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Dear International Students,

Congratulations and welcome to Magdalen! I'm Maddie, President of the JCR (Magdalen's undergraduate community) which you automatically become a member of when you join in October. More importantly, I am extremely excited to be welcoming you during Freshers' Week - as is everyone else!

I hope that after reading some of the information you have been sent, you won't need much convincing that you are likely about to embark on some of the most exciting, formative and rewarding three or more years of your life here at Oxford.

As you've probably realized, being an international student entails a few additional logistical challenges compared to being a domestic student. Our International Students' Rep (Anna Hashimoto) should run a social during your first week to get to know other students, and should be your first port of contact for any queries specifically related to being an international student. I am also an international student myself (from the US!) so am always happy to chat about the international student experience. Our Freshers' Team (Sophie Lyne, Michael Daly, David Moisob, Katherine Graddy, and Carissa Pham) have tried to ensure all international students have an international parent – hopefully they have put special advice in their letter. However, we also thought it would be helpful to put together a general template of advice which has been written by international students, for international students.

Here are a few suggestions from current international undergrads at Magdalen:

- Just bring the essentials. Don't bother with heavy things like irons, kettles and coffee makers; there is often access to these communally and you can buy everything you need in Oxford and store it in College over the vacation. There are loads of shops and lots of storage too, so use your luggage for the things that you can't buy over here. The kitchens are well equipped and you're sure to have a neighbour who'll be happy to lend you stuff if needed.
- The same goes for books; the libraries here are absolutely incredible resources and Oxford's friendly librarians are very happy to purchase whatever you may need. If necessary, you can always order stuff on Amazon when you arrive or go to Blackwells (local book shop) if you need it ASAP.
- Do bring some home comforts to decorate your room with – whether it be food, postcards, photos or whatever, the walls have plenty of space!

- We recommend bringing a plug socket adaptor if you have one, or, if not, get one when you get here (you can get one at a number of shops in the town). A good idea is to bring a “block” with multiple sockets from home and then an adaptor to convert that to the UK plug socket. This simplifies the whole plugs situation. You will always want to be plugging things in and want to have an extension cable in useful places like by your desk or bed.
- A bilingual dictionary, if you feel like it. You’ll generally be fine with online dictionaries and may want to save the space in your suitcase for other things as people are super welcoming but do bring one if you think it will help :)
- Opening bank accounts can be a bit of a difficulty for overseas students who have never resided in the UK. However, once your student registration has been finalized, you will be able to print an enrolment certificate and it should generally be fairly simple to open a current account. Just make sure not to put it off for too long since the process may take a while and you’ll really want to use your account. Barclays Bank has been very helpful in our experience, and HSBC have a good reputation in dealing with overseas students. If you need any help, please get in touch with College – they’ll find someone who can help, so don’t suffer in silence / stress about it!
- Whilst you’re here, you’ll probably want to have an English phone SIM-card (or e-SIM). You can sort that out cheaply and easily when you arrive in Oxford – you will find that there are many phone shops which can help with unlocking mobile phones in Oxford but do Google around for the best provider for your needs.

And finally, don’t panic about anything! Everybody will be in the same boat when you arrive and you will get to know people very quickly; in Freshers’ Week the entire College goes out of its way to make sure you have a good time and help you settle in.

There are many international students across the JCR, which means there will most likely be someone who has been in a similar situation as you and the College is very understanding of a number of special requirements. We and the rest of the JCR Committee are here to ensure that you enjoy yourself, so don’t hesitate to approach us! Make the most of the first couple of weeks and try to stay busy – this is a terrific opportunity to meet people and explore the plethora of exciting opportunities ahead. We hope you won’t have time to feel homesick, but please do get in touch with our wonderful Welfare Team, International Students’ Team, and Freshers’ Reps if you fancy a chat – they’ll be hosting events throughout the first term to help make you feel at home so do keep an eye out on emails and Facebook (which I do advise you get, if only to join the JCR page).

Finally, to reiterate, arguably the most important part of my role is to be available to all undergraduates at Magdalen, whatever their needs. I am glad that this now includes you and can’t wait to meet you all when you arrive. On that note, please let me know if you have any questions, suggestions or concerns and I’ll do my best to help out both before and after you arrive!

Looking forward to meeting you in October – have a lovely summer break!

All the best,

Maddie Blackburn, JCR President

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