
Your guide to Oxford



<https://oxforduniversityafricasociety.com/>

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DISCLAIMER

The content in this document does not claim to be representative of the views and/or opinions of the Africa Oxford Initiative, the Oxford Africa Society, the University of Oxford, or any other official entity. While we have solicited input from some students, we don't claim to represent the collective view of all students as they are a diverse group with differing opinions.

We cannot guarantee that all the information in this guide is up to date. Things change regularly and it is up to you to double-check.

Who are we?

This document was initially compiled by the Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOx) and the Oxford University Africa Society (AfriSoc), with inputs from current students and alumni and is currently being amended by the 2022/2023 Committee. AfOx and AfriSoc have a longstanding relationship based on a foundation of shared values that puts Africa at the centre of all activities. AfOx and AfriSoc collaborate on outreach and access programmes for prospective African students at Oxford as well as academic support and community building for African students once they are in Oxford.

The Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOx)

AfOx is a cross-university platform that facilitates equitable research collaborations between researchers based in African institutions and the University of Oxford. At AfOx, we also recognise the role that African graduates and researchers play in contributing to the future of the continent and the wider world. For this reason, we work with departments, colleges and scholarship committees across the University to maximise opportunities for prospective African applicants and support current African students at Oxford.

The Oxford University Africa Society (AfriSoc)

AfriSoc is an official student club of the University and is run entirely by students. The Society has three main aims: to build a vibrant and supportive community for African students, to provide a platform for African issues, and to bring together people from all backgrounds who share a desire for positive change in Africa. To this end, AfriSoc hosts several social, academic and extramural activities throughout the year to help you make the most of your time at Oxford.

Oxford Vocabulary

Battels

Your college's system for billing you. Some colleges allow you to charge things like printing, meals, and drinks from the college bar to your battels. And then they send the bill to your email. This may differ from college to college.

Bops

Big open parties

DPhil

Doctor of Philosophy, PhD

Formal Hall

Fancy meals at your college. You are usually required to wear your academic gown to these meals.

Gloucester Green

Pronounced "gluh-ster green" and is a main bus stop for several bus routes including the Oxford Tube to London, the O2 Airline to Gatwick and London Heathrow Airports.

GP Surgery

This is the place where you will have registered to consult with and be treated by a general practitioner or a nurse any time that you need to (see page 14 for details)

High Table

It's a table in the dining hall that is raised on a platform overlooking the family-style tables in the rest of the hall. The high table is usually for fellows of the college and their guests.

JCR

Junior common room. The college undergraduate society.

Junior Dean

Often a postgraduate student who is responsible for the welfare and discipline of students in a college.

Magdalen College

Pronounced "maudlin"

Matriculation

A mandatory ceremony that marks your formal admission to the University. You wear your full subfusc and walk to the Sheldonian Theatre with your college cohort where the Vice Chancellor will give a speech in Latin for about 15 minutes.

MCR

Middle common room. The college postgraduate society.

Michaelmas

The first of three terms of the academic year (Oct – Dec). It is pronounced, “mickle-miss”. And it is followed by the easier-to-pronounce Hilary (Jan - March) and Trinity (April – June) terms.

NHS

National Health Service – the publicly funded healthcare system of the UK. When you applied for a visa, you paid an immigration health surcharge which allows you access to all the benefits of the NHS (i.e.: no fee to consult a GP, subsidised dentistry).

Noughth week

The week before the start of the full 8-week term (week 0)

Porters

College staff are usually located at the entrance of the college and are in charge of the practical running of the college (i.e.: mail, keys). They don't assume many of the roles of, for example, a hotel porter who might carry your luggage etc.

Subfusc

An academic dress that you have to wear for matriculation, graduation and exams. See this university page for [subfusc rules](#). You are advised to bring most items (like a white shirt, dark trousers/skirts etc.) with you. And you can buy the gown and ribbon second-hand or from one of the [gown shops in Oxford](#).

Stash

University or college merchandise like hoodies or mugs, swag

Welfare Officer

A peer counsellor

Worcester College

Pronounced “wuh-ster”

Pandemics/ Epidemics

We do not wish for a pandemic or an epidemic. However, these circumstances are often beyond us whether as a society or as a college or University. We have provided below the guidance that was applicable during the recent Coronavirus pandemic that shook the world. Notwithstanding, please note that face masks and isolations are no longer required. Although, this may change from time to time – please visit [the UK's travel advice page for the latest guides](#). Please see below the applicable [guide for Coronavirus](#).

The coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on the Oxford student experience. And although things are opening up, there are still restrictions and regulations in place that you should be aware of. On this page, we would like to draw your attention to some of the national and University guidelines and provisions around the coronavirus pandemic.

Masks and social distancing

Since 19 July 2021, there is no longer a legal requirement to wear face coverings in indoor settings or on public transport. However, it is strongly encouraged to continue to practice these protective measures to ensure that we do not put the at-risk and vulnerable populations of our community at higher risk of being immunocompromised. As the pandemic is ongoing and everchanging, it is best to consult the [University status and response to COVID-19 page](#). You are always encouraged to maintain social distancing.

Have a look at this page for more details on [national guidelines](#) related to COVID-19 restrictions. There is also a [student coronavirus health page](#) with more information from the University with regular updates. Please consult your college for college-specific guidelines.

Self-Isolating and Hotel Quarantine

International students will be required to self-isolate for 14 days on arrival in the UK (unless the country that you are travelling from is [exempt](#)). Please contact your college as some provide support for students needing to self-isolate, particularly in college or University accommodation.

You can use delivery services like [Ocado](#) or grocery store deliveries ([Tesco](#) and [Sainsbury's](#)) to get essentials. Be mindful that most have a minimum spend (i.e.: £40 on Ocado) and the delivery slots fill up quite quickly so you might have to wait a while for your delivery. You can also find some essentials like bread, milk and vegetables from Marks & Spencer and the Co Op from UberEats and Deliveroo.

Some international students travelling to England from a country that is on the red list will be required to quarantine in a hotel for 10 days on arrival. The cost of quarantine will be prohibitively high for many people. The current University advice is to apply for a residency exemption if you find yourself in this situation. As the rules and restrictions on travel constantly changing, keep tabs on emails you receive from the University and your college and [check the UK government guidelines regularly](#).

COVID-19 Testing

The University's testing service is now open for students. If you have symptoms, you can [book a test online](#). You will need your NHS number to access this service and your GP surgery can help with this.

Before you attend some college and University events, you might be asked to take a rapid lateral flow COVID-19 test. You can ask your college for these tests, and they will provide you with them for free. Or [you can order the tests online from the NHS](#) and they will be delivered to your house.

Travelling out of the UK

With changes in guidelines, check online on both [the UK's travel advice page](#) and the country of destination's travel requirements to see if you require a COVID-19 test or will need to quarantine/self-isolate. Contact your GP and college to see if there may be a way for them to assist you with your travel preparations.

Accessibility

For students with disabilities, there may be additional challenges and barriers associated with being a new student at Oxford. There are a few avenues for support and accommodation options available for students living with disabilities and/or those who have accessibility needs:

- Each **college** has a disability office which is often one of the first points of contact regarding accommodation and accessibility for students who need it
- The [University Disability Advisory Service \(DAS\)](#) is a university-wide service that is made up of a team of advisors that provide information and other support services (financial, academic etc) to students with disabilities or medical conditions. You are encouraged to register your disability with the University. They will ask you for a lot of documentation, but it will be worth it to protect yourself.
- There should also be a **Disability Coordinator in your faculty**. This will be your point person for discussing all your accessibility needs related to your programme of study.

Some more resources:

- The [Oxford Student Union Disabilities Campaign](#) offers documents on language guidelines, the accessibility of events etc
- The [University's access guide](#) has information about the accessibility of physical spaces such as departments, libraries and other buildings
- The [Oxford Accessibility Project](#) has resources on the accessibility of Oxford colleges and social venues for those who use wheelchairs

You can also download **the SociAbility app**. It makes it easy to find detailed accessibility information for social venues and shops. All you have to do is search the map for places nearby to see whether they are accessible. You can also contribute to the crowdsourced database if no information exists yet.

By moving away from vague labels like 'accessible' or 'inaccessible', SociAbility provides users with the key details that they need to judge accessibility, in context, for themselves! Everywhere, every time.

Click [here](#) to download it from the Apple app store

Click [here](#) to download it from the Google Play Store

Getting Around Oxford

Getting around Oxford is quite easy. There are buses, a well-connected train station and local taxi services. Having a car is not at all necessary. These are some of the ways that you can get around day-to-day:

Walking

Oxford is a relatively small city. You can walk from one end of the city (Cowley) to another (Jericho) in about 40 minutes. Depending on how far you live from the city centre, your college and your department, you can just walk.

Taking the bus

Buses are another great way to get around. You can use Google Maps to plan your trips and get real-time information about where the bus is. A single trip may be up to £2 and a return is £3 - £4. If you plan to take the bus regularly, [order a bus card](#) and you can activate it and top it up with weekly, monthly and yearly bus passes online. Most (if not all) buses also accept contactless bank cards. If you do not want to get the card, there is the option of a 24-hour ticket which may cost up to £4.30 and can be used as many times as possible in 24 hours. Please be aware that due to the rising costs in the UK, these prices may change.

Cycling

Cycling is one of the quickest ways to get around Oxford. Here are some tips if you plan to cycle while you're here:

- You should budget around £180 for a new bicycle
- You need to buy a heavy D-Lock (bicycle theft is real), as well as a helmet and lights (for safety – it is also illegal to cycle at night without lights). Look out for sales at the beginning of the year from your college.
- You should also register your bicycle with your college. Find out how to do this from the porter's lodge or the reception of your college.
- You can buy a second-hand bike online from Gumtree and Facebook marketplace (for as cheap as £50). They may need a lot of fixing though.
 - You can get a £50 voucher towards the cost of repairing your bicycle [on the government's 'fix your bike' voucher scheme](#)
 - The [Broken Spoke Co-Op DIY Workshop](#) provides space where you can fix your bike
 - Walton Street Cycles (Jericho) sells second-hand bikes – this probably won't be as cheap as £50 but is also unlikely to need as much fixing as one bought on gumtree.
- Want to learn how to cycle or get more comfortable cycling on Oxford streets? [The Broken Spoke Co-Op](#) offers lessons. The University of Oxford students can get up to six hours free.

Quote from Ndjodi, a former Namibian DPhil Law student:

"If you have a bike north of £200 – best to insure it from theft. Often £5 a month. You can insure with other items like phone and laptop."

Cabs/Taxis

There are also several taxi options available that tend to charge between £5 and £10 within Oxford depending on distance, traffic and choice of a taxi company. Some options for cabs are:

- [001](#): you can call for a taxi using this number 01865 240000 or by downloading the app [here](#).

- [Royal Cars](#): you can call for a taxi using this number 01865 777 333 or by downloading the app [here](#).
- You can book a cab using the Uber app. They have partnered with local cabs that you can order using the Uber platform.
- There are also regular taxis that you can take, mostly found in Gloucester Green Square, the corner of Cornmarket and High Street and by the train station

When taking a taxi please make sure to confirm what payment option you would like. Most taxis have cash or card, but some only take cash. If you are catching a taxi from the street, make sure to ask whether they have a card machine or only take cash.

Quote from Nteranya, a former Congolese MPhil Development Studies student:

“Taxis are helpful when you urgently need to get somewhere but be careful as some destinations may require you to go around the city and not through it. Also avoid peak times, such as early mornings or 3 pm when primary and secondary school students are being dropped off or picked up from school.”

If you want to travel a little bit further outside of Oxford, see the section on “things to do” on page 19.

Mobile Phones and Sims

Luckily, there is WiFi pretty much *everywhere* around the city. This means that you will not need to use much data on your cell phone. For times when you're out of range or need to call a UK number, these are your options:

You can order a sim card that fits any phone **for free** from any network provider. On these networks, you can get a free sim and don't have to pay anything until you use it:

- [3](#)
- [GiffGaff](#)
- [Lebara](#)
- [Vodafone](#)

These networks only offer "sim packs": you can still order a sim card **for free** but once you receive and activate it, you will have to pay the amount specified on the pack to use it (and sometimes this is a monthly commitment):

- [EE](#)
- [O2](#)
- [Virgin Mobile](#)
- [Voxi](#)

Quote from Lillian, a South African DPhil Geography student:

"I think you should start small and see what your data needs are instead of committing to a plan that you won't use. I have a prepaid sim. I spend £10 every six weeks on 4GB of data – which comes with unlimited calls and texts. I find that this is enough because I only have to use data when I am out of a WiFi zone."

Banking and Money

You can open a bank account with a traditional brick & mortar High Street bank, an online bank or both.

If you want to open a bank account with **Barclay's, HSBC, Lloyd's or NatWest**, then this is a checklist of all the documents that you will need to have on hand before you go:

- Passport and student visa and/or your biometric residency permit
- A stamped and signed letter from your college stating that you are enrolled
- UK home address (you should use your college address regardless of whether you are living in college or not)

Quote from Katongo, Zambian DPhil Social Policy student:

“It is best to visit the bank as soon as possible. You probably won't get to open an account on your first visit. You will be asked to make an appointment and come back at a later date.”

Quote from Nteranya, former Congolese MPhil Development Studies student:

“You may be offered a student account by the bank. This has benefits like student discounts. However, it also has a fee. You should be able to get a regular, “everyday” checking account that is free. Do your research, ask lots of questions and choose the one that's best for you.”

You can also open an account from a bank that is entirely online. **Monzo** seems to be the most popular among students. However, there are others – see [here](#) for a comparison.

All you need to do to open a bank account is:

- Download the app
- Follow the instructions to sign up: they will ask for pictures of your passport ID, email address, phone number and home address (again, use your college address)
- Take a selfie video to confirm your identity
- Tell them where to send the card. It will arrive in a couple of days.
- Activate the card on the app once you've received it in the post

Quote from Shamila, a former South African MBA student:

“Get Monzo, even if you have an account with a High Street bank. I absolutely love Monzo... Best thing about Monzo is that you have unlimited free swipes in any county.”

Want to send or receive money from abroad? You can probably do that with whatever bank you have an account with. But these are some other services that you can use which might be more affordable:

- [ACE Money Transfer](#)
- [Azimo](#)
- [Western Union](#)
- [World Remit](#)
- [Xoom](#) (a PayPal Service)

Shopping

There are a few things that you will need to buy to settle into your new home. There are lots of [charity shops around Oxford](#) where you can get pre-owned items (from cookware to winter jackets) for really cheap. You can also find some free stuff on [Freecycle](#). But there are, of course, more places where you can buy what you need:

If you are looking for **kitchenware**, you can buy it from:

- Sainsbury's (the one in Westgate Mall)
- Tesco (the ones on Cowley Road and Magdalen Street)
- Argos
- Flying Tiger Copenhagen
- Amazon
- Templar's Square (Shops here may be cheaper, but it is quite a distance out of town)

If you are living in college accommodation, you should have been able to order **bedding** from your college. But if you haven't, aren't living in college or just want another set, then you can buy some from:

- Primark, Argos, H&M and Amazon – are the most affordable places to get bedding from.
- Debenhams, John Lewis and Marks & Spencer – these stores sell bedding and other house items that are good quality but very pricey

September and October tend to be rainy months and the temperature starts to drop as autumn turns into winter. You are going to need really warm and waterproof **clothing**. You can get these from one of the charity shops, online and at many of the shops in Westgate and the Clarendon Centre.

Quote from Shamila, a former South African MBA student:

“You don't need to splurge on new clothes. There are just a few essentials for winter: comfortable waterproof shoes (my everyday shoes are the Nike Air Force 1s), warm undergarments, about 2 really warm jackets and a waterproof jacket or raincoat (a lightweight, long-length one is best).”

You have many options when it comes to shopping for **food**. Typically, students spend between £30 and £50 on groceries each week.

- There is likely to be a regular grocery store near you like a Tesco, Sainsbury's or Food Co-Operative. These grocery stores also have loyalty cards where you can earn points and save on future shops.
- **Tahmid's** (on Cowley Road) is a great grocery store for buying South Asian and African ingredients. Cowley Road is also the place to find Halal food - see this [map of Halal eats in Oxford](#).
- There are outdoor markets all over Oxford where you can buy delicious, prepared food featuring cuisines from many parts of the world as well as fresh fruits and vegetables
 - The **Gloucester Green Market** is held every Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday (and more recently, on Fridays – as a trial). Fresh fruits and vegetables are sold on Saturdays. If you go in the afternoon (from about 14:00, they might be discounted).
 - You can shop for your weekly staples of bread, milk and eggs as well as a range of other products from the **East Oxford Farmer's Market**. This market is held every Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm

- **Summertown Farmer's Market** is held every Sunday from 10am to 2pm along Banbury Road in the North of Oxford
- **North Parade Market** is held every 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month from 10 am to 2 pm

Quote from Kelly, former Cameroonian-Dutch-British MPhil Development Studies student:

“Many places have student discounts. But you have to ask. Take your student card with you everywhere you go and make a habit of asking whether there is a student discount. Websites like [Totum](#), [StudentBeans](#) and [MyUniDays](#) also provide student discounts on a range of products like clothes, tech and food.”

Taking Care of Yourself

Navigating the NHS

Consultations

In the first week or two of your arrival, your college will help you register with a **general medical practice**. If you are not happy with the practice that has been assigned to you, you can register with a new one. The practice that you have registered with is the office that you will call if you are feeling unwell.

Some colleges have **college nurses** available on the college site whom you can see without an appointment. So be sure to check this with your college when you arrive. For more information, see [university guidance on doctors and nurses](#).

For **dental and optician** appointments, you have to pay a fee for a consultation. You can expect to pay about £22 for a regular check-up at the dentist. [Studental](#) (now known as Damira) at Oxford Brookes University in Headington is the recommended dental practice.

For optician appointments, you will generally have to pay £20 - £25 for an eyesight test. You will also have to pay for any corrective eyewear (i.e.: glasses or contact lenses). It is recommended to get these organised in your home country and bring them with you.

Prescriptions and Pharmacies

Many prescriptions on the NHS are either free or subsidised. Boots and Superdrug are the main pharmacies where you can pick up prescriptions as well as over-the-counter medication. Your GP will ask where your nearest pharmacy is.

EMERGENCIES:

999

This is the emergency number in the UK for police, fire and ambulances. You should only call the emergency number if:

- there's a medical emergency – someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk.
- there's a fire.
- a crime is taking place, for example, an assault or burglary.

111

This is the number that you call when you need medical advice but it is not an emergency. You should call the number if:

- you need medical help fast but it's not an emergency.
- You think you might need hospital treatment.
- you don't have a doctor or it's out of surgery hours.
- you need health advice and are not sure what to do next.

Support for victims of sexual violence

Sexual assault is broadly understood as “any sexual acts committed against someone without the person’s freely given consent” – this refers to a wide range of harm. If you experience any form of sexual violence, these are some of the support services you can turn to:

- University of Oxford [Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service](#)
- Oxford Community Support:
 - [Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre](#)
 - [Victim Assistance Services of Oxford County](#)
 - For male victims: [Survivor’s UK](#)
 - Includes specific support for queer folk: [It Happens Here](#)

Mental Health

If you’re feeling down while you are in Oxford, you are not alone. Academics, the weather, feeling lonely as well as various other factors can negatively affect your mental health. Here, we give you an overview of some of the support that you can access and resources you might find helpful:

- Check what kind of support your college offers. Each college has a welfare officer, junior dean or senior student (all usually senior DPhil students) whom you can talk to about your wellbeing
- Your college nurse and GP can do basic health assessments, discuss and prescribe medication and refer you to the NHS mental health services
- The [Student Counselling Service](#) provides free, short-term (about 4 sessions per student) services. In addition to individual counselling, they also offer workshops, and group counselling and have a number of supportive resources. See here for information about [making an appointment](#).
- Some colleges and departments offer free mindfulness courses to students. They are quite expensive to sign up for so if you are interested, sign up and take advantage of these free sessions. However, while mindfulness and meditation may promote wellbeing and insight, it is not a replacement for counselling and therapy – especially for issues that might be longstanding, complex or urgent.

Many students (and especially students who are coming to Oxford from warmer climates) experience **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)**. The winter days in Oxford are very short – it can start to get dark by 3 pm. This can affect your mood significantly. The NHS recommends that people take vitamin D supplements. And you can also invest in a SAD lamp (a lamp that simulates the sunlight that’s missing in the darker winter months) for about £30.

Quote from Claudia, a former Kenyan LLB Senior Status student:

“Getting through Oxford is not an easy feat. It is therefore necessary that you actively take care of your mental health through whatever form of self-care works for you. The Oxford counselling department is very responsive when it comes to helping students deal with their mental health issues, be it through therapy, meditation, or mindfulness classes. There are also opportunities to do fun activities like yoga and Zumba, and of course, most colleges have gyms so you can get your endorphins activated.”

Sexual Health

Whatever decisions you make about having sex (or not) as a University student are perfectly fine as long as all parties involved are consenting and safe. To help with this below is all the essential information you need to know about safe and healthy sex:

[Sexual Health Oxfordshire](#) offers a wide variety of services – including STI testing and treatment, help for those who have experienced sexual assault as well as advice on and prescriptions for contraception. Different clinics offer different sexual health services. The Oxford (Churchill) and East Oxford (Rectory Centre) are the two clinics that are the closest for Oxford students. Find out which one would be the best for you to visit [here](#).

Contraception

- Many colleges offer free **condoms**. Ask your welfare officer where and how you can access these. If you are under 25, you can get condoms from the [Safety C-Card scheme](#) that allows you to collect free condoms from various locations in Oxford.
- If you were assigned female at birth, there are many **long-term options** that you can choose from. The best place to find out more about these is from a nurse at the GP with which you are registered and from the sexual health clinics listed above. If you decide on contraception, you can get a prescription that you can collect for free from a pharmacy you choose.
- You can get the **emergency hormonal contraceptive** (“morning after pill”) for free from your GP or any sexual health clinic. If you are over 21, you can buy it from a pharmacy too.

Consent

- Each year, colleges and common rooms hold **consent workshops** during orientation (week 0). **You are strongly encouraged to attend them.**
- The Oxford Africa Society will also be hosting a consent workshop. Be on the lookout for more details.
- The Oxford Student Union usually holds face-to-face consent workshops, but they may not be possible due to the pandemic restrictions. However, the University has made an [online consent programme](#) available.

Sexual health support for the LGBTQIA+ community

The Jolly Farmers (20 Paradise St, Oxford OX1 1LD) hosts free confidential drop-ins with the Terrence Higgins Trust Oxfordshire every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the Month to chat with a trained professional (no appointment required)

Issues you can discuss:

- PrEP and PEP
- HIV and other STIs
- Home Testing
- Relationships
- Signposting other services
- General Sexual Health

Gyms

College Gyms

Some colleges have small gyms on the college site. They are free to members of the college or may require a stipend membership and maintenance fee. You might be able to sign up for a gym in a college for which you are not a member for a fee. You will need to find out from the college itself.

Iffley Road Gym

This is the main University gym. Depending on the facilities you want to use, the amount you pay will vary from about £55 per year to £184 per year. If your college does not have an onsite gym, they could provide you with a free or discounted membership at the Iffley gym. To join, you need to take a passport photo and your Bod card to the gym.

University Club

This is the centre of postgrad activity. The building has a small gym that you can join for about £45 per year. To use the gym, you need to [sign up](#) to be a member of the club – which is free for postgraduate students.

Students often complain about these gyms being small and getting crowded quite quickly – especially during peak hours. So many opt to join a private gym. There are two main options in the city centre:

[Buzz Gym](#) is inside the Westgate shopping mall. Student membership is £19.99 per month and a once-off £5 joining fee. Make sure you click the drop-down menu and select ‘STUDENT MEMBERSHIP’ near the bottom of the list.

[Pure Gym](#) is near the Westgate shopping mall. Student membership is £22.99 per month and a once-off £10 joining fee. However, you can only access this membership through [UNiDAYS](#). They have various types of membership options available on their site (i.e.: you can get an off-peak pass, or you can pay less monthly if you commit to a 6-month membership).

Both Buzz Gym and Pure Gym are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. And both have flexible membership options.

Quote from Ngoni, a Zimbabwean DPhil Engineering Science student:

“In my early Oxford days, fitness wasn’t always a part of my routine, and I was convinced it was for good reason: it was too cold, too expensive, I was too busy, the gym was too far and so on. However, building my routine around a consistent fitness regimen has immensely benefited other areas of my wellbeing and made my time here more fulfilling by giving me a healthy body and mind to relish everything Oxford has to offer. My gym membership is my most worthwhile monthly expense.”

You don’t have to join a gym. Oxford has plenty of open and green spaces that are great for **outdoor exercise**. University Parks, Port Meadow, Christ Church Meadow and South Park are popular options for jogging sites.

Joining a sports team is another way to get exercise. You can find a list of all [sports activities offered at the University](#). You can check whether your college has any sports teams as well where you can participate in weekly intramural soccer, netball or tennis.

Barbers and Salons

Like most things when it comes to moving to Oxford, the cost of doing your hair is about to increase exponentially. And most people find it difficult to find hairdressers that can work with type 4C hair. We have tried our best to make that easier for you.

Barbers

- Best Barbers: 138b Oxford Road, OX4 2DU
- The University Barbershop (for Afro/4C hair, ask for Junior): 10 Turl Street, OX1 3DN
- Nationwide Barbers: 368 Cowley Road, OX4 2BY
- Regina Hair Salon: 211a Cowley Road, OX4 1XF

Haircuts seem to cost between £11 and £20. On average though, most people seem to pay about £13 for a haircut.

Salons

- Boss Chic: 59 – 63 Cowley Road, OX4 1HR
- Salkamja Hair: 31 High Street, Kidlington, OX5 2DH
- The Braids Factory: Go to their Instagram page [@thebraidsfactory](#) where you can book a mobile appointment
- Regina Hair Salon: 211a Cowley Road, OX4 1XF

These salons offer everything from Afro hair products and braids to wig services and hair dying. The prices will probably differ at each salon depending on what you are looking for. But to give you an idea, shoulder-length and regular-thickness box braids are about £60 - £80.

The cost and quality of haircare in Oxford will probably differ quite a lot from what you expect and are used to in your home country. Many students come to Oxford with long-lasting protective hairstyles such as braids and wigs. Others either do their hair themselves or ask friends to do it for them. Some hairdressers do braids from their homes for usually much cheaper than the salons. If you ask in [the AfriSoc Telegram Group](#), people are usually happy to share their contacts.

Social Activities

Eating Out

Going out for a meal with people you've met in college or your department is a great way to get to know people and explore the city. Depending on your tastes, you have a lot of options. This section highlights just a few of the options available.

- The food scene in Oxford is quite diverse. Restaurant meals usually cost between £10 and £15. Check out this [Oxford Food Guide](#) for a comprehensive list of what is available.
- There are two restaurants which serve mainly West and East African food:
 - [Heat African](#) on Cowley Road
 - **Linda's Kitchen** delivers jollof rice with a side every Friday. Place your orders before the end of day Thursday from [Home Away African Kitchen](#) on Facebook.
- You can also go to your own or another college's **formal dinner**. The price and quality of the dinner differ from college to college, but you could get a four-course meal for approximately £10. Some colleges offer members one free dinner per term or year. It is worth finding out how your college organises the tickets for formal dinners and then inviting your friends from different colleges over for a fancy dinner.

Things to do

Oxford is a beautiful city with stunning architecture, history and culture. There is a myriad of things to do including visiting ancient and modern Oxford colleges, fascinating museums and galleries, and plenty of parks and gardens! This [website](#) provides a great list of things you can do in Oxford.

You can, of course, also do things outside of Oxford. In the UK, you can venture to London, Bath, the Cotswolds, Glasgow and Cardiff. Or you can see the rest of Europe. Here are some things to consider if you would like to travel inside and outside the UK:

- It is worth investing in a [Railcard](#). It costs £30 for a year and gives you discounts on rail travel. By the time you take 3 trips on the train, you would have made that money back.
- You can take buses to London and directly to the airport (London Heathrow and Gatwick) from the Gloucester Green bus station
- If you're travelling on a passport that isn't North American or European, you will probably need a visa to travel outside of the UK. You need to factor the time and cost of this into your plans.

Night Life

Oxford also has diverse nightlife to meet different people's interests. Some of them have been listed below:

Bars, pubs & clubs (L'A= LGBTQIA Friendly)

- Hanks

- Oxford Retreat
- Cowley Retreat
- Kiss
- The Black Swan
- O2 Academy Oxford
- Sandy's Piano Bar
- Kings Arm
- Turf Tavern
- The Head of the River
- The White Horse
- The Jericho Tavern
- The City Arms
- Plush (L'A)
- The Jolly Farmers (L'A)
- The Feud Café Bar
- The Alchemist
- James St Tavern
- The Bullingdon

Karaoke

Get your Whitney Houston on at places like:

- Sandy's Bar
- The Mad Hatter

Dancing

Sometimes you just want to dance the night away:

- Oxford Retreat
 - Latin night on Friday 11 PM - 3 AM Saturday
 - Salsa beginner class with social dancing until 11:30
- Spirit
 - Latin nights on Saturdays
- East Oxford Conservative Club
 - Cubanismo Oxford hosts classes here. [Follow their page for more.](#)

Late-night food options

It's nearly midnight and the time is ripe, your tummy's rumbling for delight. So, who are you going to call?

- Kebab King
- Dominoes
- McDonald's
- Soloman's Grill
- Gores Van

- McCoy's Express Food
- Boss Kebab
- Kebab King
- Ahmed's Bar B-Q

Academic Life

As you will soon find out, the University operates in a decentralised way. Your experience as well as some of the resources that you have access to will depend on your academic department as well as your college. During your course induction, you will be given very useful and specific information about your degree and your department. Don't skip it! However, there are some resources that everyone has access to that can contribute to your academic success:

- The [University Language Centre](#) offers a variety of courses to help with writing essays and dissertations.
- There are four [academic divisions](#) within the University. They all offer training and resources for researchers. These will be particularly useful for MPhil and DPhil students. Find out which division your department falls under and have a look at the academic support that is available for you.
- There are [past exam papers](#) that you can use to practise for your exams. There are also mock exams hosted at the Examinations School to give you a feel for what the exam-writing experience will be like before you take the real one.
- You can get [free newspaper subscriptions](#) (including the Financial Times and the New York Times) using an Oxford University address.
- The Africa Oxford Initiative hosts an **essay-writing workshop** as well as a **DPhil Roundtable** in the Michaelmas term. Make sure you're signed up to the [mailing list](#) to receive registration links for these events. You can also read [Naima's reflection on adjusting to academic life](#) and the benefits of attending the essay-writing workshop.

Quote from Nwamaka, a Nigerian DPhil International Development student:

"First, do not be intimidated! Indeed, Oxford can initially be unnerving but always remember that you have earned your space here and that you are just as qualified as anyone else on your programme. Second, there would be tons of materials to read all the time but don't attempt to read it all. Don't even try! A key part of being a good scholar is being able to decipher relevant reading materials and focus on them. Listen in class to understand what the key texts are, and read those and other materials that may help illuminate the arguments. Good luck!"

Adjusting to Life in Oxford

You have an extraordinary experience ahead of you. We hope that more than anything, you take advantage of all the opportunities that this experience will present to you and **have fun**. However, adjusting to life in Oxford can be complicated and stressful – especially during the first few days when you are settling into a new country amid a global pandemic. Over time you will start to pick up on British social norms and notice the differences from what you're more familiar with in your own country and community. As each interaction with a British person will slowly teach you - "you alright?" does not mean "how are you?" but rather "hello/how can I help you". You might get used to some of these norms and some might just feel strange. However, it is important to remember that no one's transition is seamless and that some things about Britain seem a bit strange to many. So, this is nothing to feel bad about.

You are going to be studying at one of the best universities in the world alongside some of the world's achieving highest-achieving students. Because of this, many students report feeling imposter syndrome – like they must be in Oxford due to some kind of administrative error or a feeling that they don't deserve to be here. If you ever do feel this way, we hope that you will remember that you were selected because of your abilities and your achievements and that you deserve to be here as much as the next student. However, it is understandable, especially as you will meet an overwhelming number of people with impressive CVs, that the feeling of being an imposter might persist. Firstly, don't be afraid to talk about how you're feeling. You may find that many of your peers feel this way too. It is also worth looking at these [ways to manage imposter syndrome](#).

Many of us may have experienced some form(s) of discrimination in one context or another. In June 2020, racial discrimination came under the spotlight as people across multiple cities in the world protested in response to the murder of George Floyd. In Britain, it is not uncommon for people to say that 'racism in the UK is not as bad as it is in the US'. However, racism in Britain does exist, it is systemic and affects the lives and livelihoods of many Black people basis daily. Social justice problems like racism as well as sexism, homophobia, ableism, classism and xenophobia often overlap creating multiple intersecting levels of social injustice.

The University of Oxford is not exempt from these issues. Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford (RMFO) is a movement that aims to decolonise the space, the curriculum and the institutional memory, and to fight [intersectional oppression](#) within Oxford University. Work done by the movement has highlighted how discrimination operates within the University. These can be overt but are often more covert taking the form of microaggressions, for example. Additionally, Africa can be seen as a monolith and represented in terms of poverty and conflict. These views persist today in Britain and some parts of the University.

It is worth finding out from your college and your department what the processes are for reporting discrimination. You can also have a look at the [University's processes and policies for reporting discrimination](#) or harassment. Some students have pointed out that, on occasion, University processes can come across as falling short of the University's public statements against racism.

However, this does not mean that you have to suffer in silence. You can reach out to the AfriSoc welfare officer (contact details for AfriSoc are on the next page). You can also speak to other students and people from your college and department that you trust. Students and staff have come together

on multiple occasions to stand up against discrimination experienced by students at the University.
You are not alone.

We're here for you!

From your department to your college, there are a few places, in Oxford, where you can find and establish a sense of community. However, you can always count on the Oxford Africa Society to find a community of vibrant and engaged African students as well as on the Africa Oxford Initiative for academic support and opportunities. So please feel free to reach out to us on any one of these communication channels:

The Oxford University Africa Society (AfriSoc)

Website: <https://oxforduniversityafricasociety.com/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/oxfordafrica> (@oxfordafrica)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/OxfordAfrica>

Become a member: <https://oxforduniversityafricasociety.com/become-a-member/>

The Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOx)

Website: <https://www.afox.ox.ac.uk/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/Africa_Oxford (@Africa_Oxford)

Join the mailing list: <https://www.afox.ox.ac.uk/afox-mailing-list>