

Statement on the overall Oxford student experience in 2020-21 during COVID-19

Purpose: The University of Oxford and colleges believe that enriching extracurricular activities are as important as ever during COVID-19. Whether organised or informal, in-person or online, these activities form an integral part of the overall Oxford student experience. Each student's own Oxford experience will be influenced by their course, their department/faculty and in most cases their college, their interests, activities and friends, and their own personal circumstances. By bringing together people with similar interests (often transcending membership of a particular college or academic subject) they support students' physical and mental health and counter the risk of loneliness. Optional activities are also valuable in enabling students to develop new or existing skills and interests, and explore future career paths.

The University and colleges are working in partnership with students to facilitate as high-quality and wide-ranging a student experience as possible during the pandemic. Plans are in place to adapt provision and operate flexibly in line with changes in Government guidelines, in order to support the student experience while protecting the health of the whole Oxford community. Given the uncertainties of COVID-19, it is important for us to acknowledge that students will need to adjust their expectations of how their extracurricular life will take place. Student services, clubs and societies are adapting their activities in creative ways: as a minimum, activities and services of many, if not all, types will be able to take place online, as happened successfully in Trinity term 2020. The [Student Life webpage](#) within the [Coronavirus student webpage](#) provides up-to-date information.

This statement has been produced by the Student Experience Co-ordination Group, under the aegis of Silver Group's Michaelmas Co-ordination Group. It brings together the different strands of an Oxford student experience, to articulate their value and set out how they are being supported and developed for the circumstances of 2020-21. It complements the [Expectations of Teaching and Assessment in Michaelmas Term 2020](#).

- 1. Educational provision:** The Oxford educational experience is characterised by a personalised approach with a strong focus on tutorials or supervisions and high levels of personalised feedback and support, as detailed in the [Expectations of Teaching and Assessment in Michaelmas Term 2020](#). All students will have frequent academic engagement with tutors or supervisors, available in-person as far as possible. Our educational planning in the current COVID-19 landscape has sought to ensure we can take a flexible and inclusive approach to teaching and supporting learning, resilient to changes in prevailing circumstances.
- 2. Libraries:** [Oxford's libraries](#) represent a crucial part of the student learning experience, with over 100 libraries across colleges, departments/faculties and the Bodleian's research libraries. These are accessible in a number of ways. Opening-hours and reading-spaces are subject to restrictions, but slots for reading can be booked in many libraries. Scan-and-deliver and click-and-collect services are supplementing access to reading material, alongside the increased availability of online resources. Students will be supported through Live-Chat, online and in-person training seminars, and bookable consultations with subject specialists.
- 3. Student wellbeing and mental health:** It is recognised that anxiety and concerns about the pandemic are at heightened levels for a wide range of reasons. Student and staff safety remain our highest priority, informing all our planning to maintain as safe a study and residential environment as possible. The University has made commitments through its

Student Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy to further strengthen the central provision of specialist welfare services, and additional resources are being added to increase capacity. Support and welfare services are available to students in residence and those studying remotely, including for students who need to [self-isolate](#) on arrival in Oxford or during their studies: Oxford Student Union is also providing [self-isolation tips and tricks](#). While most [central welfare specialist provision](#) remains available through online and virtual modes of delivery, work continues to determine how aspects of provision more suited to face-to-face or in-person engagement can be delivered. College welfare provision remains a key component of support and students in colleges can access this, whether living in or out. Oxford Student Union offers an independent, confidential and free [advice service](#) for students wanting further support or advice. Students of many faiths will find [religious groups and societies](#) in Oxford ready to welcome them.

4. **College life:** The college environment is often at the heart of students' social experience. Colleges have re-organised their [accommodation, catering and other elements of practical support](#) provided by dedicated and experienced college staff, to ensure that these important elements of student life can continue. Colleges understand the value of the community experience they offer, and are doing what they can to offer as full a range of social activities as possible, in line with COVID-19 safety requirements. However, colleges face different constraints due to the physical layout of their estate and so the scope they have to offer different types of social activities will vary.
5. **Accommodation:** Many students live in college buildings, both historic and modern, and enjoy the social aspects of these multi-disciplinary academic communities. Some students live in the University's dedicated [graduate accommodation](#). Students in these types of accommodation are being grouped into 'households', enabling social interaction and use of shared facilities. Whether in University, college or private accommodation, support for self-isolating students will be offered by college staff, through telephone contact. Specific coronavirus-related information for [college accommodation](#) and [university accommodation](#) has been published on the following topics:
 - College accommodation and arrangements for 'households'
 - Arrangements for early/late arrival, quarantine and self-isolation support
 - College catering, social spaces and common rooms
6. **Sport:** The importance of physical activity and sport at all levels, from novice to elite, has never been more relevant for wellbeing and social engagement. While online and virtual provision through [Active Anywhere](#) will continue (offering a suitable alternative if in-person activity is not possible) we remain committed to enabling as much [sport](#) as possible in COVID-safe University and college facilities. Outdoor sports are already underway, with competitive team provision in place, and with college and University facilities re-opening, including the swimming pool. Formally organised University and college level sports with approved risk assessments are more likely to be able to take place than casual sport, which falls under the Government rules on social gatherings.
7. **Student clubs and societies:** The University has [hundreds of student-led groups](#) covering a wide range of interests, cultures and activities. These clubs and societies provide a focus for those with shared interests to come together, gain new skills and meet new people: they make an important contribution to student wellbeing. The creativity and resilience of student groups seen from the start of the pandemic is set to continue. The Oxford Student Union have developed [a range of guidance tools](#), including interactive resources, live webinars and [step-by-step guides](#) to manage events and activities in COVID-safe ways. The

University has provided a [risk guidance tool](#) for in-person student activities, so that all can be reassured that the appropriate safety measures are in place.

8. **Performing arts:** There are scores of college and pan-University groups for music, drama and other performing arts, whose activities are knowledgeably and enthusiastically led by students and staff and whose performances – to the highest levels – are enjoyed within the University and the wider community. Projects are being conceived or creatively adapted to fit the physical constraints engendered by COVID-19, in line with University guidance on [music](#) and [drama](#).
9. **Language learning:** The [Language Centre](#) offers teaching across 11 modern languages – from intensive short courses to in-depth three-term programmes – as well as access to online and physical resources and the opportunity to find a language partner for skills practice. The Centre's Academic English courses can help improve the academic writing and communication of those for whom English is not their first language. In Michaelmas term all courses are taking place fully online, including live weekly small group sessions.
10. **Careers:** Alongside their study and social life, many students will want to explore their career options, including further study. The [Careers Service](#) is offering its broad span of [services](#) virtually/online, including a full programme of careers advice, virtual careers fairs and employer careers presentations, skills programmes and internship programmes and mentoring.