*  *The information in this handbook is accurate as at [insert date of publication], however it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at (insert link to relevant UG (*[*www.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges*](http://www.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges)*)/PG (*[*www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges*](http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges)*) webpage). If such changes are made the department will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of the changes and students will be informed.* |
| 1.4 | List of contents | | A clear and complete contents page is essential, preferably divided into sections for increased clarity and legibility and with internal hyperlinks for navigation. If the course handbook is large, departments may also wish to consider including an index to the contents. |
| 1.5 | Welcome/Introduction | | This should include:   * a welcome from the Head of Department and/or Course Director * a statement of the purpose of the handbook * links to other key sources of information: department website/WebLearn, Examination Regulations, Examination conventions, Oxford Students website, Student Handbook; also refer to College Handbooks which are available on College websites. |
| 1.6 | Useful department contacts | | Consider including:   * essential academic and support staff contact details * student representatives (or where to find the information) * departmental disability contact(s) * other useful contacts, e.g., IT Services, libraries, and department reception.   For undergraduate joint courses (whether joint honours schools or courses taught across more than one department/faculty), this should include an administrative contact specific to the course, to act as an initial point of contact for students. This might be a specific administrator for the joint course; an administrator in one of the relevant departments/faculties who will triage queries as necessary; or a shared mailbox with a course-specific e-mail address. |
| 1.7 | Buildings/Locations/Maps/ Access | | - |
| 1.8 | Important dates | | Dates of term, key assessment dates etc. |
| **2** | **The course content and structure** (where a handbook covers multiple courses, this section should be repeated for each course) | | |
| 2.1 | Overview | Give a summary of the different awards covered by the handbook.  Include the:   * full title of the award, e.g., Master of Studies in History * FHEQ level and credit rating (where applicable), see the *University awards framework (UAF)* ([academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/university-awards-framework](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/university-awards-framework)) * title of the relevant subject benchmark statement (see <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>) * the length of the course * details of professional accreditation (where applicable) | |
| 2.2 | Course aims | See Annex L of the *Policy and Guidance on new courses and major changes to courses* for guidance on writing course aims ([academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/new-courses](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/new-courses)) | |
| 2.3 | Intended learning outcomes | See Annex L of the *Policy and Guidance on new courses and major changes to courses* for guidance on writing intended course learning outcomes ([academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/new-courses](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/new-courses)) | |
| 2.4 | Course structure/description | There should be a clear description of the overall structure of the course, year by year. Handbooks for FPE should include an overview of the structure of the whole course but may not include all the detail of the FHS. If course information included in an FHS Handbook is different to that provided in the FPE Handbook for that cohort previously, changes should be drawn to students’ attention.  For the specific years of the course the handbook covers the following should be included:   * details of core and optional courses/papers * guidance on choosing options and where to go for further advice. * information on any other options available outside the course/department.   Information should be provided showing how students will be exposed to current, research-informed teaching as well as provided with experience of a research environment. See paragraphs 6.1 to 6.5 of the *Policy and Guidance on UG learning and teaching* ([academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/ug-learning-and-teaching](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/ug-learning-and-teaching)) for further information. | |
| 2.5 | Syllabus | Detailed syllabus information (teaching staff, learning aims, dates and times of lecturers/classes, synopses, reading lists) may be provided in the handbook, in a separate document, or on the department website/WebLearn (link). | |
| **3** | **Teaching and learning** | | |
| 3.1 | Organisation of teaching and learning | | Explain the:   * role of the department in teaching and learning (lectures, seminars, practicals etc.) * role of the colleges in teaching and learning (including tutorials and role of the tutor for UG) * teaching patterns - explain the number of lectures or classes, the number of hours students are expected to spend in practicals, project work, or fieldwork; the normal tutorial pattern for the course or the year in question. Also give information on class sizes where applicable. * timetables or where to find timetable information * (PGT) the role of the supervisor (if general ‘supervision’ is offered beyond specific supervision on a dissertation or project).   For undergraduate handbooks, a tabular representation of the recommended patterns of teaching (RPT) and a subject-specific statement about the purpose of tutorials for the course must be included. See Annex B for further information about presenting RPT, and see paragraphs 4.9 to 4.13 of the *Policy and Guidance on UG learning and teaching* ([academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/ug-learning-and-teaching](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/ug-learning-and-teaching)) for further information about the description of the purpose of tutorials.  Include the following text:  *If you have any issues with teaching or supervision please raise these as soon as possible so that they can be addressed promptly. Details of who to contact are provided in section [x] complaints and appeals.* |
| 3.2 | Practicals (where applicable) | | Explain:   * details of practicals and work required * health and safety in the laboratory * procedure for the submission of practical notebooks etc. * marking of practicals (link to assessment section) and what is regarded as satisfactory completion of practical work; consequences of unsatisfactory completion of practical work. |
| 3.3 | Fieldwork (where applicable) | | Explain:   * the structure and purpose of the activity/activities * whether compulsory/optional * the options available and how to select an option (if applicable) * the likely cost, or if there is a range of costs what that range is and why * sources of financial support * health and safety issues * how fieldwork relates to other course components (prior learning/contribution to examination) |
| 3.4 | Placements/exchange (where applicable) | | Explain clearly what is on offer in terms of placements or exchange opportunities and where to find further information and guidance. For more guidance see the *Policy and Guidance on education with others* ([academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/providing-education-with-others](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/providing-education-with-others)). |
| 3.5 | Projects/dissertation (where applicable) | | Explain:   * the place of project/dissertation within the course * arrangements/procedures for choosing projects/dissertations * supervision arrangements (including to what extent supervisors will provide feedback on draft dissertations or other submitted work) * department specific guidance for writing up the project/dissertation e.g. format, citation style, etc. or refer to guidance elsewhere. |
| 3.6 | Expectations of study and student workload | | State that students are responsible for their own academic progress and explain what is expected of students in terms of their own study – e.g. hours spent in private study both during term and in the vacations – as well as in taught sessions. Information should be included regarding the balance between scheduled contact time and private study with indications provided about the typical and maximum amounts of work expected of students per week. You might include a description of a typical day or week, being clear that this is a guide only and that this will vary between different students. Information should be provided on how students should seek support in relation to unusually heavy workloads. See Section 3 of the *Policy and Guidance on UG learning and teaching* ([academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/ug-learning-and-teaching](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/ug-learning-and-teaching)).  For undergraduate handbooks link to the guidance on paid work on the Oxford Students website ([www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/experience](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/experience)).  For graduate handbooks link to the *Paid work guidelines for Oxford graduate students* ([academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/paid-word-guidelines-graduate-students](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/paid-word-guidelines-graduate-students)). |
| **4** | **Assessment** | | |
| 4.1 | Assessment structure | | Set out the assessment strategy (why you assess the way you do) and structure of the course including the types and weighting of assessment for each part of the course. Provide a link to the relevant *Examination Regulations*. |
| 4.2 | Feedback on learning and assessment | | Describe the opportunities offered for informal feedback. This might include reference to the purpose of tutorials (cross reference to the teaching and learning section above), peer interactions, interactions with department staff etc.  Describe the opportunities offered for formative assessment. This might include an explanation of the role of: tutorial essays, college collections, in class problem sets, peer marking exercises, peer and lecturer feedback on in class presentations etc.  Describe the opportunities offered for feedback on summative assessment. This might include an explanation of the role of: marks, generic feedback on cohort performance through examiner’s reports, anonymised essays or exam answers used in marking exercises etc.  Further guidance on writing this section can be found in the *Policy and Guidance on undergraduate learning and teaching* and the *Policy and Guidance on graduate taught courses* ([academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/a-z-policies-guidance](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/a-z-policies-guidance)) and the OLI resource ‘Formative assessment and feedback’ ([www.learning.ox.ac.uk/support/teaching/resources/assess/](http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/support/teaching/resources/assess/)) |
| 4.3 | Examination conventions | | This section should include an explanation of examination conventions. The following suggested text might be included for this purpose.  *Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how your examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of your award. They include information on: marking scales, marking and classification criteria, scaling of marks, progression, resits, use of viva voce examinations, penalties for late submission, and penalties for over-length work.*  The Examination conventions should be either:   * linked to from this section; * included within this section; or * included as an annex to the handbook.   If Examination conventions are provided by a link, this section should include a statement as to when and how the definitive version will be made available (noting the requirement in clause 8.1 of the *Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations: Part 8* that ‘The conventions (…) shall be published to prospective candidates not less than one whole term before the examination takes place or, where assessment takes place in the first term of a course, at the beginning of that term.’ <https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/Regulation?code=rftcoue-p8aocasopapetoexam>)  If Examination conventions are included within the handbook, this section should include a statement as to whether they are definitive or may be revised prior to Examination, if the latter, information should also be given as to how students will be informed of the revised conventions. |
| 4.4 | Good academic practice and avoiding plagiarism | | This section should include:   * the University definition of plagiarism and link to the Oxford Student’s website guidance on plagiarism ([www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism))   *Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition.*  *Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence.*   * appropriate subject specific advice on plagiarism, including a range of examples * specific guidance on academic good practice and topics such as time management, note-taking, referencing, research and library skills and information literacy and a link to the Oxford Students skills webpage ([www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills)) * include or refer to a style guide to inform students of good referencing practice * expectations regarding good academic practice for online open-book exams |
| 4.5 | Entering for University Examinations | | Indicate subject-specific procedures to be followed, otherwise refer to the Oxford Students website for examination entry and alternative examination arrangements ([www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams)). |
| 4.6 | Examination dates | | These should be provided or linked to where possible, or a provisional timetable included, or an indication when and where timetables are normally available. Refer also to the Oxford Students website ([www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/timetables](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/timetables)) |
| 4.7 | Sitting your in-person examination | | Consider including the following suggested text:  *Practical information and support for sitting in-person exams is provided on the Oxford students website (*[*www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance*](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance)*).*  Include in this section any subject specific policies students may particularly benefit from having their attention drawn to, e.g., with regard to calculators, statute books etc. |
| 4.8 | Sitting your online examination | | Consider including the following suggested text:  *Online exams are taken in Inspera. You must familiarise yourself with the system prior to taking an online exam. There are a wide range of resources to help you on the Oxford Students website (*[*www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/online-exams*](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/online-exams)*).*  *Online exams require you to adhere to the University’s Honour Code (*[*www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/open-book/honour-code*](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/open-book/honour-code)*) and you should read this in advance of any online exams.*  Include in this section any subject specific policies students may particularly benefit from having their attention drawn to, e.g. expectations around use of resources in open-book exams, more detailed expectations/examples of referencing for open-book exams |
| 4.9 | Submitted work | | Deadlines for submitted work should be provided or linked to – calendar date should always be included (alongside term/week/day if using).  Consider including the following suggested text:  *All assessments will be submitted online via Inspera [replace if using another approved platform]. Ensure you are familiar with the online submission process in advance of any deadline. Full information is provided on the Oxford students website (*[*www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/submission*](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/submission)*).* |
| 4.10 | Problems completing assessment | | Consider including the following suggested text:  *There are a number of University processes in place to help you if you find that illness or other personal circumstances are affecting your assessments or if you experience technical difficulties with an online exam or submission. Full information is available on the Oxford students website (*[*www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/problems-completing-your-assessment*](www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/problems-completing-your-assessment)*).* |
| 4.11 | External examiner and Examiners’ reports | | Provide the name, position and institution of the external examiners responsible for the course(s) covered by the handbook. Include the following statement:  *Students are strictly prohibited from contacting external examiners directly. If you are unhappy with an aspect of your assessment you may make a complaint or appeal (see page/section [x]).*  Provide a link to where students can access Examiners’ reports (including the external examiner’s reports) (as required by the *Examinations and Assessments Framework* sections 3.4 and 4.5 ([academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/examiners](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/examiners)) |
| 4.12 | Prizes | | Give details in handbooks or reference to other information sources. A central list of all prizes is at: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding/prizes-and-awards](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding/prizes-and-awards). |
| **5** | **Skills and learning development** | | |
| 5.1 | Academic progress | | UG Handbooks should include an explanation of the division of responsibility between departments and colleges for monitoring academic progress (including the use of OxCORT). Cross-refer students to their college information.  PGT handbooks should include details of who has overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting on student progress (including the use of GSR).  This section should be clear on the extent to which it is appropriate for students to seek advice by email or in person from members of the department who are not directly involved in their teaching or supervision. |
| 5.2 | Learning development and skills | | Explain how students are supported to develop as learners both in terms of academic and transferrable skills.  This could include:   * a summary of the skills students are expected to develop – both academic and transferrable – through the course * existing sections of the course handbook related to ‘how to study’ or links to the same information provided in another document or webpage * details of specific skills training offered by the department or other services including libraries, language centre etc. of relevance to students. * any opportunities for peer mentoring, self-assessment, peer-assessment provided throughout the course |
| 5.3 | Induction | | Details of the induction programme for new students should either be included here, or if available in a separate document/website a link provided. |
| 5.4 | Opportunities for skills training and development | | Skills and other training opportunities offered by the department.  This is particularly important for PGT handbooks and this section should also cover who is responsible for advising students as to which opportunities might be most suitable for them.  Suggested text on central university resources:  *A wide range of information and training materials are available to help you develop your academic skills – including time management, research and library skills, referencing, revision skills and academic writing - through the Oxford Students website* [*http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills*](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills). |
| 5.5 | Opportunities to engage in the department research community (PGT only) | | For PGT handbooks describe what opportunities are provided for students to take part in research seminars or groups, and what access is available to research funds. |
| 5.6 | Employability and careers information and advice | | Explain what employability and careers-related activities are offered by the department or where to find more information and include a link to the relevant page on the Oxford Student website ([www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/experience](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/experience)) and/or the University Careers Service ([www.careers.ox.ac.uk](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk)). |
| **6** | **Student representation, evaluation and feedback** | | |
| 6.1 | Department representation | | Explain the student representation system in the department including the process for selection of course representatives, the committee arrangements (JCC/GJCC or equivalent) and where further information, including course representative contact details, can be found (link to the department website or WebLearn). |
| 6.2 | Division and University representation | | Consider including the following suggested text.  *Student representatives sitting on the Divisional Board are selected through a process organised by the Oxford University Student Union (Oxford SU). Details can be found on the Oxford SU website along with information about student representation at the University level.*  Information on divisional consultative forums should be included where relevant. |
| 6.3 | Opportunities to provide evaluation and feedback | | Explain how the department uses feedback from University wide surveys.  Explain local feedback mechanisms in place – course evaluation questionnaires, open meetings, etc – and how the information is analysed and responded to.  The following text should be included describing University wide feedback mechanisms.  *Students on full-time and part-time matriculated courses are surveyed once per year on all aspects of their course (learning, living, pastoral support, college) through the Student Barometer. Previous results can be viewed by students, staff and the general public at:* [*www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/student-engagement?wssl=1*](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/student-engagement?wssl=1).  *Final year undergraduate students are surveyed instead through the National Student Survey. Results from previous NSS can be found at* [*www.unistats.com*](http://www.unistats.com)*.* |
| **7** | **Student life and support** | | |
| 7.1 | Who to contact for help | | Explain the roles of the department and colleges regarding academic and pastoral support.  What, if anything, to do if you are ill or otherwise unable to attend departmental classes, lectures, practicals etc.  For information relating to the wider university consider including the following text.  *Every college has their own systems of support for students, please refer to your College handbook or website for more information on who to contact and what support is available through your college.*  *Details of the wide range of sources of support available more widely in the University are available from the Oxford Students website (*[*www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare*](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare)*), including in relation to mental and physical health and disability.* |
| 7.2 | Complaints and appeals | | See Annex C for text to be included. |
| 7.3 | Student societies | | Give details of relevant student societies at Oxford or to student membership of national subject bodies. |
| 7.4 | Policies and regulations | | Consider including the following suggested text.  *The University has a wide range of policies and regulations that apply to students. These are easily accessible through the A-Z of University regulations, codes of conduct and policies available on the Oxford Students website* [*www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/regulations/a-z*](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/regulations/a-z)*.*  Here, or at an alternative location in the handbook, students’ attention should be drawn to the *Policy on recording lectures by students*  (located here: [academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/recording-lectures-other-teaching-sessions](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/policies/recording-lectures-other-teaching-sessions)) |
| **8** | **Facilities** | | |
| 8.1 | Social spaces and facilities | | i.e. cafes, common rooms etc. |
| 8.2 | Workspace | | Particularly for PGT Handbooks |
| 8.3 | Libraries/museums | | Introduction to the relevant library and museum facilities available. |
| 8.4 | IT | | Clearly indicate what facilities and training are provided by the department (and if these are ancillary to other course activities or specially provided). Mention other sources such as IT Services. |
| 8.5 | Experimental facilities/laboratories (if applicable) | | Location of laboratories or other experimental facilities and their abbreviations, access arrangements / restrictions (or link to further information) |