The alternative prospectus, written by students
Welcome!

Magdalen (pronounced “mawd-lin”) is one of the 38 colleges which make up Oxford University. It’s one of the oldest, founded in 1458, and medium in size, housing about 400 undergrads. Members of the College live, eat, work, socialise, and even receive much of our teaching here.

Location

Oxford is an incredible place to live. It’s not too big — everything is packed tightly into the city centre — but not too small either; it still feels like a city. There are plenty of clubs, gazillions of pubs, and a dense network of coffee shops covering all levels of hipster from Costa through to “where do I sit? I just see cacti”. Students get complete, free access to three outstanding museums, the Pitt Rivers, the Ashmolean, and the Science Museum. Cinemas and theatres, shops and markets abound. The stunning colleges, cobbled back-streets, and famous spires are just the icing on the cake.

Magdalen is the only college that stands on both the high street AND the river, and we have our own free-to-use punts and kayaks! Cowley is right on our doorstep, boasting an array of independent restaurants, pubs and bars and the Iffley Sports Centre (with free access to the gym and pool for Magdalen students!).

To begin with, here are our top 10 reasons to study at Magdalen!

People and Events

It’s a common misconception that Oxford is all work and no play, but there’s just as much to be said about social life as academia. Magdalen is first and foremost a community, and there are plenty of events which take advantage of that.

Bops: themed college parties once a fortnight in our Old Kitchen Bar (OKB). Think clubbing + school disco + low-budget fancy dress party. Dance and de-stress without even having to leave College — and you can invite friends from other colleges too.

‘Magdalen Mondays’ have just been reinstated in the OKB! So far we’ve had an anti-pub quiz and a bingo night, and there’s rumour of karaoke in the pipeline.

Below - The OKB with a bop in full swing!
The Tutorial System

This method of teaching is implemented at all colleges, but we thought it was a pretty important thing to mention anyway. The tutorial system is specific to Oxford (and Cambridge). It means that some of our teaching is 1-to-1 or 2-to-1 with an academic in College. At the start of each week the tutor sets an essay or problem sheet which you work on independently and then hand in at the end. Then, you have an hour-long tutorial, where you receive feedback on your work and have an academic but relatively informal discussion about the topic. When you’re used to a classroom environment, this can sound daunting — but tutorials are extremely rewarding and genuinely fun. They push you to think on your feet, help you develop ideas, and build a rapport between you and your tutor as they learn how you think and where your specific interests lie. Tutorials go alongside seminars/classes (small groups), labs, and faculty-based lectures.

Libraries

There are over 100 libraries in Oxford: the central library (the Old Bodleian); the faculty libraries; and the college libraries. Ours, Longwall Library, has a seriously impressive collection. The building is 19th century, with huge windows which let in plenty of afternoon sunlight. The inside, on the other hand, was renovated in 2016, so we have the best of both worlds. Its 4 floors each have a different layout, so that you can find the setup that suits you best. If the system has stumped you, the librarians are endlessly patient and helpful; and, if they don’t have what you’re looking for, you can ask them to order a copy! There are no overdue fines or limits on how many books you check out at once, and it’s open 24/7!

Finance

People often assume that Oxford is more expensive than other Russell Group universities, but this is far from the truth. For one thing, terms are shorter, so you’re only paying for accommodation 27 weeks of the year. And there are many avenues of financial support:

From Magdalen

- Student Support Fund — assists about 25% of undergraduates each year with the cost of living and studying comfortably at Oxford.
- Hardship Fund — small sums of money in unforeseen and one-off cases of financial hardship
  - An annual book grant of £100
  - A travel bursary of up to £1050
- An annual vacation study grant for working outside of term
- Creative Projects Fund (e.g. for music lessons, cameras, art supplies, etc.)

From Oxford University

Details can be found at https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/fees-and-funding, including fee reductions and non-repayable Oxford Bursaries based on household income.
Just when you think you know everything that goes on at Magdalen, you find out that there’s a canoe polo team. So, here’s a taster of what’s available outside of academia, but we can’t guarantee it’s comprehensive! In any case, if you can think of something that’s missing, there are always the means to set it up yourself. All activities are open to everyone, whatever your experience level. Much of the sport takes place at our very own sports ground, the Bear Pit.

For more details on extra-curriculars, go to www.magd.jcr.ox.ac.uk and click ‘Prospective Students’, where you’ll find a lengthier prospectus.

Tennis
Music
LGBTQ Society
Mixed lacrosse
Sherringdon Society
(Football)
Film Society
Darts
Basketball
Kayaking
Rowing
Dancesport
(football and Latin)
Go-karting
Christian Union
Canoe Polo
Cricket
Cheerleading
Squash
Atkin Society (law)
Yoga
Basketball
Florio (poetry)
Ice Hockey
Netball
Quizzing
Wine Society
Hockey
Magdalen Players
(Rugby)
Croquet
Stokesley Society
(Canterbury)
Athletic Union (current affairs discussion)
Rugby
Pool

Flexible Catering

Magdalen has a small fixed termly catering fee, and meals are pay-as-you-go, so how much you use the dining hall (hot meals) and OKB (quick lunches) is totally up to you. While College does serve 19 meals a week, there are student kitchens, too, and many of us cook for ourselves on a regular basis, using College catering as an occasional time-saver. If you do opt for a College meal, it’ll cost roughly £2-3 for breakfast and £3-5 for lunch or dinner.

Fair Accommodation

As an undergraduate, you’re guaranteed Magdalen accommodation for the duration of your degree. This isn’t the case with all colleges and, although there are far worse evils than house-hunting, it’s a luxury not to have to worry about it while you study. Plus, you don’t even have to manage separate utility bills; everything is included in one termly payment. Unlike most university accommodation, all the rooms are the same price and allotted by ballot.

A view from a first-year room

The OKB - great for snacks and sandwiches (or a pint!)
Green Spaces

As beautiful as the buildings are in Oxford, sometimes you just need some fresh air. The College grounds are vast and have a distinctive sense of openness. Oh, and we have a deer park. Unfortunately, the upshot of this is that we’ve heard every conceivable deer-related pun several times, not least the simple but classic, “Oh deer!” On the other hand, when it snows, the deer get so freaked out that they literally don’t move until it’s all melted away; they just stand in a cluster like a weird art installation for several days — and suddenly it’s all worth it. Anyway, this is where the river runs through College. It’s the perfect place to walk, whether to clear your head, or chat with a friend after dinner (apparently, JRR Tolkien and CS Lewis used to do this every evening).

What’s more, just across the road you’ll find the Botanical Gardens (free entry for Magdalen students) and Christ Church Meadows, where yet more river can be found as well as the college boathouses. Or, closer still, there’s a gate at the back of College that opens straight onto University Parks.

Welfare

Magdalen’s large welfare network allows students to seek support in whatever way suits them. You can speak to one of 6 trained student Peer Supporters, an elected, non-judgemental Welfare Rep, LGBTQ or Trans Rep, or one of the four Faith Reps, about anything that’s on your mind. Staff are also on hand: the Junior Deans are trained welfare staff who are friendly and approachable and live in College; and an independent counsellor comes in one day a week. The Dean of Divinity is a chaplain who is also an academic! is yet another port of call. Oxford University also has a central counselling service. And the tutorial system fosters great personal academic support, too. So, if it’s work you’re struggling with, talking to your tutor is very often the remedy.
A day in the life of a Magdalen Student

“Like a lot of other science students, my timetable means my day is pretty structured. On most weekdays it’s up at 8 for lectures at 9, then a break to grab lunch in town or at College, followed by either a lab, more lectures or maybe a tutorial. Other days though we’ll be done as early as 11am, and I’ll usually use the rest of the day to work on that week’s essay or spend time with friends. Our timetable changes a little weekly, which keeps it nice and varied, but whatever happens I’ll be back at college by about 5 o’clock.”

-Joseph Peace, 1st Year, Biomedical Sciences

“Humanities students don’t have a consistent timetable to help structure their work, which teaches them to be organised and also gives them the freedom much envied by scientists. I’ll usually get up at 9 and read in the library all morning (unless I have a lecture at 10), then have lunch in the OKB, followed by an hour-long seminar or tutorial. I’ll then grab coffee with friends and return to the library to write my essay (most people will spend two days reading and one writing). Finally, I’ll cook myself dinner and read a little more before hitting the pub.”

-Will Hosie, 2nd Year, English & French

Interviews

The interview period is an exciting time here. The large team of student reps is keen to meet you and set you at ease — as are the tutors! The process is slightly different from subject to subject, but you can read about the experiences of two current undergrads below:

“My interview process lasted three days. The stay was enjoyable because the Oxford students made sure you felt at home and there were organised evening socials so interviewees could meet and relax. I think the main skill I was tested on was my ability to read legislation and apply it to different scenarios. The key was to stay calm and really focus on the wording of the law — e.g. could I see any loopholes? There’s no ‘set way’ to prepare for interviews but the best advice is to practise saying your thought process aloud and structuring it into a strong line of reasoning. What helped me was to approach interviews as a conversation about law with someone who is just as interested in it as you are. That way you feel more relaxed and might even have fun!”

-Maryam Shah, 1st Year, Law

Other voices

If you want more insight, www.thatoxfordgirl.co.uk is a fantastic blog which curates many student voices from different colleges on a wide range of topics, from the application process through to Oxford social life.

And there are lots of Oxford vloggers, too. Here are a few you might find insightful:

MollyptOxford  MissVarz
ThisisMani  HelenLily

“I originally applied to St. John’s but I was reallocated to St. Catherine’s at interview stage. Biochemists have two interviews as standard and my second one was at Magdalen, so that’s how I ended up here. The important thing to remember is that mechanisms like college reallocation are meant to ensure that people who should get a place do get one, regardless of their college choice. Most people do end up going to their college of choice though, so when you’re applying, pick a college you like; don’t worry about whether some colleges are ‘harder to get into.’”

-Emily Green, 2nd Year, Biochemistry
Interested in applying?

Here are the next steps...

- Check that the College offers the subject you're interested in. Google 'Oxford colleges PDF' for all the info on this, or 'Oxford courses PDF' for a comprehensive course guide. You can also make an open application, meaning the University chooses your college for you. Remember, none of these decisions affect your chances of getting into the University as a whole, so it isn't worth stressing about.

- Tests: most subjects require an admissions test — a few require more than one (e.g. joint honours courses). You will need to register for your test(s) by 15th October. More info here: https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/tests.

- UCAS: Oxford’s deadline for UCAS applications is 15th October.

Written work: after you’ve sent in your UCAS application, most subjects require some written work. More info here: https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/written-work.

Open Days

Come and see us on one of our Open Days! These usually take place in July and September; many colleges and faculties will be giving tours and chatting about all things university-related.

More information here: http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/open-days-and-visits

Contact us

If you’d like to speak to a student, the JCR Access and Admissions Trustee would love to hear from you. Email admissions@magd.jcr.co.uk. Whatever you’d like to ask about life at Magdalen, please don’t hesitate.

Or, to speak to a member of College staff, contact the Admissions Officer at admissions@magd.ox.ac.uk.

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Prospectus design by Will Nelson (a current student who learned all his design skills — if any — whilst at Magdalen)
We look forward to hearing from you!