

# **University College Oxford Alternative Prospectus**



# Living in a College Community

**Univ is one of the over 30 colleges that make up the University of Oxford. A college is where students live, study, relax and eat.**

A college is much more than just the physical space, it's a community of people! At Univ, there are around 400 undergraduates — that's students studying for their first degree — so you don't get lost in the crowd but it's also big enough that you'll definitely meet people with similar interests.

This may be incredibly cheesy, but the people at Univ are incredible. Everyone is (truly!) super kind, friendly and welcoming - I guarantee you won't be able to walk from one side of the site to the other without stopping to chat! There are a real mix of people at Univ from different backgrounds, schools, upbringings, countries and cultures yet somehow it manages to feel like one big family.

**(Anna, Philosophy, Politics, and Economics)**

I originally applied to a different college, but I was lucky enough to be able to come back to Univ (after I got my offer) to have a tour, meet one of my tutors, as well as some of the staff that I would be working with when I came to university. So right from the get go, I felt welcomed and very comfortable coming to Univ. And after being here for some time, it feels like it was the right choice.

**(Becky, Earth Sciences)**

Univ is a close-knit community that has quickly become like a second family to me. I have made so many fond memories in the short time that I've been here and I know that I will treasure them forever.

**(Jaskiran, Medicine)**

Many people at Univ feel a sense of loyalty to our college and I would say that we are quite tight knit because we live together. I found that joining college music and sports societies has meant that I have really developed relationships with people in college that have similar interests. Univ is considered to be a friendly college, and I'm so happy I chose to apply to Univ!

**(Elsa, Music)**

The people at Univ are friendly, welcoming and fun! Everyone from the students, to the tutors and staff are always smiling and willing to help you out when you need.

**(Jade, Physics)**

Whenever I return to Univ at the end of the day I genuinely feel like I'm coming home. With the friendly smile from the porters and friends to welcome you, Univ really is a very cosy and comfortable place to live.

**(Amy, Earth Sciences)**







# Accommodation, Food and Facilities

**Univ is usually able to provide students with accommodation for every year of their degree. This might be on the main college site, nearby in the city centre, or at our specially built annexe in the north of Oxford.**

Accommodation at Univ is really varied but all good quality. Some people share a large study with two smaller bedrooms attached while others have their own study-bedroom. It's randomly allocated in first year but there is a randomly generated ballot for all subsequent years. This means that, in the order of the ballot draw, you can pick accommodation that suits you e.g. a flat with a small group of friends, a room in one of the large houses, a bit of college with modern kitchens, etc.

**(Rosie, Engineering)**

I brought loads of posters with me to Oxford, and put them up all over my room, to make it more like home. Although I didn't actually spend that much time in my room, if me and my friends ever wanted a night in, it was really cosy and near to a kitchen so we could make food and cups of tea.

**(Martha, Maths and Philosophy)**

My room in first year was a massive \*en suite\* bedroom in the modern, new accommodation block called Goodhart. I have several disabilities which mean mobility can sometimes be difficult and this block was amazing because it had lifts, a fully accessible bathroom and adjustable kitchen fittings - plus the added bonus of a double bed! The kitchen facilities were excellent and being so close to them was an amazing way to meet new people every night and socialise over pizza!

**(Anna, Philosophy, Politics, and Economics)**

My first-year room was actually in the Radcliffe Quad tower; it was very big, with tall ceilings which made it the perfect space for music practise! In second year, I had a room in the Greenwood flats in Stavs (Univ's annexe in North Oxford). This was smaller but much more modern, and I was right next door to my friends.

**(Elsa, Music)**

One of the best things about accommodation at Univ is that all rooms cost the same, regardless of style, shape, size or location - it really makes it fair and means you can budget in advance as you will know how much your tenancy will cost! This, along with the balloting of rooms in later years, really makes the accommodation situation fair and equal regardless of your income - I love it.

**(Anonymous)**

My favourite part of college accommodation so far has been living in Stavs (Univ's annexe in North Oxford). I was a little apprehensive about it being further from the centre than the main site but my bike made everything feel a lot closer and I really enjoyed the experience of living in a flat with four of my friends.

**(Katie, Experimental Psychology)**

Ballot n. a system to fairly decide the order in which students get to pick their accommodation in 2nd and 3rd year.





# Food, Glorious Food

**Many students eat their meals in the Dining Hall. It's a great way of grabbing a bite with friends between lectures or library sessions. The College also has some kitchens available so that students can cook for themselves, as well as there being a fridge in most bedrooms.**

Univ's buttery always has a really good selection of food. There are cold options on offer throughout the day for takeaway, as well as breakfast, lunch, and dinner throughout the week, as well as (the famous) brunch and dinner at the weekends. There are always meat and vegetarian options on offer, as well as a salad bar. Meals are affordable and are great options for those who don't have the best access to kitchens, which varies depending on where you live at college.

**(Becky, Earth Sciences)**

In first year, I ate in hall for dinner a lot because of the social aspect of eating with friends. The menus were also uploaded online so I could look ahead of time to plan when I wanted to eat in hall.

**(Katie, Experimental Psychology)**

The food served in hall is tasty and nutritious, and you will always get good value for money. I've also had access to a kitchen wherever I have lived in college, and that makes it so easy to cook for myself.

**(Jaskiran, Medicine)**

Univ has some kitchen availability, meaning that there is no pressure to eat in hall every day. This makes living as a student cheaper and allows you to explore your culinary talents!

**(Esther, French and Russian)**

I have a severe nut allergy, so eating food out from public places (restaurants, cafes etc.) is a major source of anxiety. Thankfully, the labelling and breadth of choice of food served in hall in College means there is always something I can eat. And, if I am unsure about a particular food/meal, the catering staff are all very approachable and understanding, so I feel comfortable asking them to investigate any queries. In both 1st and 2nd year, I was able to request my kitchen space to be a 'nut free zone', giving me some peace of mind about eating.

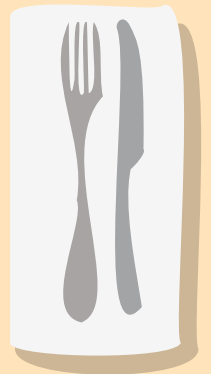
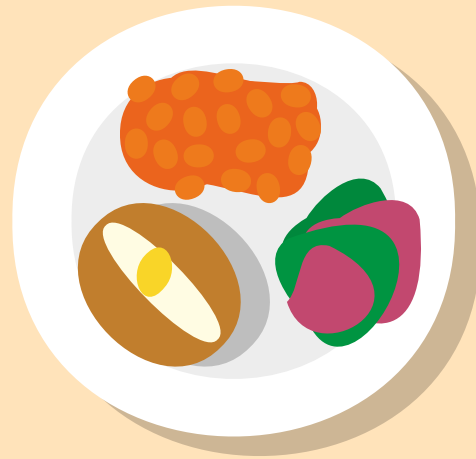
**(Becca, Earth Sciences)**

Formal Hall n. Three times a week an optional three course dinner is served.

Students tend to book on as a special treat, e.g. to celebrate a birthday. Some are themed like LGBT+ formal, Burns Night, and BME formals.

Buttery n. a bit like small school cafeteria, offers food on a pay-as-you-go basis.







# Learning at Oxford

**Learning at Oxford looks a bit different depending on your subject. Generally, it involves more self-directed study than school and more choice to learn in a way that suits you. Read what a week in the life of some of Univ's students is like.**

As a Chemistry student, my week has quite a few 'contact' hours. There are usually two lectures each day in the week and most weeks I will spend a couple of days in the lab. There is usually one tutorial each week (3-4 people) which I will prepare for by reading up on the subject and attempting the question sheet on the topic.  
**(Samantha, Chemistry)**

During the week I'll have typically two or three tutorials and five lectures. My course is based on a lot of independent study, so I can decide how to structure my week's schedule. If I organise myself well, I am able to dedicate quite some time to my hobbies and to other activities! I really love the balance between guided and independent work — I think it allows me to be flexible and explore what I'm most interested in.

**(Allyson, Philosophy and Linguistics)**

I usually have about 2 or 3 lectures a week. I have two one-hour long tutorials with my tutor at Univ. I also have other classes and seminars, including grammar and oral classes, with students at other colleges. This has given me the chance to meet other students at other colleges. I usually have one or two essays to complete a week, as well as homework exercises and preparation for my other classes.  
**(Annie, Russian)**

I think the biggest change from school is having much more freedom to study what you want – this year I wrote an entire English Literature essay on worms! Having more academic freedom is incredibly stimulating, and allows you to discover your academic interests in a creative way.

**(Alexandra, English Language and Literature)**

**Learning independently doesn't always mean learning on your own. Univ is a community of students and tutors exploring their subject interests together.**

I have such a good relationship with my tutors, and I get the overwhelming feeling that they want me to do well. It feels great to have someone 'in your corner'.

**(Connie, Philosophy, Politics and Economics)**

It's really common for science students at Univ to work together to solve problems as well which contributes to the supportive atmosphere and stops it feeling at all competitive.

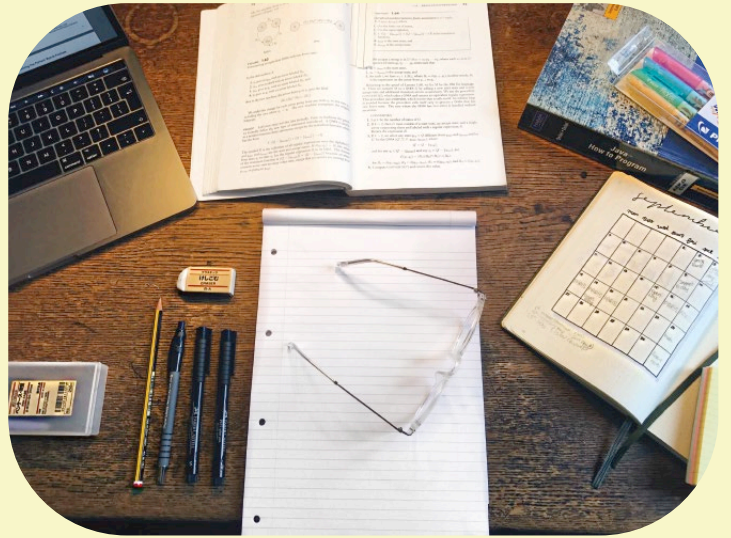
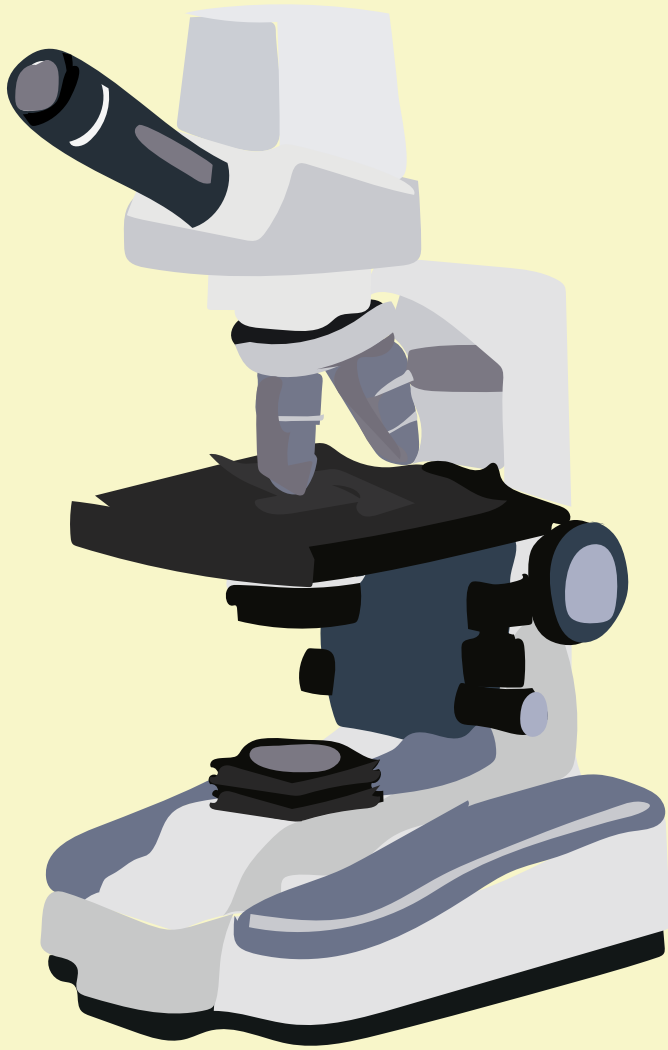
**(Rosie, Engineering)**

The most incredible support I have at Univ is from my lovely friends. We're all in this intense learning environment together and I find that I am often motivated by my friends. If there is anything serious, there is also a great college welfare team! Alongside this, the tutors are normally very understanding – when I was having a tricky time earlier this year, my tutor was very supportive and let me know that completing work is not as important as maintaining good mental health!

**(Elsa, Music)**

Tutor n. University word for teacher. Tutors tend to be actively involved in researching their subject as well as teaching.

Tutorial n. small group teaching session typically with 2-3 students and one tutor.



# Map of Univ

Take a look around University College (Univ for short). While being a student at Oxford may take you across the city to libraries, lecture halls, labs and sports facilities, your college is your home.

## 1, Porters' lodge

The first people to greet you when you step through Univ's front door are the college's friendly porters. The porters look after the security of the college and collect and deliver the post. They are friendly and generally a great point of call if you need a bike pump or the spare key if you ever lock yourself out of your room!

## 2, Dining hall

Our big dining hall is a great place to catch up with friends over a bite to eat.

## 3, JCR

The JCR is a lovely space to relax with sofas, table football, an xbox and a TV. One half has desks so it's a nice informal space to work too. It's the site of JCR committee meetings where the student body vote on issues it cares about and is one of the ways that the collective student voice is heard.

## 4, Bar

A place for socialising, parties and pub quizzes

## 5, Old Library

One of two Univ libraries which are open 24/7 and provide key books and workspaces.

## 6, New Library

The newest of two Univ libraries. Stocked with social sciences books.

## 7, Master's lodgings

Home of the Master of the College (like a headteacher).

## 8, Percy in the Master's garden

When he's not in hibernation, you may also find our College tortoise, Percy, chilling in our outdoor spaces too.

## 9, Chapel

Most of Oxford's older colleges have a chapel onsite. Ours is home to some stunning stained glass and a weekly choir service.

## 10, Tower room

Like many rooms around this quad, the room at the top of the tower is a student bedroom!

## 11, Shelley Memorial

## 12, Fellows' garden

There's quite a lot of spaces to hang out with friends throughout college, both inside and outside. The fellows garden is a beautiful and peaceful outdoor space, which is also great for working and eating in the summer, when the college puts out tables and chairs.

## 13, Goodhart

Student accommodation is dotted around college. This is our newest building with 57 ensuite rooms and large kitchens.

"Univ is located right in the centre of the city, a stone's throw from the iconic Radcliffe Camera, and down the road from all the shops you could need. Being so near to the centre of the city has made it so easy to travel from college to my lectures and tutorials held in the science departments".

## Jaskiran, Medicine

"I think the fact that Univ is so central is really comforting as you feel as though you are in the centre of a busy, bustling city but also it is nice to be able to have a retreat within the college walls".

## Barbie, Biochemistry







# Student Support

## Welfare and wellbeing support

My favourite thing about Univ is the respect that staff members show towards the students. In particular, the welfare staff are extremely caring, and will do a great deal to support students who are struggling.

**(Uri, Psychology and Philosophy)**

You really do feel like people have got your back here at Univ, whether that's your friends, tutors, porters, etc. It's comforting to know that there is a genuinely high level of support.

**(Phoebe, Chemistry)**

Univ has a great welfare network, and peer support is a very important part of that. Students are trained for one term by the counselling service and then have termly supervisions. This allows peer supporters to help students in a constructive way, and they are there to listen to other students. Whether it is to complain about an assignment or to talk about something quite personal.

**(Allyson, Philosophy and Linguistics)**

## Disability support

I cannot stress enough how amazing the support for disabled students is at Univ. The dedicated staff go out of their way to ensure your needs are being met, e.g. by adjusting your accommodation, tutorial schedules and exam arrangements. I personally have a chronic illness which is not widely known or commonly dealt with. Despite this, Univ have been exemplary at dealing with it, helping me to access national and University-wide support.

**(Anna, Philosophy, Politics, and Economics)**

Disability support has been great; I declared Generalised Anxiety Disorder on my UCAS because I knew it would affect me more now than at sixth form etc, and College picked up on it straight away, and have offered me support in the form of exam arrangements, a mentor, specialist equipment for recording lectures, and financial support.

**(Anonymous)**

## Money

I receive a bursary from Oxford University, as well as a college one from Univ. Having such great financial support is incredibly liberating, because it means that when I'm in Oxford, I only have to focus on my academic work and I'm not weighed down by financial worries. I also received a £1000 holiday bursary during the summer holiday, which meant that I didn't have to take up a full-time summer job, but instead used the summer to complete an internship.

**(Alexandra, English Language and Literature)**

In first year, I purchased some molymods for an organic chemistry module using the college's book grant and in second year I have been able to claim back expenses from university level sport through the JCR's 'Blues Fund'

**(Lewis, Biochemistry)**

I have found that my budgeting skills have improved with time, and once you settle into Oxford life it becomes natural and less stressful to manage your money. Before coming to university, I was very worried about how I would fund my living costs, being from a low-income household; however, the support Oxford and Univ have given me is amazing.

**(Jade, Physics)**

I was anxious about finance as I was not eligible for a large government student loan or the Oxford Bursary, even though the money situation at home was shaky. But the Hardship Fund from College really picked me up and prevented me from slipping in my studies owing to financial reasons!

**(Anonymous)**

Bursary, n. Grant of money which you don't pay back provided typically to support living costs for students from lower income backgrounds.





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# What About Free Time?

**Doing a degree at Oxford means a big workload – but it's not all work and no play! There are lots of opportunities to get involved in fun stuff outside your studies, with something to cater for every interest.**

I have a fairly big workload, but it is manageable, and I find time to have lots of fun as well, whether that is going out in the evening with friends, going punting in the summer months, playing in Uni sports teams, having lunch and dinner with people and listening to talks organised through the Uni.  
**(Annie, Russian)**

I'm quite an active person so I have been a part of both the University and College netball and rugby teams. Both offer a great way to meet people from across years and different colleges. I also enjoy walking around Oxford's (many) picturesque parks and streets.  
**(Becky, Earth Sciences)**

In addition to the University-wide Islamic Society (which always provides a great sense of community), a group of Muslim Univ students have recently set up a Univ Islamic Society to provide a more local source of community, and support so that we can all keep up the faith in what is sometimes a stressful environment to do so.  
**(Ali, Philosophy, Politics, Economics)**

In first year I made a regular trip to the Oxford University Tea Appreciation Society — a new feature tea every week, free biscuits and great company from all over the university!  
**(Amy, Earth Sciences)**

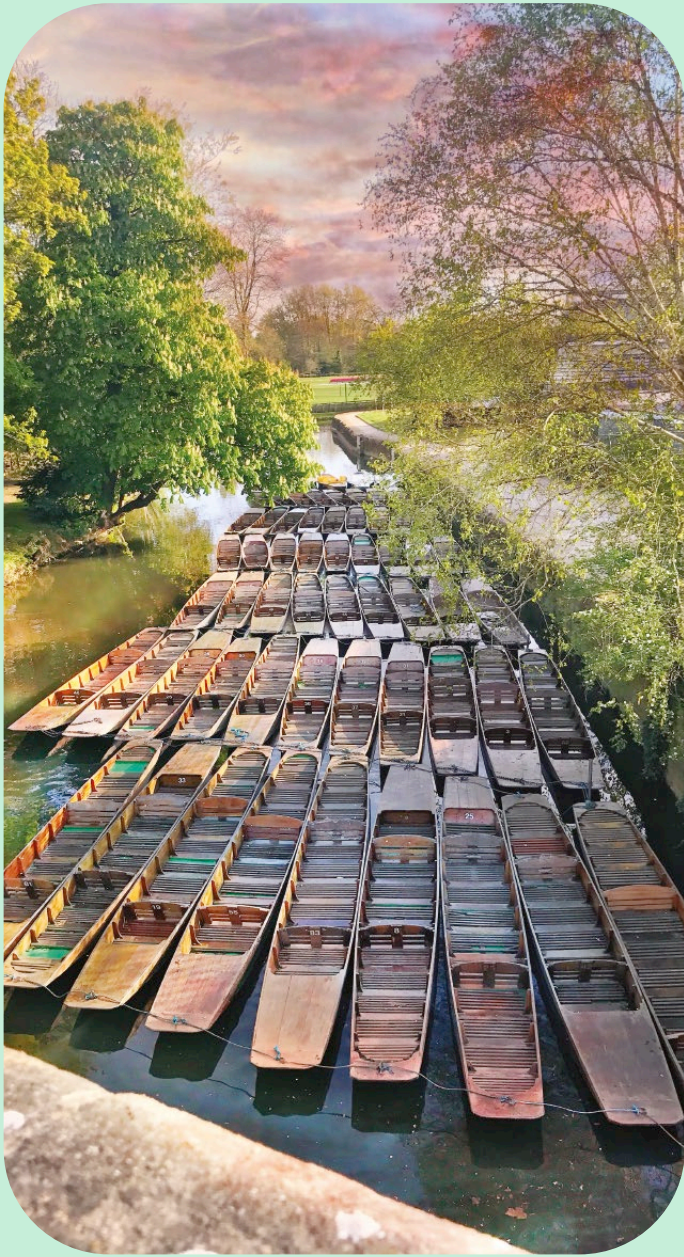
I'm a member of the aerodynamics team for Oxford University Racing. The aim is to make an electric Formula 1 style car that students then take to Silverstone to race against other universities. As well as the design process, there are loads of opportunities to get involved with practical engineering like manufacturing the carbon fibre bodywork and setting up tests to evaluate the car's performance. The team even run go-karting socials!  
**(Rosie, Engineering)**

I'm now President of Oxford University Badminton Club, which is such an amazing opportunity for me, I've always loved badminton and tried out for the squad here, and the people I play with have since become some of my closest friends. Even though it is a big commitment, it always feels like fun, and it gives me a chance to relax and exercise, where otherwise I might struggle to do this on my own!  
**(Freya, Classics)**

In my free time I captain the Univ mixed hockey team, go to Univ Games Society evenings, and volunteer with the Oxford Hub.  
**(Katie, Experimental Psychology)**

As a Music student, I was attracted to Univ by the wide range of extracurricular music on offer. We have a College choir, regular Open Mic nights and Master's Lodgings Concerts, and the College orchestra!  
**(Elsa, Music)**







# Celebrating Diversity

**Despite coming from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, students find a home at Univ and plenty of ways to celebrate diversity. Univ's undergraduates typically come from over 30 countries!**

The student-run liberation magazine, Roots and Their Branches, celebrates diversity at Univ by encouraging members of the Univ community from traditionally underrepresented groups to submit their artwork and thoughts. I have enjoyed working with fellow Univ students to put together the magazine, which aims to be as inclusive as possible by providing a space for any Univ student to get their work printed.  
**(Lizzie, Medicine)**

For the last few years, there has been a special formal in February to celebrate Univ's LGBTQ+ community. The hall was decorated with strings of pride flags and the catering staff even made a rainbow cake! Whilst the lovely food was obviously a bonus, it's the dedication to celebrating diversity that makes Univ such a warm and inclusive place to live and study.  
**(Rosie, Engineering)**

As a BAME student, coming to Oxford I had apprehensions about feeling left out or unwelcome. But aside from its incredible, diverse student body, BME reps and international students reps arrange brilliant events so students can explore their own cultures and learn about other cultures as well!  
**(Priya, Music)**

For international students, there is a great sense of community and appreciation of each other's cultures! International students have some dinners/teas/general activities during term time and it really helps forming a small community - and when you're away from home, it can be really important.

**(Allyson, Philosophy and Linguistics, Italy)**

Being part of Univ for me is such an achievement as I have come from a background of adversity. I have found Univ to be so welcoming and have really felt like I can make strong friendships and connections here, which is something that I was really anxious about before coming. I am so proud to be part of such a fantastic, supportive college and hope that all of the new freshers will feel the same!

**(Barbie, Biochemistry)**

## **Welcome to Univ.**

At the time of writing, I have been here nearly 12 months and whilst it's not been a typical year, courtesy of COVID, I was able to experience the warmth of a Univ welcome. I am proud that Univ has worked hard to open up admissions to the College to students from a wide range of backgrounds. We are ambitious, innovative and vibrant, and hope that you will join us.

**Master of the College, Baroness Valerie Amos**







# Applying to Oxford

**It's normal to be nervous when you're applying to university. But you don't have to worry about being a 'genius', or coming from a particular background. There's not one type of 'Oxford student'. Here's what Univ students have to say to anyone unsure about whether to apply.**

Studying at Oxford had always seemed like an impossible dream to me, but when I worked up the courage to apply and then I actually got in, I knew I should never have doubted myself! Oxford is for everyone, and if you think that this could be the right place for you, then don't let anything get in your way.

**(Jaskiran, Medicine)**

There is nothing to lose by applying and going through the process. It is a great opportunity for learning how to practise thinking and expressing yourself clearly and logically.

**(Uri, Psychology and Philosophy)**

I would encourage anyone that is nervous to just give applying a go! Get in touch with someone in Univ admissions and they can point you to helpful resources, like Staircase 12, which might help you to feel more confident and prepared.

**(Elsa, Music)**

Give it a go! I couldn't imagine myself at Oxford when I applied but now I'm here I couldn't imagine being anywhere else.

**(Katie, Experimental Psychology)**

I would say that you're more capable than you might realise, and that there's nothing to be lost by applying to Oxford! Whilst Oxford may have a reputation of being posh and old, there is a place for everyone here, and the student community is a lot more diverse than one might initially think. If you're really passionate about your subject, Oxford is a perfect place for being around many like-minded people who are also keen to learn and grow in their respective academic fields.

**(Phoebe, Chemistry)**

I think it is natural to feel nervous about applying. If you are really really interested and passionate about your subject(s), then it is definitely worth it, as interest in your subject is such an important part of applying. I remember being most nervous about the admissions tests and the interviews. In terms of the admissions test, there are plenty of past papers to help you feel more prepared, which should make the process of applying less daunting. In terms of interviews, all the tutors I have met so far have been extremely friendly.

**(Annie, Russian)**

**[www.univ.ox.ac.uk/staircase12](http://www.univ.ox.ac.uk/staircase12)**

a bank of resources and book reviews to help you explore your subject interests and prepare for applying to uni







# Univ Facts

Univ is the oldest college at the University of Oxford. Our story began in 1249 when William of Durham, a high-powered theology lecturer who had retired to County Durham, left in his will 310 marks (a lot of money in those days) for the support of poor scholars. The rest is history!

Univ has its very own pet tortoise called Percy. He's currently limbering up for the annual tortoise race against other colleges.

Univ is amongst the largest colleges in terms of population: 400+ undergraduates and over 200 graduate students too!

The Master And Fellows Of The College Of The Great Hall Of The University (our full name, but we just call it Univ!)

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