

# INTERNATIONAL FRESHERS HANDBOOK 2023/2024

Exeter College Oxford

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## 1. Welcome from the International frep and rep



Hi! I'm Hanna (she/her)! I am a music student at Exeter College. I was born and grew up in Italy. I am the international frep this year, so I am here to support you during your preparation, arrival and settling in to Oxford, so contact me with any questions, doubts or worries you may have! Moving away from home is difficult, moving away from home in a different country with a different culture is even harder! But Exeter College is a really warm and welcoming college, with lots of people who are willing to help. The first year of uni can seem very hard, but I am sure you will find small things, activities, and good friends who will help you along the way. This document will hopefully answer many of the questions you may have, but please do contact me, the freps, or the JCR representatives. There are no wrong, dumb or too many questions, and I'm always happy to chat about anything if you need

to! Enjoy Freshers' week and your first year of uni! You will have so much fun!

My email is [hanna.gualandi@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:hanna.gualandi@exeter.ox.ac.uk) and my Facebook is: Hanna Gualandi.



Hey! My name's Rayvell (he/him) and I'm a rising second year studying biochemistry at Exeter College. I'm from Jakarta, Indonesia and I lived there my whole life before coming to Oxford. I'm currently the Exeter JCR's International Rep. My role is to support all international undergraduates at Exeter thus I am here to help with any international questions and problems you may have. Moving abroad can be a very daunting experience and I'm sure you have many queries about both starting university at Oxford and living in the UK. There will be a lot of things to sort out once you arrive in the UK—I remember how hectic it was for me during my first week here. However, we have an extremely welcoming and lovely community at Exeter and there will always be someone here who is ready to help you. In addition, Oxford has such a vibrant

international student community across all its colleges and I very much hope you will enjoy your

time here! I know many of you may feel nervous about Freshers' Week but please use this time to enjoy yourselves and get to know as many people as possible. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have anything to ask or just want to have a chat!

My email is [rayvell.wijaya@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:rayvell.wijaya@exeter.ox.ac.uk) and you can find me on Facebook as Rayvell Wijaya. I can't wait to meet you all!

## 2. Airports

The closest main airports are: London Heathrow, London Gatwick, and London Stansted.

Ways to travel from airport to Oxford:

- **Coaches** : the durations are 1.5/2 hours from Heathrow, 2/2.5 hours from Gatwick, and 3/3.5 hours from Stansted. The bus companies suggested are: Airline or National Express. The stop in Oxford where the coaches drop you off and pick you up is Gloucester Green bus station, a 10 minute walk from Turn Street college. I would suggest buying tickets online at least a day before, just to be safe.
- **Tube/train/shuttle and Oxford Tube**: if you are travelling from Heathrow and Gatwick, this might be cheaper. If you are travelling from Stansted, this might be more expensive. You can get a train/shuttle/tube from the airport to any stop from which the Oxford Tube passes. The Oxford tube is a coach that travels regularly from London to Oxford, you can get a return ticket for 11 pounds.
- **Taxi**: pre-booking a taxi is another option.

## 3. Dates and arrival

The year is divided in three terms: Michaelmas, Hilary, and Trinity. The dates are present online and indicate the start of the teaching term, so of Week 1.

For this Michaelmas term, you are required to arrive by Sunday 1st of October, for fresher's week. I would suggest contacting Mihaela Groza (Accommodation Manager) about your date and time of arrival, especially if you are arriving early.

On your arrival on fresher's week, the first place you'll see, as soon as you walk in, is the Porter's Lodge (Plodge). Here you will be given a key to your room and you will be able to unpack and settle in. You can contact any of the freshers reps that are arriving earlier to help you with anything.

Each following term you might need to arrive earlier than the date online. Specifically, college tends to require you to be present by noon on Thursday of 0<sup>th</sup> week because you might have collections in 0<sup>th</sup> week, which are like mock exams on the previous term's content (do not worry too much about these).

If you need or want to arrive earlier than Thursday, you need to contact the Accommodation Manager, Mihaela Groza, and book vacation residence, which you need to pay extra for.

Note: The Oxford calendar the week starts on a Sunday, so Sunday of 1st Week is the beginning of 1st week.

## 4. Visa

International students (non-EEA/Swiss)

- International students (non-EEA/Swiss) coming to the University to study a full-time course for more than six months must apply for Student visa before coming to the UK - this has replaced the Tier 4 Student visa.
- Further info on the Student visa can be found on the UK government website: <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa>
- Oxford's website might help too (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/before/studentvisa>) - it has information about applying before your studies
- Note: check your eligibility for work. The Student visa allows you to work in the UK under some circumstances, but college does not permit work during term. If you wish to work in the holidays though, or participate in college jobs during term like working at the college bar, you will need a National Insurance number (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number>)
- You should also have a look at the University's Covid travel updates: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus/students/travel>

## 5. Bank accounts, work, phone plans, voting, doctor

### **Bank accounts:**

Here is a guide from the UK Council for International Student Affairs: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Opening-a-bank-account>

Suggestion: online only banks like Monzo, Starling, or Revolut work faster!

HSBC has a specifically international student bank account service, while most of the other banks have student accounts, but not necessarily international.

HSBC, Barclays, and other banks are very slow and time consuming (the bureaucracy is more complicated), so if you decide to use these start early!

Note: make sure the name you give exactly matches the one on your ID. You will need one or more forms of ID and an enrolment certificate (from Student Self Service) with a stamp from college. You can get a stamp from the College Offices next to Staircase 9. This may be something you have to sort out if you plan to get a UK phone plan. You should also ensure that you have enough cash/ credit to go around until you open your account. When filling out forms, remember that you live in the UK for at least six months of the year so you are legally a tax resident here.

### **Work**

The University and College both discourage students from taking up paid employment during term time. This is because it will seriously interfere with the time you have for academic work, and won't leave time for well-needed leisure time. If this is a problem, speak to your tutor. They will be understanding. You are also required to spend a portion of your vacation doing academic work, either in preparation for next term's content or revising last term's content for your collections.

There are some opportunities for paid work within college, for example:

- Events run by the Development Office such as the telethon (essentially ringing alumni for donations to college)
- Bar shifts in the College Bar
- Helpers with interviews during the Michaelmas vac (depending on Covid)

There may also be additional charges for services that you can opt out of in your battels (termly charges for accommodation and college services) e.g., the Iffley Gym membership, if you are looking for ways to cut down on your spending.

### **Phone plans**

We recommend getting a phone number after you have opened a UK bank account - it will make it much easier to arrange. You can get a VOXI plan from the Cornmarket Street Vodafone office for a good price. Alternatively, I was never bothered to get a proper plan so I top-up my 4 SIM card from the airport around once a month. A phone plan is an important must for getting around freely!

### **Police registration (if you need it for your visa)**

This may be a requirement for some visas, which you will need to undertake ASAP.

You will need:

- £34 (in exact cash - they don't give change) • UK passport-style photo
- Passport
- Biometric residence permit
  
- Enrolment certificate with college stamp (see Bank Account section for how to get)

### **Voting**

As a student resident in the UK, you may be eligible to vote in local or national elections and referenda. Registering to vote is the responsibility of each individual. Do remember to do it - you'll receive information on this in your freshers packs.

### **Doctor**

Exeter students are now registered with the 19 Beaumont Street surgery. The registration is online, an email should have come through to you. Documentation is included on the Freshers' Weblearn site.

The nurse is often present in college, so if you do have a worry or are not feeling well, you can always see if they are around or drop them an email.

## **6. Packing**

### **Essentials to bring from home:**

1. Documents (see list at the end of this section\*)
2. Foreign adaptors
3. Warm clothes for Michaelmas and Hilary
4. Any medication you need or want that they might not have in the UK
5. Subfusc clothing: dark formal trousers or skirt, dark shoes, white shirt.

Suggestions:

6. Formal clothing if you plan to go to formals ( if you are a choral scholar a few formal options )
7. Photos, posters, soft blanket or even a comfort food that you may not be able to get in the Oxford foreign shops

### Essentials and suggestions you can buy in Oxford:

- Subfusc gown and ribbon for ceremonies and important events like Matriculation, Formals and Examinations. Shops on Broad St or High St such as the Varsity Shop, Shepard & Woodward or Ede & Ravenscroft have what you need. There's also Walter's on Turl St. Check the Red Book for exact items/variations. Get there early!
- Kettles, toasters, and hairdryers can be bought online or from Tesco's.
- Bed sheets, blankets, towels: you can buy those from the nearby shopping centre, like M&S .
- Stationary, food, toiletries, medicine: you can buy these in the shops on Corn Market Street, conveniently close to college, is the major shopping and pedestrian street in Oxford with a Boots, WHS Smith, and fast foods. Tesco and Sainsbury are located on East Magdalen Street, really close to college and also a cheap option.
- A laundry basket and laundry detergent

### Notes:

- There is an iron in the laundry room in Back Quad
- Cooking utensils and equipment- cutlery and crockery can be bought from Tesco's and there is a small kitchen on the side of the JCR
- Pillows and duvets are provided from college, though you can bring your own pillows

### **\*Essential documents\***

- Photo identification/drivers' licence/National ID (for things like bank registration and police clearances as well as going out)
- Passport
- Evidence of address in home country
- CAS document (this might be helpful when entering as Immigration might ask you for it)
- Your medical records - you will need to provide your vaccination history when registering with the college GP (note: you will get an NHS number when you have registered with a GP); this might have been completed before arriving
- Glasses/medical prescriptions
- COPIES of these documents.

### Why bring them?

Visa requirements, applying for a National Insurance number (which is necessary for paid work), registering with a GP, opening a UK bank account, and getting a bank card, customs clearance, getting insurance of some sort

## **7. Storage and end of term**

At the end of each term you will need to empty your room.

BUT international storage during vacations (even the long vacation) is available. You get 4 boxes in which you can store things.

International storage is available at the bottom of staircase 9 and it is limited to 4 medium sized boxes. This is arranged with college. Alternatively, you can arrange for private storage though this can be expensive and a bit of a pain to organise and transport as I found out.

At the end of term, you can leave by the end of 8<sup>th</sup> Week. Normally you have to leave by Saturday of 8<sup>th</sup> Week if you don't request vacation residency.

An exception: the last term of year (Trinity), you will have your first-year exams (Prelims), and some students will have them during Week 9 of term. Exam timetables vary, so you will have to keep an eye out for this yourselves.

Note: Law students have their Mods (exams) after the Hillary Term.

## **8. Culture and socialising**

### **Events and Societies**

Oxford offers 400 clubs and societies, so as well as the friends you will make in college and in your course, you can find more people in the societies and at events.

- Facebook is the essential platform on which Societies post events and information about themselves
- In Freshers' Week there will be a Freshers' Fair ran by the Student Union (Not to be confused with the Oxford Union) for us it was in Marquee in Uni Parks but for you it may be back in the Examination Schools. This is a way to meet and explore different societies in person from sport and charity to cultural and religious groups. This is a way to explore cultures outside from your own or to link with people from your own background.
- In Fresher's week there will be an International Freshers meeting to meet other international students in Exeter

There are so many different activities and people that you should not be afraid of being yourself and exploring. Exeter is very inclusive, hence to keep it this way do not hesitate to point out if anything makes you uncomfortable or is insulting to you.

### **Food**

Hall food offers British cuisine, which includes lots of potatoes, greens, beans, gravy, meats, and pies. Sometimes it offers foreign food, and always has a veggie option.

You can also buy your own food at Tesco, Sainsbury or other little shops that may offer more authentic ingredients. You use the JCR kitchen.

There are also plenty of international restaurants you can sit in or order from.

The international frep (Val) from last year had suggested a few shops:

- European Supermarket - 120A Cowley Road, Oxford, OX 4 1JE (lots of Eastern European products! (Especially different distillates and distillations)
- Il Principe (Italian deli) - 82 Cowley Rd
- Asian supermarkets: GG Oriental Snack Shack (Japanese, Chinese, Korean food) - 93 Gloucester Green; Lung Wah Chong (mostly Chinese food) - 41 Hythe Bridge St; Seoul Plaza (mostly Korean food with a Japanese section) - 59-63 Cowley Rd

- Skogen Kitchen (Scandinavian Cafe) - 2 King Edward St

There are lots of vans and trucks scattered around which sell Middle Eastern-style Street food. The closest one to Exeter is Hassan's, at the end of Turl Street. It only opens in the evenings and is perfect for a post club or an essay crisis snack.

The markets in Gloucester Green, the Covered Market and other places have a wide variety of fruits and vegetables for low prices, and lots of variety in terms of food.

These are just some !

### **Language**

Studying and socialising in a second language is not easy, but with time and patience it will become easier. If you are feeling exhausted at the end of the day, remember that processing everything in a different language is extremely tiring.

English slang is also challenging and different to what one might have learned during English lessons. A few useful words:

Mate = friend

Nippy = cold

Cheers = thank you

Spoons = a cheap pub chain the actual name of the pub might be different, but it will be owned by Wetherspoons

Knackered = tired

Bloody = very

Quid = pound

Tenner = 10 pounds

Nick something = steal something

## **9. Contacts**

If you need any questions asked before or during the start of term, please feel free to reach out. Everyone is more than to answer any queries you might have.

International Freshers Rep: [hanna.gualandi@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:hanna.gualandi@exeter.ox.ac.uk)

International Rep: [rayvell.wijaya@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:rayvell.wijaya@exeter.ox.ac.uk)

### **Welfare:**

Chaplain: [andrew.allen@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.allen@exeter.ox.ac.uk)

Welfare dean: [welfare.dean@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:welfare.dean@exeter.ox.ac.uk)

Student Welfare Rep: [matthew.brayshaw@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.brayshaw@exeter.ox.ac.uk) (Male Welfare) [maya.kerr-davis@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:maya.kerr-davis@exeter.ox.ac.uk) (Female Welfare)

\*The University offers a range of [wellbeing support](#) for all students. There is college-based support, such as your personal tutor, college welfare staff and peer supporters (including Rainbow Peers and Peers of Colour). There is also University-wide support, such as the University Counselling Service.

### **Medical welfare**

College nurse: [nurse@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nurse@exeter.ox.ac.uk)

General practitioner: Exeter students are now registered with the 19 Beaumont Street surgery

### **Admin**

Academic office: [academic.oce@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:academic.oce@exeter.ox.ac.uk) (Open 8:30 every weekday, shut for lunch around 12:00-12:30pm, closes at 4:30pm Monday-Thursday and 4pm Friday)

Admissions: [admissions@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@exeter.ox.ac.uk) (this is who to email with any queries before you arrive)

Accommodation Manager: [accommodation.manager@exeter.ox.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation.manager@exeter.ox.ac.uk)

### **Additional Links**

UK Council for international student affairs: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk>

The University web page: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/for-international-students>