

# OSAP Student Handbook

## Table of Contents

PREFACE.....	2
ACADEMIC GUIDE FOR THE ASSOCIATE MEMBER .....	4
Why Thirteen Weeks of Residence is Important to One-Term Students .....	5
THE TUTORIAL SYSTEM.....	6
The Oxford Tutorial & Essay, (with advice on reading lists, etc.) .....	6
What Is Your Tutor Looking For? .....	7
Tutorials.....	7
Planning and Writing Your Essay.....	8
Choice of Tutors.....	18
The Academic Placement Process .....	19
The Responsibilities of the Student.....	19
LIBRARIES.....	20
GRADES & EVALUATIONS .....	21
FURTHER CONTACT WITH OXFORD .....	23
WITHDRAWALS .....	23
CLUBS, SOCIETIES AND SPORTS.....	24
COMMUNICATIONS WITH OUR STAFF, ADVISERS, TUTORS, ETC. ....	25
EDUCATIONAL TOURS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES .....	26
MEDICAL CARE.....	27
MEALS .....	28
PERSONAL INFORMATION.....	29
Expenses .....	29
What to Bring.....	29
SOCIAL LIFE IN ENGLAND.....	30
COLLEGE LIFE.....	32
TERMLY EVALUATIONS.....	36
RECENT STUDENT EVALUATIONS <sup>1</sup> .....	38

**Copyright Note** -This website was largely written by Robert Schuettinger. The descriptions of Colleges and of Visiting Students and Associate Members status were carefully scrutinized for accuracy by several senior fellows of Oxford colleges. © OSAP December 2009.

**Photographs** - Many of the photographs are published with the kind permission of Christopher Donaghue © (Tel.: 01865251996) and Thomas Photos (Tel.: 01865761350)

## PREFACE

The purpose of this handbook, especially written for the benefit of the Junior Year Abroad students (and some graduates) who are Associate Members or Visiting Students in several Oxford colleges through the Oxford Study Abroad Programme (OSAP), is to make your stay in Oxford as problem-free and as smooth as possible. We believe that if you read these pages very carefully (and return to consult them every now and then) you will have a much easier and much more enjoyable time in Oxford. We include here some policies not mentioned in your admission letter which are binding on both the student and ourselves.

Naturally we can not anticipate every possible problem (or opportunity) but we hope we have included relevant and useful information on the major aspects of overseas study in Oxford.

This handbook will not tell you everything you need to know; you should also consult several other important sources of information:

- a. The Oxford Student's Handbook, published by the Oxford University Student Union (OUSU, the student government, not the Union Debating Society.) This Handbook will be given to you during orientation (it is published in every year in October) and includes a wealth of information on student life in Oxford. You should bear in mind that it is written by students, and as they themselves say, reflects their individual points of view.
- b. Vade Mecum, also published at the start of each term, includes a valuable list of many of the 300 clubs and sports teams, some of which you may wish to join. The names of the officers and their colleges are included.
- c. The Oxford University Undergraduate Prospectus. You may have already been sent the sections which describe the subjects available for study in Oxford and a description of your own college.
- d. A handbook of the particular rules of your own college, meal times, etc. This will be given to you at orientation.
- e. You should pick up an Oxford University diary upon your arrival. This book will be invaluable to you. It will allow you to write in your tutorial appointments, which may vary a bit from week to week, and to keep track of other events. It includes lists of addresses and phone numbers of all the colleges, a handy map, and train and bus schedules. (You should get the latest schedules when you arrive since they change every now and then. There are special passes for those under 25 years old; ask at the bus and train station.)
- f. When you arrive you may wish to buy one or two of the many books about Oxford in the bookstores. You should make a point of visiting some of the more beautiful and interesting colleges as you go along. Set aside one or two hours a week for this purpose. Especially beautiful colleges include Christ Church, Magdalen (it has a Deer Park), Merton, Trinity, New College, and others too numerous to mention!
- g. The University newspaper, The Cherwell (pronounced Charwell), is published each week. Along with the bulletin boards, and the mail in your own box, it will alert you to events of all sorts. A useful broadsheet, Daily Information, lists events and is posted all over Oxford.
- h. Lastly, for information on the outside world, you will wish to read one of the many British newspapers. The International Herald-Tribune, which includes much American news, is on sale at many shops, including the large W.H.Smiths on Cornmarket. Time, Newsweek and The Economist also cover North American news.

The Porter's Lodge of each college is always an invaluable source of information.

As you read this handbook, you will note that some of the advice offered is inevitably of a personal nature. We hesitate to offer advice on the social customs of Oxford since we do not wish to imply that you need advice on how to behave with others. However, in many discussions with North American students last year, we were strongly urged to offer these special tips. There is no doubt that they will seem superfluous to some, but if even one student is helped it will be worth it. Our students come from different parts of North America and should realise that they are in a different environment where the customs and attitudes are necessarily different. For clarity's sake, we have generalised (and put in a few words) about subjects upon which books have been written. With these caveats, and only on the strong advice of past students, we offer some thoughts on how best to get along in Britain inside and outside of the classroom.

In conclusion, we also wanted to emphasise that this handbook was written by two Oxford dons (one is an American; the other is British familiar with North American students) working together (each has been an overseas student himself). Naturally each of us has their own point of view and each of us would not necessarily agree with every emphasis and nuance in this handbook. We hope it will be useful to you; we urge you to **read it carefully and often** (using the index) and we welcome you to Oxford and to a new world.

*For more information on Oxford University, go to: <http://www.ox.ac.uk>.*

*For a list of courses, go to: <http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/courses/index.shtml>.*

*For advice for Visiting Students, go to:  
<http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/forms/pdfs/vsugradnotes2002.pdf>.*

*For more information on New College, go to: <http://www.new.ox.ac.uk>.*

*For more information on New College Student Union (Junior Common Room), go to:  
<http://jcr.new.ox.ac.uk>.*

*For more information on Magdalen College, go to: <http://www.madg.ox.ac.uk> (Visiting Students only).*

*For more information on Magdalen College Student Union (Junior Common Room), go to:  
<http://jcr.magd.ox.ac.uk>.*

*For more information on Trinity College, go to: <http://www.trinity.ox.ac.uk>.*

*For more information on the Trinity College Student Union (Junior Common Room), go to:  
<http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/jcr>.*

*For more information on Christ Church, go to: <http://www.new.ox.ac.uk>.*

*For more information on Christ Church Student Union (Junior Common Room), go to:  
<http://www.chchjcr.org>.*

# ACADEMIC GUIDE FOR THE ASSOCIATE MEMBER

## PREFATORY NOTE

As you know, every college is different and the procedures outlined here may differ slightly from those of other colleges. Any significant difference will be pointed out to you by your adviser.

The Basic System: Oxford University is a confederation of 41 "societies" which admit their own students. The University matriculates students to supplicate for degrees, administers the final examination, and then awards degrees (to a passing student). You cannot be a junior member of the University without first being a junior member of a society. We have been invited by several of the 41 societies to recommend qualified students to them for consideration; these students would study for one year or less as "junior year abroad" students, associate members. (Graduate work is possible also).

The One-Year Student: Traditionally, there has been some resistance to admitting students to study for only one year. Starting in 1980, a few of the societies began to admit a very few one year students. As we note in our prospectus, a few leading U.S. colleges (Harvard, Columbia, etc.) have slowly made special arrangements with a few Oxford colleges to consider a few of their students for one year periods of study. The Information Officer of the University, Ms Ann Lonsdale, published an authoritative letter on this subject. In the newsletter of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, Ms Lonsdale notes that "Universities....in the U.S. have Junior Year Abroad agreements with the colleges of Oxford University rather than with the University itself." This is the method under which students recommended by us are accepted as "Visiting Students" or "Associate Members" of a number of Oxford University societies. Many of these places are "reserved" for students from non-American universities and many of the U.S. places are "reserved" for students from particular colleges (Georgetown, Tufts, Cornell, etc.) who have made special arrangements. As a result, only a few dozen of the US student spaces are open to qualified U.S. students from other colleges.

(Of course, a few other American students are admitted each year as degree candidates for either a second BA or an Oxford graduate degree.)

A number of one year students return to their Oxford colleges to pursue a degree; as "alumni" they are often welcomed back (several every year.) You may wish to consider this option.

An important point to bear in mind is that the British educational system is somewhat different from the American system. The last two years of a British high school (called the Sixth Form) are equivalent to the first two years of a U.S. college. The first year at Oxford, therefore, is on the approximate level of the Junior year of a distinguished American College. This means that all Oxford courses are on the junior, senior, and first year graduate level in U.S. terms; they all would be called "Upper Division" courses by a U.S. college. The Oxford BA (which becomes an MA eventually) is roughly equal to an MA at a leading U.S. college.

For this reason it is normally not possible for an American undergraduate to matriculate for an Oxford degree; except in a rare case, an Oxford college would normally admit only an American BA to degree status.

## Why Thirteen Weeks of Residence is Important to One-Term Students

The colleges that we are working with are aware that American students often are only able to study abroad for one term or semester (due to course requirements at home, finances, etc.).

If they welcome a student for one term they naturally wish to be sure that he or she will receive a substantial and coherent academic program.

The eight-week period is that *part* of the Oxford term during which the University lectures are given. Degree candidates normally arrive in zero week (the week before the first week of the eight weeks period) to meet with their supervisor regarding the term's courses, etc. Tutorial courses may extend into ninth or tenth week. According to experienced tutors, most degree candidates do academic work for at least 39 weeks a year (an average of 13 weeks a term). An important point is that Oxford degree candidates normally work on reading lists during the three vacation periods. For instance, the Oxford Classics Handbook says "Vacation study is vital." (p.11) With the approval of his or her US home college a non-graduating student may enrol in 2-4 additional *tutorials* each term at no extra cost. If a student chooses to study in less than the normal 14 tutorials there can be no refund since the cost for the entire program is based on average costs per student. Not every student will participate in every tour or use every library, etc. The same average use principle applies.

The Vice-Chancellor recently confirmed this view of the Oxford academic year in the *Oxford Gazette*. He wrote "attention is being given to ways in which existing practices may be formalised to make explicit the fact that the academic year at Oxford is more nearly the thirty week year of other institutions, and not, as is commonly assumed, a twenty-four week year."

OSAP will ensure that Visiting Student or Associate Member *will be in residence for 13 weeks a term* and will (depending on the individual college) normally study in one primary tutorial course of nine tutorial sessions and one secondary of five tutorial meetings. Alternatively, in some cases, three secondary courses of six tutorials each might be educationally desirable. Senior fellows also expect to consult with the student's U.S. professors to work out the *best* academic program for him or her.

This will mean that a student could *properly* earn 13-14 U.S. semester credits over 12-13 weeks of intensive academic work.

If you are considering applying through another US overseas program (as some students do) you should ask them specifically how many weeks of residence you will have. (Most offer only 8-9 weeks and students often must get their own housing in vacation periods if they come for two or three terms). Also ask how many tutorials will you have (most offer only 12 tutorials in 8 weeks). Also, ask if the other program has an office and staff in Oxford to help you. (Several have no Oxford office). The academic rankings of the colleges they work with may also be of interest. Ask about the "Norrington Tables".

You could also ask how many tours they offer, do they have a medical plan, is the housing with British students, what is the location? Will you receive a transcript authorized by Oxford University or a U.S. transcript?

## THE TUTORIAL SYSTEM

At Oxford, teaching is done primarily through the tutorial system. This unique system offers unrivalled opportunities to study concentrated topics in particular subjects. The tutorial consists in essence of an approximately one hour meeting between the tutor and one or two students, at which a piece of written work ("an essay") will be read and commented upon, with discussion frequently branching out beyond the original topic to embrace cognate areas as well. At the end of the tutorial the tutor will assign the topic to be studied over the forthcoming week and will suggest reading.

During your time in Oxford you will usually study one 'primary' and one 'secondary' subject, consisting of nine and five tutorials respectively, spread out at roughly weekly and fortnightly intervals in the term. We say 'roughly' because problems sometimes occur which make absolute adherence to this schedule impossible: You or your tutor may be ill; your tutorial course may start later in the term for some reason; or you may both simply decide that you wish to "bunch up" tutorials. As so often in Oxford, there is no absolutely "normal" pattern!

It will be apparent that the success of the system relies upon your engaging in extensive independent work, using the resources available to you, under the broad guidance of your tutor. The tutor's function is not to spoon-feed knowledge down compliant throats; sometimes you may leave one tutorial armed with only a reading list and the title of the next essay. But through the tutorial method you learn the skills of critical evaluation of material and organization of ideas not fostered by any other system - which is one reason why Oxford graduates are so highly prized in the outside world. Indeed, one might sum up the tutorial system by saying that its greatest function is to teach you how to teach yourself, probably the most important academic lesson you will ever learn.

The tutorial thus forms the focus of the week's work, providing a forum for the exchange of knowledge and ideas. A common concern of students is naturally that they wish to know how they are progressing during the term, since the only formal evaluation comes at the end of the tutorial course. In general Oxford tutors tend to confine their criticism (and praise!) to the particular topic under discussion in the tutorial and unless pressed refrain from more general comment. It is therefore in your interest to ask the tutor outright if you wish to know how you are progressing and how you may improve. Communication is a two-way affair and unless you ask questions information may not always be forthcoming! This is not because tutors do not wish to deal with such matters, but rather because they are not generally accustomed to being asked such questions by matriculated British degree students. However, once confronted they will usually be delighted to discuss your general progress.

You should always remember the Oxford tutor will be on your side, he or she will wish to see you do your best work so he or she will prod you but they will understand that the first tutorial will be a new experience for you. If you are selected for this program it will be because you will be able to do work at the Oxford level.

### **The Oxford Tutorial & Essay, (with advice on reading lists, etc.)**

Excerpts Taken from "Student Survival Kit", Dr Ian Archer, Fellow in History, Keble College. Accessed 13 June 2006 at <http://www.weblearn.ox.ac.uk/> These



very useful comments are published with the kind permission of Dr Archer. He wrote this advice for his own students in history but generally these comments can be applied to any of the social sciences or humanities.

- You are also encouraged to consult the Oxford Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (OxCHEPS) Occasional Paper No. 1: "The Oxford Tutorial" by Mr David Palfreyman, MA MBA LLB, Bursar and Fellow, New College, Oxford University. It is available at: [http://oxcheps.new.ox.ac.uk/MainSite%20pages/Resources/OxCHEPS\\_OP1.doc](http://oxcheps.new.ox.ac.uk/MainSite%20pages/Resources/OxCHEPS_OP1.doc). It includes chapters on the sciences and other subjects.

## **What Is Your Tutor Looking For?**

*Initiative:* how hard have you tried in seeking out books? have you gone beyond the demands of the reading list?

*Intellectual curiosity:* have you asked questions in tutorials? have you shown a willingness to study different types of history? how flexible are you in the face of new approaches/evidence? have you confined yourself narrowly to the demands of the syllabus?

*Argumentative flair:* have you structured your essays well? have you shown an interest in conceptual issues?

*Fluency:* what is the standard of your written English? how wide is your vocabulary?

*Responsiveness:* have you made an effort to implement any advice your tutor may have given you? do you make an effort in tutorials? do you engage with the work of your tutorial partners?

*Originality:* have you made a real effort to engage with the contents of what you have read? have you thought critically about the arguments of the historians?

*Professionalism:* have you been punctual for meetings? have you responded promptly to tutors' requests for information? have you respected the additional calls on your tutors' time?

*Efficiency:* how well have you managed the balance between academic and other commitments? have your assignments been completed on time?

*Team-work:* have you contributed constructively in seminars? have you managed to avoid the expression of personal animosities in your academic dealings with your peers?

**This may seem like a tall order, but these are precisely the range of qualities on which we regularly are required to comment to employers. Please do not expect us to perjure ourselves.**

## **Tutorials**

The tutorial should be a mutual exploration of a topic. It is not a one-way transaction; you are not there to be spoon-fed. You should expect your tutor to provide some feed-back on the content and structuring of your essay, but you should not let the initiative lie always with him/her. You should always go into the tutorial with an agenda of problems you feel need discussing. If you feel a little intimidated by the set-up - and perhaps some of you will at first - then write down the

things you want to discuss before you go in. You should pay careful attention to the issues the tutor raises with you and the range of alternative approaches he/she suggests. By all means take notes during the tutorial, but not at the expense of your own intellectual engagement. If you do not take notes during the tutorial, then write down what you have learned immediately the tutorial is over. Make sure that your notes are clear, and tidy them up if necessary after the tutorial. Tutors get extremely irritated when they find themselves going over in revision stuff through which they know they have laboured in tutorials.

[If applicable] Always listen patiently to what your tutorial partner(s) say, and be prepared to comment on their arguments. Don't always wait on your tutor's judgement. Never dismiss another person's point of view without arguing a case, and avoid posturing.

### **Relationship between assignments**

The weekly assignments should not be viewed in isolation; they are simply convenient divisions into which the material is divided for the purposes of learning. This means that you should endeavour to make connections between one week's work and the next. Sometimes students find the themes of papers rather alienating at first, but many of the ideas and approaches you use early on can be applied to later assignments, and you will also find that the insights of one paper can be applied to another.

### **Assessment Criteria**

Your work will be assessed according to the following criteria: focus on question, overall structure, coherence of argument, depth of reading, use of evidence and accuracy, and prose style.

Oxford has not yet surrendered to the new barbarism of subjective spelling and grammar. Illiteracy will be penalised [dyslexic students have special guidelines].

### **Planning and Writing Your Essay**

Planning your essay is essential, and you should ensure that you leave enough time to do it properly. Planning the essay is something you should be doing throughout the time of your work for it. Some students are paralysed at the point when they come to write the essay often because they have not been thinking about the demands of the question while researching the assignment. It is a good idea to keep a sheet separate from the main body of your notes on which you should record thoughts and ideas relevant to the essay title as they occur to you in the course of your reading. These jottings do not need to be elaborate, but making them will assist you in shaping an essay.

### **Essay writing**

Your guiding principle here should be clarity. Much of what I say below relates to making your case explicit and providing signposts to your argument. Aristotle helps us here: 'A speech has two parts. You must state your case and prove it. You cannot either state your case and omit to prove it, or prove it without having first stated it; since any proof must be a proof of something, and the only use of preliminary statement is the proof that follows it'. The introduction obviously plays a key role in providing the reader with guidance as to where you stand and how you propose to tackle the question.



Introductions have a number of functions. They can be used to IDENTIFY the issues which the question raises and the range of previous historical opinion (the 'historiography') on the question. Where opinion is divided - and it usually is - the introduction also provides an opportunity to EVALUATE the arguments (albeit in a preliminary fashion), either by indicating the kind of evidence on which they are based, or by looking at some of the conceptual difficulties raised by historians' different approaches. This evaluation should help you to SIGNPOST your own approach, in other words to establish an analytical strategy. The type of strategy you adopt will depend on the kind of question you have been asked but it often helps to break the question down into a series of sub-questions, each of which can be addressed in a separate paragraph.

Another (perhaps more interesting) technique is to begin the essay with an example which in some way encapsulates the nature of the problem you are exploring. You might use your example to generate the questions which determine the sequence of subsequent paragraphs.

Undergraduates often ask tutors whether they should or should not put their conclusions in their introductions - and they often misunderstand our answers, because there are not hard and fast rules. It is more important for the introduction to define the problem than to give a solution; so stating the conclusion should never be a substitute for opening up the issues. Having said that, it may be obvious by the end of the introduction what you are going to argue because of the way you are tackling the question: all well and good. But try to avoid the mechanical, 'In this essay I am going to argue that...': there are more artful ways of doing this.

Likewise conclusions are often difficult to handle, and I will confess that they give me more trouble than any other bit. If your essay has developed a clear line, you won't need to sum it up! You may want to find an appropriate image, example, or quotation which sums up your position.

Your essay should be clearly organised into paragraphs. Each paragraph should have an argument that is somehow related to the main question. If it does not, it should be eliminated. The argument of the paragraph (its proposition) should be announced in the first sentence of the paragraph (the 'topic sentence'). The following sentences should prove the proposition by means of evidence. It is also legitimate to use the topic sentence to introduce a question or state a problematic provided that (i) it is related to the main question; (ii) the paragraph addresses that question/problematic, and sticks to it; and (iii) your answer to the problematic is clear by the end of the paragraph. You should not drift from the subject matter announced in the topic sentence. It should be possible for the reader to make sense of your essay by reading the first and last sentences of each paragraph. Test for yourself.

Some students have difficulties linking their paragraphs. Much depends on whether you have successfully identified an analytical strategy at the outset. If you have done this well, you will already have given the reader the necessary signposts to the argument, so that he/she will know where each unit stands in relation to the whole. But there are other devices for linking material. One is by means of a brief summary of the argument so far, pulling the strands together, and indicating the thus far unanswered questions. Another is by providing a numbered sequence of points: 'There are (say) three reasons for this' *f* then list them in summary form *f* then devote a paragraph to each. Numbered sequences can also be used to organise material within paragraphs.

Another common source of difficulty lies in the use of evidence. Students either give no evidence at all for their assertions or they wallow in superfluous detail. Remember that you should never substitute an historian's opinion for a discussion of evidence on which it is based. In other words it is not adequate to say that 'Archer has shown that x is true', without indicating

something of how Archer got there. After all Archer may be a historical mountebank! But neither is it necessary to reproduce all Archer's evidence. A telling example, contemporary assessment, or persuasive (if you are convinced) statistic is often enough. Still more impressive is the classification of types of evidence: 'Contemporary assessments by *f* (give example) suggest that *f* This is confirmed by the evidence of A (give source type and example) and B (give source type and example)'. You should try to weave in evidence allusively rather than feel the need always to labour points.

As a matter of fact it is unwise to name-drop, not least because it is likely to lead you into the trap of substituting opinions for evidence. It is sometimes helpful to indicate historians' opinions in the introduction, but thereafter it is best to get down your own response. Name-dropping is also dangerous because of the risk of getting the wrong name. Some students show a distressing propensity to credit the writers of textbook cribs with the insights copied out from an original authority the student has been unable to consult.

Always move from weak points to strong ones. In other words don't end your essay (or indeed an individual paragraph) with a whole series of qualifiers thereby undercutting your argument. If you are dismissing a given line of argument do it at the beginning of the essay, not at the end; you must end on a positive note.

An argument is always strengthened by anticipating the obvious objections. The best historians will attempt to answer those objections.

Students sometimes get confused by the bewildering variety of historical experience, e.g. the problem of local variations. But remember that it is the historian's task to identify the variables which explain those differing patterns of behaviour. A standard rhetorical device which helps here is structuring the argument as follows 'Although example *x* shows that in a given set of circumstances *y* outcome *z* applied, nevertheless in the majority of cases circumstances *b* applied producing outcome *c*, as shown by examples *a*<sub>1</sub>, *a*<sub>2</sub>, *a*<sub>3</sub> etc.'

Avoid purely descriptive material; make sure that everything you write is problem orientated.

**Your essay should be concise; normally somewhere between 2000 and 3000 words should be adequate.**

Your essay should be clearly presented, and your tutor will probably be pleased if it has been word-processed using the facilities in the College's Computer Room. You should, in any case, acquire word-processing skills while at Oxford, as they are a definite career advantage.

All essays should include a margin of sufficient breadth to allow for written comments by the tutor.

You should always include a list of books and articles you have read at the end of each essay, or you may wish to footnote quotations. [Whatever notation style you use, it must be clear and consistent]

If your tutor has marked an essay, always read his/her comments, and try to act on advice given. If you cannot read the comments ask for them to be deciphered.

## Reading Lists

One of the most initially intimidating aspects of learning at Oxford is the reading list. You will undoubtedly be expected to read more than you have ever done at school. Your tutor should give you some guidance as to the order of priority to be observed among items, distinguishing between outline surveys, monographs, and articles. It is important that you realise that different types of text require different types of reading. You will read a few sources, articles and chapters in full. But you will also need to read some things at speed, especially if you are just trying to get a general sense of the argument. Varying your focus and speed so as to take in what you need, but no more, is one of the skills you will need to develop.

Textbooks you should read to get an idea of the order in which events happened and a notion of key personalities and historical issues. They are best read in the vacation preceding the term in which you study the paper. I do not advise you to take extensive notes from textbooks; you will end up virtually copying them out, and they will often leave you ill-equipped to answer questions because they rarely give a sense of the current debates. It is better to buy the textbook and use it for reference purposes as you cover the paper. Confine any note taking you make to analysis rather than narrative, while taking care to ensure that you have supporting evidence.

Students are often deterred from reading monographs because of their bulk; this is a pity because they can often provide new angles on familiar topics. Monographs do not necessarily have to be read from cover to cover; pay careful attention to tables of contents; sometimes your tutor will direct you to individual chapters; monographs are often susceptible to gutting; you can look at introductions and conclusions, and at the beginnings and ends of chapters; sometimes an article can be skimmed by reading the first and/or last sentence of each paragraph (the appropriate technique will depend on the author, and spotting the correct technique is something at which you will become proficient over time). Because writers of monographs are engaged in an academic discourse they tend to labour their conclusions, giving ten examples where one will do. Look out for the framework of the argument, and don't allow yourself to be swamped by detail - except where, you think, the detail is at the heart of an argument or is the crux of a whole topic or essay. Similar prescriptions apply to the reading of articles.

Make sure that you learn to use indexes. Sometimes you will be looking for information on a specific topic or individual; if the book has been properly indexed (alas, not always the case) you will be able to pinpoint what you need. But look carefully at how the index is arranged (in particular at the level of thematic indexing); sometimes it is necessary to engage in a certain amount of lateral thinking to find what you want.

Your reading should always be active. It is perfectly possible to spend long hours in the library but to make zero intellectual progress. This happens when you read passively, in other words without a set of questions in your mind. To generate a set of questions: think about the assignment you have been set (what is the broad structure of the subject? what parts can it be divided into? what seem to you to be the main themes within the topic? what interests you most about it? what broad questions does it raise? what is the range of alternative answers to the question you have been set?); think about the types of evidence the author is using; think about how the author relates to other authorities you have read; think about definitional and conceptual issues; think about other essays you have covered which address the same kind of historiographical issues; follow up any hints your tutor may have given you. Use textbooks for initial orientation, then move on to monographs and articles, preferably looking at as many as possible briefly in order to determine which will be most useful for the kind of questions you have become interested in.

Remember that while reading you are thinking about the ways in which the past has been investigated and interpreted and debated by historians, as much as trying to learn about the past itself. So, think about what the book/article is trying to do. Is it offering a synthesis or overview, making available some new information from primary research, or challenging older opinions with new arguments, ideas, and/or facts - or a combination of these? When was it written (especially in relation to other items on the same topic)? What are its assumptions and prejudices? Which sources is it relying upon and which has it missed out: do these make a difference to its line of argument? You should always be building up a picture of how historians work, and of the variety of ideas they entertain about the past.

- A further point which I can't emphasise too strongly. Don't feel hide-bound by the constraints of the reading list; if something interests you follow it up through the foot-notes; browse along library shelves by all means; look out for short-cuts to the monograph literature, e.g. by reading the reviews in periodicals like the *English Historical Review*, *Historical Journal*, *Journal of Modern History*. ...

A note on 'relevance'. Some students seem to think that a text is irrelevant if it does not directly answer the question they have been set. This is to fail to recognise that there would be little point in asking the question if there were a 'pat' answer somewhere. The reading you will be given often requires thought; some of the connections will not be immediately apparent. But, and this is very important, if you feel that a text has been irrelevant (or indeed if you have had difficulties in understanding it), use the tutorial to ask about it.

### **Monitoring progress**

Students often complain that they do not know where they stand. There are a number of mechanisms for feed-back. Sometimes tutors do not use them properly, and students have cause for complaint. But remember that any act of communication involves two parties, and if the mechanism has broken down, it may be because you have done little to activate it. Your tutor should provide feedback on essays in tutorials. If he/she does not, ask.

Note that by feedback I do not mean grades. My personal view is that it is unhelpful to label a student's work on a week-by-week basis with a raw grade. This can have the effect of discouraging students who are trying hard but who do not necessarily register improvement in the short-term. You can only expect to make significant strides by sustained effort. But note that you may ask for some indication of the level of your performance at the end of each term.

### **Punctuality**

Once your tutorial time has been set, you should stick to it. If you know of some regular commitment which may make attendance at a particular time difficult, you should tell your tutor in Noughth Week. Note that it is particularly difficult to rearrange the times of group classes once they have been fixed because of the number of parties potentially inconvenienced.

Always turn up for appointments on time. If you think that you are unable to make an appointment, please write to the tutor indicating your reasons. Never leave apologies until after an appointment has been missed; your failure to arrive on time will have generated a considerable amount of resentment in the mean time. These considerations apply with added force to tutors outside Keble.

If your tutor has asked for an essay to be handed in prior to the tutorial, please ensure that it is handed in by the time specified. If it is late, you should not be surprised if your tutor refuses to mark it. It is illegitimate to expect your tutor to be marking your essay in the early hours of the morning simply because the poverty of your own organisation has resulted in its being handed in late.

## **Courtesy**

Behave courteously towards all those with whom you have dealings (fellows, secretaries, College staff, and other students). Always show yourself willing to apologise, preferably in writing, if you have lapsed in any way.

## **Balance between academic and other commitments**

The first call on your time must be your work. This does not mean that you are not encouraged to engage in other activities (sport, drama, music, College and University Societies). On the contrary the flexibility of your timetable is one of the chief advantages of an Arts course. But you must learn to organise your timetable so that your work does not suffer. Some hints on time management are offered below. But one important point to be emphasised is that before undertaking any time consuming activity (e.g. holding College or University Office) you should discuss the matter with your tutor. You should avoid such commitments in the third year.

One hopes that your enthusiasm for the subject is such as to make these exhortations unnecessary, but bear in mind that there are sanctions against students who do not work.

## **Time management**

In many ways this is the biggest challenge of your time at Oxford. For much of your previous academic career you have been bound by timetables imposed by external agencies. It is also worth emphasising that most future careers will also impose demanding schedules. While at Oxford, however, you are given a considerable degree of freedom to manage your own time.

- i. The most important point is to make sure that you work steadily. Do not leave your work until the last minute, but allocate a set number of hours each day to your work.
- ii. One source of problems is the cycle whereby students do one set of assignments weekly [a primary course] and another concurrent set of assignments fortnightly [a secondary course]. This means that in some weeks one essay has been completed, in others two. It is tempting to take things easy in the 'lighter' weeks, but this is foolish as it piles up work for the following week. Create a timetable for each week which allocates time to both assignments.
- iii. Remember that efficient work depends upon a degree of concentration. One implication of this is that the efficiency of your work will depend on where you work. Some students use the College Library as a talking shop; others find that working in their rooms leads to continuous interruptions from friends wanting cups of tea; you may find it better to work where there are fewer distractions, and this is particularly true if you are a social animal. There is a great choice of academic venues in Oxford: the Bodleian has numerous reading rooms of varied character, and you will probably find the Faculty a congenial environment. This is not to say that you should not socialise, rather that you should canalise your social energies into set times of the day.
- iv. Some students know that because of major extracurricular commitments they will be extremely pressed in particular terms. If this is the case, then they should discuss the matter in advance with their tutor. In these cases a sensible course of action is to build up an essay bank during the vacation preceding the term in question, i.e. to prepare a number of essays beforehand.
- v. Keep financial affairs in good order, because disentangling them will take up a lot of your time. Settle your bills promptly; ensure that you have the funds to meet your obligations;

and apply for grants and loans at the start of the year. Failure in this area is rarely balanced by academic success.

- vi. Keep your correspondence in good order, replying promptly to the communications you receive.

## **Invitations**

You may occasionally receive invitations while at Oxford, some from tutors, some from College Officers, some from College and University Societies. If the invitation says RSVP it is frankly rude not to reply. Some people are unclear on how to reply to formal invitations. The usual form is as follows: 'AB would like to thank CD for his/her kind invitation to whatever and is delighted to accept/regrets that he/she is unable to come'. If you have enjoyed a social occasion hosts generally enjoy receiving written thanks, particularly on nice postcards! It makes the host feel that the occasion has been worthwhile and induces the kind of benevolence which is likely to produce further invitations!

## **References**

Never give a tutor's name as a referee unless you have asked permission of him/her. It is a good idea to send your tutor a copy of your C.V. or an application form to ensure that the reference is written from an informed position. Make sure that your instructions are crystal clear, e.g. with respect to deadlines. Such instructions should be written down. Always allow your tutor plenty of time to write the reference, and make careful enquiries as to the tutor's availability during vacations (there is a possibility that he/she will be absent on research).

## **Enjoying the course**

Oxford can provide an incredibly vibrant and stimulating intellectual and cultural environment. How far you benefit from this will be the real test, because the fulfilment of your intellectual and cultural potential depends on choices you make. Many of those choices are outlined above, but note the following tips to increase your enjoyment.

- i. Try to broaden the range of topics you study. There are opportunities within the outline papers to study social, economic, cultural, ecclesiastical, intellectual, military, diplomatic, and political themes.
- ii. Be prepared to talk about historical topics with your peers. Historians should make good dinner-time companions with interesting conversation!
- iii. Try to let your historical understanding inform your perceptions of contemporary political issues, and talk about them with your friends.
- iv. Seek out some of the special lectures, particularly those given by visiting academics. They will broaden your horizons.
- v. Make your holiday travel arrangements mesh with areas of your historical study. Your enjoyment of a place will be much enhanced by an understanding of its history.
- vi. Read some historical novels.
- vii. Read a decent newspaper or news magazine like Prospect, The Economist or New Statesman and Society. Historians should always be alert to the world around them. They do not live in the past.

[The above advice is obviously geared towards historians, but is generally applicable]

## Finally,

Please remember that the demands on your tutors' time are multiple. They are not merely undergraduate teachers, important though that is to their role; they have administrative duties in both the College and the University; they have responsibility for graduate students both in their College and elsewhere; and, most importantly, they are part of an international research community. This is not to discourage you from approaching them; but it is to encourage you to observe the guidelines outlined above. Remember that Oxford gives its students a unique level of access to its faculty members, and you should therefore respect the demands on their time by conducting your relations with them in a thoroughly professional and mature manner. In that way you will get the most from them.

## Choice of Tutorial Subject

Your academic impression of Oxford will be formed mainly by your experience in tutorials - and how well this functions is bound up largely with the choice of subject. In theory there is a wide variety of subjects on offer at any one time, yet the choice you make must be limited by certain important factors.

The tutorial system is completely unsuitable for study on the introductory level: the idea that a tutorial, especially a secondary one, might be a good way to have a taste of a subject is quite misguided. **All** Oxford courses are taught at the U.S. advanced level, equivalent to junior, senior or M.A. years at leading U.S. colleges (Harvard, Stanford etc.). For example, to ask for a secondary tutorial in logic without having any background in philosophy would be very foolish. Bear in mind that your tutors will be used to dealing mainly with British students who are required to specialise at a much earlier age than in the United States, beginning even at high school. The best subjects to choose to study at Oxford are thus those where you already possess a good basic knowledge. If you need to take a subject at an introductory level for credit requirements then you should do so at your home university, where such a course will certainly be provided.

It is equally important that you take account of Oxford's particular strengths, both in terms of tutors and of material, and that you do not take subjects here which you could do more easily, and probably with better provision, at your home university. For example, asking to study the literature of the Deep South and some arcane subject of the American Civil War really misses the point of your coming to a foreign country to study, whereas an examination of Matthew Arnold's poetry and the causes of the English Civil War would allow you much better choice of tutors and more material with which to work. Of course, you will be studying in a geographical locality in which these topics would come to life.

**We want to stress that when you plan your Oxford courses you should not think about what you would normally study next term at your home college. You could take those courses later. You should think about how you can best make use of Oxford's almost unique opportunities.**

Please bear these comments in mind when making your tutorial choices, since they will have a large bearing on the success of your studies here. It must also be pointed out that your Academic Adviser will not arrange tutorials in particular subjects if he believes that your background is not sufficient to enable you to profit from the course. Please note that the provision of any particular course cannot be guaranteed in any way. For all these reasons no tutorial arrangements for your



first term of study in Oxford will be confirmed until you have been interviewed by your Oxford Academic Adviser.

## Choice of Tutors

The tutor who will teach your chosen subject will be assigned in consultation with senior colleagues in the subject concerned. Each arrangement is thus made on an individual basis taking into account the subject, the tutor's particular expertise.

There is, however, a wide variety of different kinds of tutors in Oxford, all of whom may be referred to collectively as "dons". (Don is Latin for teacher) At the top come the professors, about 8% of all teachers, whose title denotes not just that they are university professors, but that they hold a chair in the subject. The primary responsibility of a professor is to research and to lecture; apart from the occasional graduate supervision, they do not tutor at all, so you will not often meet them directly in tutorials. Where appropriate, however, the Advisers do persuade chairs to teach Associate Members.

Tutorial fellows form the backbone of the teaching system in Oxford; Fellows often hold university lectureships. The equivalent of fully tenured American professors, they are assisted by college lecturers (a misnomer, since they do not lecture at all). Research fellows (whether senior or junior) are engaged primarily in their own research, although they may take on a very few pupils for particular special subjects.

You may expect to be taught by tutors from any, or indeed all of these categories during your time at Oxford, since you will be taught by the same specialists, in the same way, and to the same standards as matriculated degree students. You may, of course, request particular tutors and every care will be taken to make appropriate arrangements where possible. However, no guarantee can be given that any particular tutor will be available to teach in any given term.

American students should also be aware that the PhD (or DPhil) is not regarded as important at Oxford. Many of the senior faculty (Fellows and Professors) never bothered with a PhD. They earned a First and wrote a book or books (the equivalent of a PhD) and were offered a Fellowship in international competition. Some of the most distinguished scholars have only earned a BA degree (the MA is honorary). Remember, it is a different system.

Oxford has always been a very international university...it was founded in large part by scholars from all over Europe (at that time every educated European spoke Latin). Today about 30% of the students are from overseas and about the same ratio applies to the faculty so you may have a tutorial from an Indian, an Australian, a German...or an American (about 5% of the faculty, including Masters of three colleges, are American.)

The Academic Advisers in the colleges that we have been working with are all well aware that a OSAP student will only be in Oxford for a relatively short time. They will make a special effort, therefore, to see to it that these students get the most out of their time in Oxford.

Students accepted should know that they will be taught by the best teachers available in their subjects regardless of which college they themselves are affiliated. In the academic sense, therefore, it makes little difference with which college you yourself may be associated.

Changing tutors once arrangements have been made is only permitted in unusual circumstances, after consultation with your Academic Adviser. You should be aware that matriculated degree students are only rarely allowed to change tutors in the middle of the term. Given the close, one-to-one nature of the tutorial, it is inevitable that occasional personal problems arise. If you ever

do have a problem of any kind with a tutorial you should talk to your Academic Adviser right away.

Your college may be thought of as your "home base"; you will probably find yourself doing work with dons from several other colleges.

## **The Academic Placement Process**

Students should always bear in mind that (as you have been told) Oxford is an international university (about 30% are from overseas); still, it is located in England and English customs tend to prevail. You must not think of Oxford as similar to an American University, in many ways it isn't. It is highly decentralized and individualistic. This allows for a very individual treatment of students. You will not be an IBM number here. Many U.S. students say they are amazed at how easy it is to meet with faculty members, even very senior ones. On the other hand, the academic process is not so cut and dried as it can be in the U.S.; you will not 'register' on your first day here and walk into a classroom on the second.

If you cooperate fully with the guidelines in this handbook, you should expect to have all your tutorials set before the end of First Week. Sometimes an especially good tutor for a secondary course may only be available in the second week. If you wish to enrol in a difficult or esoteric course, or one for which few, if any, tutors are available at the time, you will be so advised. You must realise that such a course may take more time to process. Naturally, if you change your mind this will also delay the process. During the period in which arrangements are made you should keep in close contact with your Academic Adviser (note his office hours, etc.), but you should not expect him to give you hourly reports ("I have contacted X who will let me know by Y", etc.) You must not worry that you have been 'forgotten'; this will not happen. Difficult subjects, however, will inevitably take longer to arrange.

Oxford dons naturally have many responsibilities, and sometimes will not be able to respond immediately. You should remember that they are used to thinking in long-range terms (most of their students are three or four year students) and may proceed a bit slower than they might in a U.S. college. Most U.S. students tell us the process is not always easy, but the end result is very rewarding.

## **The Responsibilities of the Student**

1. The independent and inevitably loose structure of the tutorial system means that the student must assume certain important responsibilities. Failure to take these seriously will not only affect your own progress, but will selfishly cause difficulties to others. Briefly stated these responsibilities are as follows:
2. Keep in close contact with your tutor. Exchange telephone numbers so that you can make easy contact in case of illness or other emergencies.
3. Keep your Academic Adviser informed of any difficulties which you may experience with your academic work. Unless you bring your problems to light yourself they may fester unknown for a long while. It is your responsibility to ensure that such problems are made known as soon as possible.
4. Attend tutorials punctually at the times and on the days agreed between you and your tutor. A tutorial arrangement is one that may be broken only in the case of real emergency, such as illness.
5. Observe all library regulations assiduously.

6. Check your college mailbox frequently for messages - at least on a daily basis. You may ask a flatmate to do this for you on days when you are not in college.
7. Inform your Academic Adviser immediately of any change in your study plan.
8. The Academic Adviser - It is the primary role of the Academic Adviser to arrange your tutorials, liaise with tutors, monitor your progress, and oversee your evaluations. He or she is always willing to see students and may be contacted at all times indicated on his or her door, by telephone (answerphone service) or in writing. However, unless you come during the above mentioned office hours, an interview can only take place by appointment.
9. Your academic adviser will talk with your tutors periodically and email or call you to make certain all is going well.

## LIBRARIES

You should ask your tutor right away which libraries are the best for the books he or she will assign. All the libraries are decentralized and each has its own admissions policy

Associate Members may thus be admitted to the faculty (departmental) libraries in most cases. Each such library has its own policies. Normally, as in the Bodleian, borrowing is not permitted.

Your college libraries offer you free use on the same basis as matriculated students. Borrowing is permitted. As you were told, it is normal to spend about \$150 a term on books in Oxford. If you have any difficulties, you should consult with your own tutor, with the academic advisor, or with our staff, all of whom will do their best to help.



Naturally, like all other students, you should obey the rules of each library. All libraries have the right to ban students from admission if the rules are violated. Your college will take a dim view of this if they are informed, as they would be. As a courtesy to other students, you should not borrow more books than you can read in three days, and you should return those books as soon as you have finished with them. Oxford students "use" (skim) a great many books each week, far more than is usual at most U.S. colleges.

As you have been told very clearly, Associate Members are permitted to use the main university library (the Bodleian) between 9.00 am and 10.00 pm on weekdays and between 9.00 am and 1.00 pm on Saturdays on the same basis as degree candidates.

No one may borrow from the Bodleian Library.

The advisers and tutors we have talked to agree that many (not all) of your tutors will be able to lend you hard-to-get books.

Your advisers are convinced this system will make it easier for you to gain access to the books you will need in Oxford. As you know, you will also be able to borrow from the Oxford Union (if you decide to join), which has a large lending library, our own library of 3000 frequently used books (we buy back academic books at half-price) and the Oxford City Library. As in all colleges, it is customary to buy frequently used books, especially paperbacks. You will have access to at least 7 million books while you are in Oxford. You will have to be prepared to make use of a large system which is sometimes not easy to use.

The authorities at Oxford, like all universities, change their policies from time to time, so a change in these policies is always a possibility.

## GRADES & EVALUATIONS

Toward the end of each term your tutors will be asked to provide a brief written report of your work and progress during the term and to give assessment. This is usually based on your written essays and tutorial discussions; in some cases tutors may set a written examination as well. You will be measured against the standards expected of matriculated degree students and graded accordingly. No allowance is made for unfamiliarity with the Oxford system.

The scale used in Oxford is based on Greek letter grades and although it cannot be directly translated into American terms the following table (written in consultation with the dons who have taught at leading US colleges) offers a carefully considered comparison:

<u>Oxford Grades</u>	<u>U.S. Grade</u>	<u>Point Values</u>
<b>Alpha, Alpha-</b>	<b>A+ or A</b>	<b>4.3/4.0</b>
<b>Alpha--, Alpha Beta</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Beta-Alpha, Beta+</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>3.7</b>
<b>Beta, Beta---</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<b>Beta-Gamma, Gamma-Beta</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Gamma+++ , Gamma+</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>2.7</b>

Your grade evaluation will be discussed at the end of each term (see above under 'Academic Adviser'). However, you must be aware that these grades are not open to negotiation and that only in exceptional cases will tutors be asked to reconsider their marking - your Academic Adviser will already have discussed directly with the tutor any grade which seems unclear, or incompatible with the written evaluation.

Because your Oxford tutors and your home college advisers want you to have the opportunity of completing a substantial and coherent body of academic work during your relatively short time in Oxford your term as an Associate Member will be thirteen weeks in length (your housing is included for 3 months). A one term student, therefore, will be able to complete the academic work of a US semester (14 semester credits).

Students enrolling for the full academic year will normally have 12 or 13 tutorials a term and thus will be able to earn 36 to 39 US semester credits for the academic year.

All credits are actually awarded (via transfer) by the home college; it is the student's responsibility to see that proper arrangements have been made in advance. Some U.S. colleges

may limit the number of credits that may be earned abroad, or have some unusual credit system, in which case your registrar will make an appropriate adjustment.

Students may request a transcript from an accredited US university which has worked closely with OSAP for many years. They must enroll before the start of term.

## **Grades and Evaluations**

Toward the end of each term your tutors will be asked to provide a brief written report of your work and progress during the term and to give assessment. This is usually based on your written essays and tutorial discussions; in some cases tutors may set a written examination as well. You will be measured against the standards expected of matriculated degree students and graded accordingly. No allowance is made for unfamiliarity with the Oxford system.

The scale used in Oxford is based on Greek letter grades and although it cannot be directly translated into American terms the following table (written in consultation with the dons who have taught at leading US colleges) offers a carefully considered comparison:

<b><u>Oxford Grades</u></b>	<b><u>U.S. Grade</u></b>	<b><u>Point Values</u></b>
<b>Alpha, Alpha-</b>	<b>A+ or A</b>	<b>4.3/4.0</b>
<b>Alpha--, Alpha Beta</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Beta-Alpha, Beta+</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>3.7</b>
<b>Beta, Beta---</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<b>Beta-Gamma, Gamma-Beta</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Gamma+++, Gamma+</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>2.7</b>

Your grade evaluation will be discussed at the end of each term (see above under 'Academic Adviser'). However, you must be aware that these grades are not open to negotiation and that only in exceptional cases will tutors be asked to reconsider their marking - your Academic Adviser will already have discussed directly with the tutor any grade which seems unclear, or incompatible with the written evaluation.

Because your Oxford tutors and your home college advisers want you to have the opportunity of completing a substantial and coherent body of academic work during your relatively short time in Oxford your term as an Associate Member will be thirteen weeks in length (your housing is included for 3 months). A one term student, therefore, will be able to complete the academic work of a US semester (14 semester credits).

Students enrolling for the full academic year will normally have 12 or 13 tutorials a term and thus will be able to earn 36 to 39 US semester credits for the academic year.

All credits are actually awarded (via transfer) by the home college; it is the student's responsibility to see that proper arrangements have been made in advance. Some U.S. colleges may limit the number of credits that may be earned abroad, or have some unusual credit system, in which case your registrar will make an appropriate adjustment.

Students may request a transcript from an accredited US university which has worked closely with OSAP for many years. They must enroll before the start of term.

## FURTHER CONTACT WITH OXFORD

It is possible that you may need a more detailed statement than the transcript can supply, in which case you should ask one or more of your tutors for a reference. They will be glad to provide this, but please bear in mind that it is only courteous to ask their permission in advance and that no tutor likes to be inundated with blanket requests. If you think it at all likely that you will need such a reference, ensure that you have the tutor's address before you leave Oxford.

If you should wish another official copy of your academic reports after you leave Oxford (perhaps for a graduate school application) you should first ask if your home college will forward an official copy from your home files.

As you will discover, Oxford tutors are sometimes a little slow in dealing with administrative matters. They must have a **minimum notice of one month** before the time the official copy must be sent to your graduate school, etc. That is, if you have a deadline of February 1, you would let your Academic Adviser know of your request no later than January 1.

Finally, please bear in mind that we are here to help as much as possible during your stay in Oxford, however, we cannot anticipate every request. Usually most of your requests can be dealt with if we are informed of them in good time and if you keep in contact with us.

If you read this handbook carefully and refer to it often (as you would in your home college), your time in Oxford will be much easier and your academic experience much more fruitful.

IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SOME OF YOU WILL HAVE RECEIVED THIS GUIDE AFTER SENDING IN YOUR ACADEMIC PROPOSALS. IF ANYTHING YOU HAVE READ HERE HAS CAUSED ANY CHANGE IN THESE PLANS PLEASE CONTACT THE OSAP OFFICE IMMEDIATELY WITH WRITTEN DETAILS OF YOUR NEW REQUESTS.

## WITHDRAWALS

As is customary in all overseas study programs (and in colleges generally) if a student withdraws from the program after a certain date no refund is possible. If a student notifies OSAP in writing before the date given, he or she will receive a refund of all fees paid, less a \$300 administrative fee.

Our refund policy is included in our detailed admissions letter.

We also advise students to obtain some kind of tuition insurance from their insurance agent to protect themselves in the future. Students and overseas advisers will understand that, as in all overseas study programs, most of the expense must be paid in advance and "running" expenses (rent is paid monthly, for instance) are still budgeted on a termly or yearly basis, as the case may be. Our overall fees are set, therefore, with these committed expenses in mind.

We have included this full explanation in the Handbook so that students will be fully informed.

To repeat our refund policy: Refunds can be granted only to those students whose written notices of withdrawal are received by OSAP before September 1, 2006 for the academic year or for the Fall term, (including the September program) or for the combined Fall and Winter terms, or

before December 1, 2006 for the Winter term 2007 or for the combined Winter and Spring terms of 2007, or before March 15, 2007 for the Spring Term or May 15 for the Summer sessions or at least two weeks before the start of each future summer session. Future years and terms would come under exactly the same policies (allowing for differences in the year....2007, 2008, 2009 etc.). We stress that students who enrol for a year or for two combined terms are enrolled for those periods and the deadline date for withdrawal is the date prior to the start of the combined terms or year. After those dates no refunds are possible.

As we also say in our admissions letter a student may make a special agreement with OSAP to modify one of our general policies (for instance, we might guarantee a handicapped student a ground floor room in advance). It is the student's responsibility to obtain a letter from OSAP confirming this agreement. You will readily see that this avoids confusion since either person involved could honestly forget a conversation 6 months old. In this way we seek to protect our students against any possible misunderstanding in the future.

## **CLUBS, SOCIETIES AND SPORTS**

We encourage students to join clubs and sports as a way to make friends with like-minded Britons. Vade Mecum, published every term, includes a list of many of these clubs and teams. Look up the name of an officer and go to see him or her; if they are out, leave a note and the officer will contact you with the next meeting time etc. The Oxford Student Handbook, published by the Students' Representative Union includes a list of clubs; remember that this book reflects the viewpoint of the students who wrote it, you may well have a different point of view.



Usually, any of the students from your college that you meet in the dining hall or the bar, will know whom you should see to join any particular club or team. Certainly the officers of the Junior Common Room will know - you can always contact them through your college Porters Lodge. The Colleges we work with all have British student advisers who will help you in many ways including joining clubs. You will be told how to reach them at orientation. If you have any difficulty, or would like further advice, you should ask our staff. Your Academic Adviser or tutor may know about certain clubs as well.

OSAP students are most definitely welcome to join in the rich extra-curricular life at Oxford. The many teams are delighted to have their skills and energy. There are almost unlimited opportunities open to you and we sincerely hope you will take advantage of at least some of them.

Many clubs and teams have membership fees. Since each student will join a different club (including perhaps, the Oxford Union Society), all such fees are the responsibility of each student.



## COMMUNICATIONS WITH OUR STAFF, ADVISERS, TUTORS, ETC.

Do not forget that Oxford is a large university by British standards and, therefore, communication with the right persons is not always simple. (American students do stress that they are always treated as individuals in Oxford -- there is not the mass bureaucracy found on giant U.S. campuses).

Everything in Oxford is decentralized...that has its advantages and disadvantages. Sometimes you will find that one of the officials of your college has not heard of you because he or she has not been given an up-to-date list of all the students. If this happens, simply refer him or her to your college Oxford Academic Advisor. The college porter and the dining halls will all have your name on their various lists--although again, some mistakes are always possible. You should not be surprised by this; this is simply the way Oxford is; it has been that way for centuries, and we are not going to change it.

It might be useful at this point to quote the impressions of a well known North American essayist, Stephen Leacock, who wrote in "My Discovery of England" (1922):

"Oxford is a notable university. It has a great past. It is at present the greatest university in the world; and it is possible that it has a great future. (We are the future, Ed.) Oxford trains scholars of the real type better than any place in the world. Its methods are antiquated. It despises science. Its lectures are rotten. It has professors who never teach and students who never learn. It has no order, no arrangement, no system. Its curriculum is unintelligible. It has no president. And yet, it gets there. Whether we like it or not, Oxford gives something to its students, a life and a mode of thought which in America as yet we can emulate but not equal."

He might have added that the library system is difficult to understand (it is now in the process of being computerized). So, Oxford does change...but many would say...not much. In fairness, Oxford is now a world leader in science and very few of the lectures could be called "rotten".

As one American student once put it: "Oxford is not for everyone....especially it is not for anyone who wants everything clearly arranged for him or her." You may have to talk to two or three persons to find the person who can help. You have to remember that Oxford is NOT located in America.

But to return to the issue of communication. You will want to keep in touch with your tutors, your Oxford Academic Advisor, and other faculty and staff. Most of these persons will have regular office hours. You may see them at any of those times (as soon as the student who got there ahead of you leaves!). You will also be able to call them. Remember that people, (especially dons) are often out of their offices (teaching, etc.). Many will have answering machines or you may leave a message for them in the College Lodge. They will then call you back (and you may be out). Bear in mind that this process of telephone tag is inevitable.

You should always receive a call or written message back in a few days - if the person is not ill, at a conference in St. Petersburg, etc. If you have an urgent problem you should consult your Adviser or our own staff.

When writing to tutors, you should obtain some college note cards or letterhead and envelopes and use the inter-college mail. There is an inter-college mailbox in every Porter's Lodge.

You should check your own mailbox in your college everyday (or have a friend or flatmate do it for you). You should look at the college bulletin boards; often an interesting event, party, lecture, etc. will be coming up. Make a point of asking one or two of your British friends who live in college to let you know if anything interesting is happening in college, either officially or unofficially.

## EDUCATIONAL TOURS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

As OSAP students are in Oxford for a relatively short time, we make a special effort to encourage as much social and cultural integration as possible. (Many of these activities will be organized by your College, by individual British common rooms, by clubs and sports teams, by individual British friends, etc.).



We organize welcoming receptions of various sorts so that you all will have an opportunity to meet each other and some of your dons at the earliest possible moment. We organize informal parties--as ice-breakers--so you may meet other OSAP students and some of your British classmates. We also organize educational tours to places in Britain you should see--Cambridge University, Stratford-upon-Avon, London, etc.



In order for the tours to work smoothly, it is naturally necessary for everyone to cooperate. Most importantly, you should be sure to let our office know as soon as possible if you have to cancel. This will enable us to invite another student (or at least to cancel the ticket reservation, etc.) to avoid the waste of a place or money. Sometimes in order to get somewhere on time we will have to leave at 10 AM Saturday morning...this means planning your schedule accordingly. While on a tour it is necessary for everyone to stick together and not to leave the

group. If you do leave the group, we naturally cannot be responsible for getting you back with the tour. For this reason (since getting "lost" is always possible) you should always carry 20 pounds in cash with you for emergencies (return bus fare etc.) A credit card is always helpful just in case.

Needless to say, you should always pay due attention to your British hosts (we will invite Britons to take part in our activities); it would not be courteous simply to chat among yourselves and not to mix with the British people who have (in part) invited you to a tour, reception, dinner, etc.



If we all cooperate, in the ways outlined in this handbook, you will find you will get a great deal more out of your stay in Britain and you will make friends and enjoy yourself. Some students will naturally be a bit less outgoing than others and these students will see the merit of making a special effort to mix with the British and exchange ideas.



## MEDICAL CARE

You are well advised to make certain that your medical insurance covers you during your stay in England. If it does not it is possible to obtain traveller's health insurance for short periods. While in Britain, the National Health Service will treat you free if it is an emergency; however, since you do not pay British taxes it is only fair that they charge you for other treatment. If you are in Britain for two terms (6 months) however, you may use the NHS (free) from the date of your arrival. Each college has a doctor on call and if you become ill you may consult him or her through the Porter's Lodge. There is a full hospital in Oxford. Remember that you have given us permission (in your release form) to act on behalf of your parents should an emergency arise (Naturally, this is unlikely, but it is good to be prepared). We will always do all we can to help but naturally we can accept no responsibility for any medical problems.

OSAP has made a special arrangement with one of the leading doctors in Oxford. He is a former President of the Oxford Medical Society and the doctor for New College. He will charge you half his normal fees for any needed consultations.

Each college has a women's officer (and a woman doctor) who will be pleased to help female students who may have problems they do not wish to discuss with a male doctor or don.

As you know from your admission letter, we do not charge for meals, in order to give students complete flexibility. We find that many students find set meal-times in college halls sometimes inconvenient if they are working in libraries or otherwise engaged.

As you know from comments from previous students not every student enjoys college food. One student said, "I didn't come here to eat."

We hope, however, that you will decide to dine in your college hall at least some of the time, especially the formal meals which many students find to be an enjoyable tradition, rarely found in North America. Such meals are an important part of the overall Oxford experience.

Each college has different regulations concerning meals. You will be told what they are in your own case. Vegetarian and kosher meals are usually available. The Hebrew Studies Center serves strictly kosher meals.

Some colleges charge a fee at induction (around £50) for a card which allows you to charge meals, etc. on your account. You need only pay for the meals you eat - usually around £3.50 for dinner.

We encourage students to invite each other back and forth to meals and to drinks in their respective college bars. This is an excellent way to meet British students--they will then invite you back to their colleges, etc.

In many colleges, you may, if you wish, book a private room to give a private dinner party for friends. The cost is much less than what a restaurant would cost. If your college does not have private rooms, ask a friend to arrange it at his or her college.

Most students seem to prefer dining in their flat most of the time - all of which are equipped with good kitchen facilities. This will keep the cost of meals low and you will be able to eat exactly what you want.

Late night snacks are an Oxford tradition and are available from various vans on the main streets. They are not nutritious of course.

## **MEALS**

As you know from your admission letter, we do not charge for meals, in order to give students complete flexibility. We find that many students find set meal-times in college halls sometimes inconvenient if they are working in libraries or otherwise engaged.

As you know from comments from previous students not every student enjoys college food. One student said, "I didn't come here to eat."

We hope, however, that you will decide to dine in your college hall at least some of the time, especially the formal meals which many students find to be an enjoyable tradition, rarely found in North America. Such meals are an important part of the overall Oxford experience.

Each college has different regulations concerning meals. You will be told what they are in your own case. Vegetarian and kosher meals are usually available. The Hebrew Studies Center serves strictly kosher meals.

Some colleges charge a fee at induction (around £50) for a card which allows you to charge meals, etc. on your account. You need only pay for the meals you eat - usually around £3.50 for dinner.



We encourage students to invite each other back and forth to meals and to drinks in their respective college bars. This is an excellent way to meet British students--they will then invite you back to their colleges, etc.

In many colleges, you may, if you wish, book a private room to give a private dinner party for friends. The cost is much less than what a restaurant would cost. If your college does not have private rooms, ask a friend to arrange it at his or her college.

Most students seem to prefer dining in their flat most of the time - all of which are equipped with good kitchen facilities. This will keep the cost of meals low and you will be able to eat exactly what you want.

Late night snacks are an Oxford tradition and are available from various vans on the main streets. They are not nutritious of course.

## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

### **Expenses**

A number of students (and parents) have asked us for guidance on personal expenses.

Naturally this will depend on the individual. In general, Oxford is considered very expensive, as expensive as London. (Rents for students are very high - just ask any British student when you arrive).

Roughly speaking, we would say that Oxford is about 60% more expensive than most college towns in the East, such as New Haven, Boston, etc.

You can save a lot of money by avoiding restaurants; an average lunch would cost about 9 pounds (we will use pounds, you can check the current exchange rate in any good newspaper. Pub lunches are a good buy - about 4-5 pounds. College meals are a real bargain - about 3.00 pounds and you can cook meals in your flat (all have kitchens) eat exactly what you want and not go over 3.00 pounds. The college bars sell beer (the drinking age in England is 18) at about a third less than the public bars, "pubs".

A bus ride to London (about 1 1/2 hours) costs about 7.00 pounds return.

We would say a student could live modestly for a week in Oxford, meals, some bus fares, movies, drinks, laundry, etc. for about 80 to 100 pounds. You may wish to plan a budget which will allow you to travel in more of Europe for a week or two after (or before) the end of term.

When you arrive you can open a bank account, with cheques. You can have money sent from the States through your bank or through the American Express office in Oxford. Students are advised to consult with their bank prior to their departure for Oxford to verify whether their automatic teller machine card will be accepted in the United Kingdom and to inquire about other international financial services.

### **What to Bring**

First of all you should shop around to find the best discounted airline ticket. Normally, if you pay three weeks in advance you will get an automatic discount.

Travel as light as possible. If you come in the first two terms (Fall and Winter) you will need two kinds of clothing for each term (Fall-Winter and Winter-Spring). In the Spring term, after April 15 to the end of June, you should only need Spring clothing. Since you buy clothes periodically anyway you may wish to bring clothes for one season and buy the others in Oxford (British clothes have a good reputation).

---

*"OSAP has been very helpful as a support system for the Oxford experience."*

TB, Allegheny College

Basically, southern England has about the same weather as New England except that it is a bit colder and it rains more often. For the Winter season (after about November 1) you will need an overcoat and a sweater. Fall and Spring clothing would be just what you need for the northern U.S. Most Oxford students dress casually but you will need a jacket and tie at least - a dark suit will probably be needed once in a while (or the women's equivalent).

Visiting Students will need to wear subfusc once or twice - a dark suit or dress with a white tie (which can be bought in Oxford) and black academic gowns.

Most clubs have termly black tie dinners and there are Balls. You could buy a used tuxedo in Oxford (the British prefer them - they look older, etc). Women could get by with a party dress - a long gown is rarely necessary. You will need all the personal items (razor, etc.) that you would normally take to your home college.

In most cases, U.S. electrical equipment, including computers, may be used in England with an attachment you can buy on arrival. You may wish to rent a computer if you come for only one term. You will not need a computer (you may prefer one) since most Oxford students still write their essays by hand (some use typewriters). Email, by the way, is available in most (but not all) colleges and in the OSAP office.

You could have some goods sent on ahead. You may mail or ship a box or two to our office in Oxford (we have someone there to accept it almost all the time). Shipping agents vary from city to city but almost every town has a UPS (United Parcel Service) and if they cannot ship your box or trunk themselves they ought to be able to suggest the best way of doing it. You are welcome to use e-mail, faxes and computers in our office.

If you have a specific question, please call the OSAP office in Washington and someone there will do his or her best to help or will be able to find the answer to your question.

## **SOCIAL LIFE IN ENGLAND**

As you will soon discover, there is a very active social life at Oxford. The 300 clubs and societies, the sports teams and the colleges host receptions, dinners and parties of all sorts all the time.

We hope you will enthusiastically join this extra-curricular life, since obviously it will greatly increase your understanding of British life and customs.

You will realize that much work in Oxford is done at social events. The dons constantly exchange information over meals, parties, etc. (They are always on the look out for good tutors for students in their care! They rely upon personal contact and recommendations). If you are invited by your tutor (or a JCR officer) to meet other students and tutors for drinks at 6.30 (say) you should arrive around 6.30, or else you will miss part of a planned working event. That is, being "fashionably late" applies only to a purely social party lasting from 8pm to 4am (say) in which time is obviously of no importance!

We cannot stress too much that if you do not respond properly to a dinner invitation you will cause problems for other people. Some American students have told Oxford dons (who have gone to a lot of trouble to arrange just the right kind of social event for them -- bringing in British students with shared interests, etc.) "Oh, I was busy for your Thursday dinner - I thought I would just come to the one on Tuesday (one of my flatmates is going to that one.\*)" This is done without either regretting the dinner the student was invited to or asking if it might be possible to come to another dinner.

Some students don't take the time to write thank you notes to people who have gone out of their way to be helpful to them ...arrange dinners, etc.

We cannot stress too much that the British consider it discourteous not to send a thank you note, however brief. You may think this is an old fashioned idea, but the fact is that is what they believe.

You must remember that the United Kingdom is not an American State. Some American students assume that because the British speak the same language (with some minor variations) they are just like Americans; they are not. Certainly we share a common cultural heritage and we are much closer in all kinds of ways to Canadians, Australians, and Britons than we are to (say) the French. But there are definite differences.

In many U.S. colleges, a few men wear **baseball caps** indoors. The British consider this to be rude. We must warn you about this since every term a few students are excluded from the Bodleian, a dining hall, a lecture room, etc. for the above reason. Some tutors will refuse to teach a student who is badly dressed (including wearing such hats in his or her office). We include this information on different customs at the request of many previous students.

The most important difference is that the British tend to be more reserved than Americans. (It is difficult to generalize, since all individuals are different, but for the sake of brevity, we will have to make some rough generalizations). You should definitely not mistake reserve for unfriendliness. The British are more reserved primarily because they have great respect for the privacy of others (living on a relatively crowded island). They will not wish to intrude on your privacy unless they are sure you welcome it. Therefore, it is up to you to make the initial contact. You should not hesitate to speak to British students that you meet in the dining halls, bars etc. Simply introduce yourself and say, "I'm from New York. Where are you from?" And take it from there. Very often you will find you have interests in common and soon you will have new friends. Invite them to your college dining hall or bar, or to a small party in your flat. Then they will (usually) invite you back and before you know it, you will have ten British friends. As one American student put it, "In your first two weeks, Invite, Invite, Invite!"

The best way to meet people in Oxford with common interests (including Americans and other overseas students) is to join clubs and societies including sports teams. Almost every interest (photography, acting, journalism, politics, sports, literature, history, drinking, etc.) is represented among the 300 clubs. Nationality quickly becomes minor when you are discussing shared interests.

If you are traditional, you may write on college letterhead "Miss Jones accepts with pleasure your kind invitation to Tea, etc." with no signature. If you are modern you can write "I very much regret I cannot accept your kind invitation to the Boar hunt due to a previous engagement. Yours sincerely, John Smith."

In their evaluations, a number of past students have urged us to offer some specific tips on College Life.

## **COLLEGE LIFE**

The College is very important to the life of the Oxford student. By having some 40 or so colleges Oxford can be both a large and great university while offering the students and dons a smaller institution which is (let us hope) more human and friendly. If you ask an Oxford student or graduate where he or she studied he or she will invariably say "St Peter's", "New College", "St. Antony's", etc. They will rarely say "Oxford".

So it is very important for an overseas student to make a special effort to involve himself or herself in the life of their college. You will find when you arrive that a few students will say, "Oh, I don't live in a college, so what's the use."

The fact is that about half of the degree candidates do not live in their college either. They live in annexe buildings which may be a mile or two away, in houses owned by the college or in private houses rented by groups of students. So you are in exactly the same position as half of the university's degree candidates.

Since most of them manage, you can manage also.

First of all, you are likely to be living with at least one British student (or more if you are in large building). This student will be happy to answer your questions and show you around.

In all of the four colleges that we work with regularly one of the British students has volunteered to act as your "adviser" or "guide". He or she will see to it that you are introduced around the college just as if you were a previous friend of that British student.

Your Oxford Academic Adviser and his associates and other dons of your college may periodically invite you to social events of varying kinds. This is what makes an Oxford college different from a large, impersonal university. The Junior Common Rooms have traditionally hosted a party in the college bar for incoming Associate Students, etc.

In short, once you have been accepted by them, your college will make every effort to welcome you and see to it that you are treated as part of the college family.



When British students arrive in Oxford they usually will have some friends from the same school either in their own year or in the second year. Obviously this gives them a head start in forming a circle of friends. In your own case, you will be "coming up" with a good number of other students recommended through us. These fellow Americans and Canadians will be the first friends you will make in Oxford (since you will come a few days early for obvious reasons, you will not meet British students on the first few days). As each of them branches out and makes friends with various British (or other foreign students), they doubtless will invite you to small gatherings in their flats, in pubs, in their college bar, etc. Fundamentally, as we say in many places, it is inevitable that an overseas student must try a little harder. Imagine if you were a British student arriving at an American University for a year!

If you do make the effort, many past students will tell you (some may have in person or on the phone) that your efforts will be well rewarded. So come prepared to join in and get the most out of your Oxford experience.

During the 12 day orientation period you will be inducted into your college. Various officials and student leaders will explain how the library, dining hall, JCR, clubs, etc. work. This is usually done very informally, but every college is different. Most colleges have some sort of deposit required for keys, etc.. The amount varies from £30 to £50 usually. Be prepared to pay this in orientation week.

At formal dinners the Loyal Toast to the Queen is often given. You should understand that these toasts to heads of state (NOT to heads of government) have nothing to do with the person who holds the office--they are an expression of respect (not literally of loyalty) to the nation and people concerned. Not to stand and drink to a head of state, therefore, would be regarded as discourteous to the nation and people concerned. This holds true for heads of state who happen to be heads of government, such as the President of the U.S., or of France. There again, one is toasting the office and the nation, not the politician.

If you choose to accept an invitation to a formal dinner, usually held in an institutional setting, (you can always regret in your RSVP) you should know that, in general, the dinner will have a purpose, in Oxford or London usually an educational one. This means that all the guests will chat socially to their neighbours until the first Toast. At that point the host will usually introduce some speakers who will make short remarks (with any luck amusing ones).

It is important to remember that you should allow these speakers (who have often prepared their remarks and given up other activities to join you and to welcome you once more to their country) to be heard.

There is an important principle here. A formal dinner is NOT a place to eat. It is a communal activity in which the people present (including the students, of course) are most important.

That is why Oxonians have a drinks reception first so that everyone can meet everyone else and why often people change chairs over port (after the speeches are finished) so they can talk to additional people.

We write this at the request of many students. If you fully understand just how these affairs (which are an Oxford tradition) work you will get much more out of them and (if you enjoy this sort of thing--not everyone does) you will have a marvellous time--and you will feel impelled to write to your host to let him or her know that. This is part of overseas study.

As in every institution, there will be a few individuals who are not particularly friendly. Some British students practice the silly idea of "taking the mickey" (pulling the leg) of newcomers, including the British freshers. Our advice is to ignore such nonsense (including male chauvinism, British chauvinism, etc.) and consider the source. You should not be offended by people of that sort. If some oaf insists on asserting that Britain is superior in every way to America you should either agree with him, smiling, or just walk away. People like that are obviously not worth knowing. We are sure none of you would make derogatory comments about any nation. There is much good-natured teasing about this sort of thing, and that, of course, is another matter.

You should not pay much attention to a few isolated individuals. There is no doubt that one finds people who are unfriendly toward almost everyone (the oafs mentioned above are just as churlish toward Britons!). North Americans have been studying and teaching at Oxford (as have many other nationalities) for a very long time and they have usually been given a warm welcome. Certainly many students told us last year that many British students were happy to meet Americans. They wanted to learn about another country with similarities and interesting differences, to compare ideas, etc. Many were keen to have a few American friends to visit when they travel to the US! A good many British students come to us every year to say that they would like the opportunity of living with American students. So, by and large, the bonds of the English-speaking peoples, "bonds as light as air and as strong as iron," still hold up. Almost every English person you meet will tell you that he or she has a relative somewhere in North America.

Having said that, previous students have urged us to say that there is a stereotype of the American which is present in the mind of some British people. A few Britons (who have not been to America and who don't have American relatives) have the mistaken idea that there is a tendency to be brash and loud in some Americans (even those people would not say these negative traits are true for a whole nation). The two famous Oxford movies, "Yank at Oxford" and its current adaptation "Oxford Blue" illustrate this false image. The story, as some of you will know, concerns an egotistical young American who comes to Oxford and brags all the time that Americans (and one American in particular) have an innate superiority in every field, especially in rowing!

We mentioned this point since you should be forewarned about it. Once the British get to know you they will not harbor such thoughts. In the meantime, however, it would be wise to remember that any newcomers to a new place (and this includes British Freshers) should hang back until they get the lay of the land. It would make good sense to let others do much of the talking in the first week. Find your way around--find out which students you wish to be friendly with. Remember that as a newcomer (regardless of nationality) it makes more sense to listen and learn rather than to immediately offer one's own opinions on people and places which will be new to you. Above all, please do not jump to conclusions. You may come upon a custom which seems silly to you....after a few days you may realize there is a good reason for it. In addition, please be assured that the Oxford teachers and staff whom you will meet have your best interests at heart. If they seem reserved that is their nature. They may be a bit vague and not get to the point right away. That is their way of being polite. If a don tells you, "Your work is not bad," that is actually high praise. Always remember, the British manner and sense of humor is different. Please do not judge Oxford by American standards. Almost all British people realize that you are different and they will not expect you to act like a Briton.

If we were to select just five words of advice to offer overseas students in Oxford (based upon our twenty years of experience in advising such students) they would be:

## **DO NOT JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS!**

Every term a few students will come to our staff or dons with what they believe is a problem (this, of course, is very good...if you perceive a problem of any sort you should talk to someone who might be able to help you overcome the problem right away.) Almost always these problems are easily solved or at least ameliorated.

Sometimes, however, the student is simply acting on mistaken assumptions. He or she, not being used to British thinking or speaking (especially when humor is involved), will misinterpret what the British person was saying, or trying to say.

Some may take a criticism of some aspect of America as a personal attack on them. After some thought you may find you agree with the criticism or at least understand it. Some students will accuse an Oxonian of not being "efficient" when it turns out the student has not followed simple instructions (previously given).

When in a foreign country (and Britain is a foreign country) it is essential for the visitor (the guest, remember!) to first question his or her assumptions. After all, you may conclude (or you may not) that the British assumption makes more sense than the assumption you have been used to up until now. Isn't this openness to new ways of thinking one of the main goals of foreign study?

If you bear these few points in mind, if you are like most OSAP students, you will greatly enjoy taking part in some of the traditions for which Britain, and Oxford in particular, is world-famous.

We hope you will not think we are belaboring obvious points. We have been strongly urged to discuss these matters at some length by previous students.

You should remember, as we point out in our admissions letter, that courtesy towards everyone is naturally expected at Oxford (as it would be at your home college). If you are polite and friendly to secretaries, college porters (who are invaluable sources of information), dons, students, etc., they will be polite and friendly towards you and will go out of their way to help you.

Be sure to let your tutors know by note or phone if you are unable to make an appointment. They will do their best to notify you if they are called away, etc. Do remember to use college letterhead or other decent paper. Americans usually say that Oxford dons are friendlier and more approachable than most US professors. They are often found in the pubs talking casually with students, etc.

The younger dons will usually invite you to address them by their first name (this is because in England all members of a class are regarded as socially equal within that class...an interesting point). The age gap is much less prevalent in the UK than in the US. If you are in doubt you should ask your tutor how tutors are generally addressed in Oxford. He or she will then give you a lead.

You should be in no doubt that your college advisers and dons, the college staff and our own staff are all devoted to your welfare. Problems will always arise. When they do, talk to someone and find the right person to help you. (This may take a few calls).

We cannot stress too strongly--seek out help whenever you perceive a problem of any sort (with a don, with your housing, with relations with other students, etc.) If you delay, the problem will be harder to solve.

### **SO...REMEMBER TO LET US KNOW OF ANY PROBLEMS EARLY!**

Every term there are a few students who say they find the Oxford Union, formal dinners and some other British rituals to be what they call "pretentious". Any American familiar with Britain will confirm that there certainly are some Britons ( and some Americans) who could be called phoney or pretentious. We do not believe, however, that very many Oxford students actually fall into this category. Bear in mind that Britain is NOT America. The British have some customs which may seem strange to Americans at first. What some Americans regard as pretentious may often be Britons "taking the mickey" or making fun of themselves. Remember the sense of humor is sometimes different.

As overseas students you should want to learn about different social customs and styles...this is one of the main reasons you are here. So don't jump to conclusions about people who, at first, may seem a bit different from what you are used to. Even if you don't wish to share these attitudes and this kind of humor yourself, you should try to understand it...as a student. If you were studying in France or Spain (or anywhere else) you would find that their customs are also different.

We hope you will agree with previous students that these few hints (and explanations of British mores) are worthwhile. After all, there are many full-length books written for international business executives outlining the different customs of the several nations that they might visit. We believe that students also need to be more informed.

### **TERMLY EVALUATIONS**

We have always asked all students in all our programs to complete evaluation forms every term. (You may have seen some of these since we pass them on to other students or advisers, unless asked not to).

We believe that every educational institution should do this. We take them very seriously since they allow us to keep in touch with the students and to find out what improvements can be made in the system. We have made a number of such improvements since 1985.

In order to promote more social integration we are now able to guarantee some form of housing with British students to every student who wants it and who applies reasonably early. The various colleges we work with have encouraged some of their British students to act as "advisers" to incoming American students.

We have changed our meal policy to give students complete freedom of choice as to where they dine. We have been asked to supply even more detailed information in advance. What you are reading right now is our response to that suggestion.

In response to student requests we have persuaded the University Library to offer to OSAP students the same privileges given to degree candidates, in return for higher fees, paid by us.

We very much want to know what you think and to know right away if you experience any problems. All of us concerned will do our best to solve your problems as soon as possible (some matters are outside our control but we will always be willing to talk with officials on your behalf). So please do take a few minutes at the end of each term to let us know what is working and what isn't; you will be helping future students. We want to make this the best overseas study program in Britain and we will not be complacent until it is generally recognized as such.

## RECENT STUDENT EVALUATIONS<sup>1</sup>

The best academic experience of my life. I especially enjoyed Professor Schuettinger's seminar in diplomacy at (my college) with Lord Beloff, Sir Julian Bullard, Sir John Johnson and other outstanding diplomats and scholars. I have become a changed person."

- JS, UC-Berkeley

"My academic program was excellent. My tutors were terrific."

- CM, Claremont

"My tutorials were excellent... Oxford is fantastic."

- BV, Wesleyan

"My academic program was quite good." JM, Hastings College of Law, University of California

"I greatly enjoyed my tutorials with Dr Holmes and my British tutorial partner. My opinions were both sought and welcomed. (My college) was very welcoming in general." KD, Dartmouth

"The tutorials are a welcome measure of personal attention not found at American universities."

- WS, Yale

"My tutorials in Environmental Studies were excellent." EF, Harvard College

"I found very few restrictions at the eight libraries I used."

- AE, Yale

"We were really part of (our college) and not just in Oxford on a U.S. program."

- AG, Dartmouth

"The London Study Tour gave us a well-informed and rare look at places not normally open to tourists."

- D G, Yale

"The meals in my college are wonderful."

- PS, Dartmouth

"My housing is exceptional! I never expected it would be so nice and modern."

- CP, Colgate

"Living in the same house as British students made a big difference."

- EL, Stanford

"I would recommend this program as an excellent way to attend Oxford for a year. I would, however, make sure students were aware of the Oxford system and were sure that it is the way they want to study. It is not for someone who wants everything arranged for him or her."

- JL, BA, University of Virginia

"Wonderful! The best semester I've ever had! I would compare this program very favourably with any other overseas programs I have heard of in the past."

- CB, Bethany College (WV)

"Excellent! My tutors were patient. OSAP was helpful. My housing was great; best flat ever."  
- M D, Bethany College

"The housing was wonderful; so was the location. The OSAP program was exceptionally priced, and it was so superior to any other program about which I hear."  
- J B, Covenant College

"OSAP was helpful and friendly."  
- K M, Adrian College

"My academic program was excellent! The idea of individual tutorials is fabulous and creates an incredible learning environment. Both my Oxford college and the OSAP administration were very friendly and willing to help with any issues that arose. My house was in much better condition than I expected. The location was very nice as well."  
- S S, Pennsylvania State University

"The academic program was fantastic! I really loved my tutors and the flexibility of the entire academic program was great. Both the Oxford college and OSAP administration were great. The housing location couldn't have been better, and all the facilities were more than adequate."  
- D O, University of Colorado, Boulder

"This is the best study abroad program in the world, bar-none!!"  
- C F, Hillsdale College

"Relative to other programs I have heard about, OSAP is much more structured - which is definitely a good thing to help with the adjustment of being in a new country."  
- S C, University of Albany, SUNY

"My house could not have been better. I lived in a 16th Century house in the very center of Oxford on Ship Street."  
- A F, University of Albany, SUNY

"I lived just an 8-minute walk from my college."  
- J P, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

"The academic program was incredibly well-run and individually oriented."  
- R W, Simon's Rock

"OSAP provided me with financial aid and work-study so that I could benefit from the many opportunities in Oxford."  
- J O, SUNY-Geneseo

"I had a great time this academic year. OSAP is a great program. My tutors could not have been better. My room was in the center of Oxford."  
- A U, SUNY-Stony Brook

"My tutorials were wonderful."  
- S W, University of Florida

"My academic program was very rigorous and challenging. My tutors were top notch professionals. OSAP works hard to solve problems that arise. The location of my housing was incredibly convenient and close to everything."

- D D, Corning Community College, SUNY

"OSAP administrators were very helpful. The orientation was absolutely amazing."

- E W, University of Massachusetts, Boston

"The experience was even better than I expected. I foresee it having a lasting impact on my approach to education. I looked at several programs. This was the most academic an individually tailored program I found."

- R H, Brigham Young University

"My housing was excellent! Every repair was done in a timely manner. I will highly recommend this program."

- J G, New College of the University of South Florida

"I learned so much. My writing skills improved a great deal. My tutors played a major role in this and were so helpful. Everyone was very helpful and willing to go out of their way to make me feel at home."

- L C, Birmingham, Southern College

"OSAP was always helpful and attentive to the needs of students."

- G N, Buena Vista University

"I was extremely impressed with all of my tutors. I feel like they were truly concerned with how well I learned the material. OSAP was friendly and helpful."

- W S, Virginia Military Institute

"New College administration were always very helpful. OSAP was awesome. Thanks for all the arranging and planning. This program is great — I was able to do science; every other program only had humanities."

- B K, Northwestern College, IA

"Teddy Hall faculty and students were helpful and kind."

- A S, Regis University

"My academic program was very strong - my primary course and tutor were great. The trips to Cambridge, Bath, etc. were really interesting and a great way to get out into the countryside to see some of England."

- M N, Boston College

"The OSAP office was very helpful. You have arranged one the very best programs in Britain - and at very low cost."

- T C, SUNY-Binghamton

"The OSAP tours to Cambridge, Stratford, etc. were well-organized and a lot of fun."

- S G, Warren Wilson College



"My academic program was excellent - (my tutors) were brilliant and I felt comfortable with them. I learned a tremendous amount from them and from the tutorial set-up. OSAP were friendly and helpful."

- M M, University of Tampa

"The OSAP administration was always very helpful. They solved any problems quickly."

- J C, Azusa Pacific University

"Very challenging and highly academically rewarding. Excellent. You have helped me so much with everything."

- J T, Indiana University

"The OSAP administration was extremely helpful. All staff members were great. I love my room and the facilities were great. The house was fully equipped."

- R K, Adelphia University

"Very challenging. My tutors were both incredibly brilliant and they really pushed me to my limits. But they were also very nice and helpful."

- C S, Xavier University

"My tutorials were exactly what I requested and my teachers were both very nice."

- M S, Salisbury State University

"My academic program was excellent." MB, Union University

"If I were to grade this program, I wouldn't hesitate to give it an A. It must be joined."

- G S, Pace University, NY

"Very rigorous and exceeded my every expectation."

- F A, West Virginia Wesleyan College

"I really enjoyed the tutorial system."

- J M, University of California Los Angeles

"My academic program and tutors were excellent."

- J O, Texas A&M University

"My tutors and tutorials this term were EXCELLENT!"

- T H, Nassau Community College SUNY Honors Program

"Excellent. The atmosphere allowed for an intellectual discussion with a two-way flow of thought, questions, and responses. OSAP was a wonderful experience."

- S M, Boston University

"OSAP administrators were friendly, helpful, hardworking and easily accessible."

- J M, University of Houston

"Overall it was a great experience."

- A O, Carroll College

"I liked my program because we lived with other British students and I felt like a real member of Oxford. Many of my friends stay in hotels in their programs which is not a good alternative."

-E S, Tulane

"My academic program was excellent."

-S H, George Washington University

"My academic program was excellent... my tutors were interested in my progress and demanded a lot from me."

-D G, College of New Jersey

"It was wonderful! My tutor was a perfect match and we got on quite well!"

-C B, University of Minnesota

"I found the tutors and tutorials extremely beneficial; the tutors were very helpful and reassuring. Though the work was difficult, the program was quite rewarding!"

- M B, Point Loma Nazarene University

"My housing was more than sufficient. Great location."

- B W, Houghton College

"The housing is excellent."

- A G, Western Washington University

"Excellent academic program. The tutorial system allowed me to study exactly what I wanted. Both of my tutors were extremely knowledgeable, and they conveyed their knowledge in a very clever manner. I enjoyed the flexibility and the individual attention that the tutorials provided. Learning to sift through a large amount of material, find the relevant facts, and compile those facts into a coherent essay was an invaluable experience."

- C Q, University of Alabama

"The OSAP people have been superb. They seem genuinely interested in my emotional, physical and academic welfare and have been extremely helpful and courteous."

- D S, Campbellsville University

"My academic program was excellent."

- H H, Taylor University

"The house was excellent."

- C M, Sacramento State College

"My academic program was very good. My tutor was very nice. He had a very specific reading list and topics prepared which was very helpful."

- L C, University of California, San Diego

"I think this program offers a better experience overall for the students. OSAP is very supportive and receptive to our concerns. They try very hard to make us feel at home and ensure that we enjoy our term abroad."

- E M, Lake Erie College

"My program was managed extremely well and OSAP was very quick to handle any problems, questions, and concerns that arose. The administration was able to accommodate all of my needs throughout the program. I was very impressed with the help they were able to supply. Any small problems I encountered with my housing needs were taken care of immediately. I was very impressed with the housing and really appreciated living so close to the center of Oxford. I would say that this must be the best program available today."

- A S, University of San Diego

"An opportunity not to be missed! Challenging, at times humbling, and always rewarding. The personal attention and specificity of subject is not possible at my university of 30,000 students back home. Everyone was very helpful and always willing to answer questions. The orientation was spectacular and really helped me to know what to expect out of the quarter and to settle down into Oxford life. The side-trips were great as well."

-H G, University of Washington