

International Students Fresher's Handbook 2024-2025

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INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to St Annes!

First off, congratulations!!

We're all so excited to welcome you to both to Oxford as a whole and more specifically to St Anne's!

I'm Siddarth, a second-year PPE student here at Anne's. I was born in Paris, raised in Luxembourg and am from India by origin - and having now moved to the UK for uni, I understand the added difficulties that come with suddenly finding yourself in a completely different country, set of people and environment to what you're used to - that's why I'm determined to make sure Anne's truly becomes a home away from home for every Stanner, no matter how far-flung or different home is!

I'm going to be representing us International Students on the JCR (Junior Common Room) committee this year. That means I'll be the one helping with anything from storage to setting up bank accounts. I will try my best to get you settled into Oxford and let you get to know more people here. Essentially, I'll be an extra point of contact, as well as a bridge between you and the college regarding all things International. St Anne's is very welcoming, so I'm sure you will all feel quite at home in no time, but if there's any problems feel free to reach out to me, I will gladly help. This guide should answer any questions or concerns you might have as the beginning of term approaches. Everyone arriving at St Anne's will be nervous about what's to come, but above all you should be proud of yourself and excited for what's ahead.

If there is anything more particular you'd like to ask, email me at sann8078@ox.ac.uk, or alternatively we are planning to hold an online Information Q&A Session in September!

Contacts & Useful Links:

Contacts	
College Contacts (Academic Office, Accommodation Office, Dean of Welfare, Disability Coordinator, Battels, etc.)	https://www.st-annes.ox.ac.uk/contact/
Student Union	https://www.oxfordsu.org
St Anne's Facebook Group	https://www.facebook.com/groups/884583404974521/
St Anne's International Facebook group	https://www.facebook.com/groups/349861959361168/
My email	siddarth.vaitty@st-annes.ox.ac.uk
My Instagram	@snowgotige3

Before Arriving in Oxford:

Packing:

It can be quite difficult to pack your entire life into a few suitcases. In my experience it's best to **start packing quite early** so you can avoid last minute panicking. The fresher's handbook should contain a full packing list, but here you'll find a few tips catered more to international students.

- **It's a good idea to pack light!** Anything you pack you'll have to transport to college. And carrying multiple suitcases can be quite difficult (especially when living on the 3rd floor of Rayne- or of Wolfson, or ATB- anywhere really). You can have suitcases delivered with some services such as Send my Bag (pg.4), but you'll still have to carry them from the lodge to your room.
- **Make sure to bring clothes for English weather.** It never gets terribly cold in Oxford, but it can reach negative temperatures. Nor (unfortunately) does it usually get terribly warm (reaching 23°C is very rare). Also, **heating tends to be patchy** and is usually centrally-controlled - though this depends on which building and room you are in. I brought many warm sweaters, coats (and raincoats), socks and warm shoes - and for particularly cold nights, a hot-water bottle may also be wise. Another thing I learned, is definitely bring some water resistant shoes.
- If you're not going home between terms, make sure to bring some summer clothes. It doesn't reach tropical weather but having some shorts and T-shirts can come in handy. **Formal clothing is also important for college/society events** like Formals, Prelims and matriculation – see the university guidelines on Subfusc – do note though that the gown and mortar board can be bought once you're in Oxford, or reserved for collection in advance. Of course, Oxford also has shops that offer formal wear rentals e.g. 'Let's Share Our Clothes' and Oxford Ball Gown Swap
- Many services e.g. haircuts, tech repairs, are more expensive in the UK than in many other countries – £14 is a cheap haircut! So it may be wise to get all these done before term.
- Bring enough of any **medication** you have prescribed to last the whole term. Prescriptions don't necessarily work internationally.
- **College provides two pillows, a duvet, and sheets**, so no need to bring these. You can also ask the lodge for a towel, but I still recommend bringing your own. A good tip is to use the first term to see what works and what doesn't, don't feel like you need to get it all right the first try. If for instance, the college sheets are not warm enough, some people supplement them with their own!
- **Most essentials can be bought in Oxford** (and then stored there), e.g. towels, sheets (if you don't use the college ones), hangers, toiletries, stationery and kitchen stuff.

- Pack some things that **make you happy!** It's definitely not a waste of space. They can really help during the term. This could be food from home, pictures, a stuffed toy, an instrument, etc., or some small card games for Fresher's Week, time with friends, etc. The rooms can be very bare, so making it feel homey can make you feel much more comfortable. But **make sure these are easy to store**, as you have to vacate at the end of each term!
- Food and snacks from home are also worth packing, so long as you're sure you'll eat your way through them! Great for sharing with new friends too...
- **Bring adaptors or cables with U.K. plugs** (While you can buy these in Oxford it's a good idea to bring at least one to charge your phone in case the shops are closed when you first arrive). Do note that the internet in your rooms is via an ethernet connection, so if you have a laptop you might **need an ethernet adapter cable**. The Lodge should have some available for you to borrow free of charge though.
- You are allowed to bring a kettle and hairdryer to use in your room, but other appliances, like rice cookers, are only allowed to be used in the kitchen – so check college guidelines before packing/buying any appliances.

Getting to Oxford:

Flying:

Option 1: Heathrow

Flying to Heathrow is the quickest and most direct way to get to Oxford. The Oxford Bus Company has direct regular buses (theAirline) from all Heathrow terminals into Oxford. The trip takes about 2 hours but really depends on traffic.

Option 2: Gatwick

Flights to Gatwick are often cheaper than to Heathrow, but it will take you longer to get from there to Oxford, and that journey may be slightly more expensive. There is also a direct line through the Oxford Bus Company, but these take between 2-2.5 hours

Option 3: Other Airports

You may have a flight into another airport in London (Stansted, Luton, or London City Airport) and it is possible to get to Oxford from these too, however the journey is much less direct and takes quite a bit longer. As such I would recommend flying to Heathrow or Gatwick whenever possible.

Buses from the Airport:

As mentioned, there is a direct bus service (**theAirline**) from Heathrow/Gatwick to Oxford. Getting the Oxford Bus Company app is highly recommended as it lets you both book these tickets and local bus tickets within Oxford.

If you plan on going back home at the end of term, it could be worth getting a 'period return' ticket (basically a 2-way ticket that lasts 3 months) to save money.

The closest bus stop to Anne's is **Gloucester Green (10-15 min walk)**. However, there can often be lots of traffic in the city centre so it may be worth it to get off at Queen's Lane and walking the extra 5 minutes.

Trains:

If you live in Europe, you could consider taking the **Eurostar** train. It may be cheaper (but not necessarily) and is definitely better for the environment! If you have a lot of luggage though, it may be better to go another way.

The Eurostar ends at **St Pancras International**. **To get to Oxford, take the London Underground to Paddington and change for the Great Western Railways service. This takes around 1.5 hours.**

Taxis:

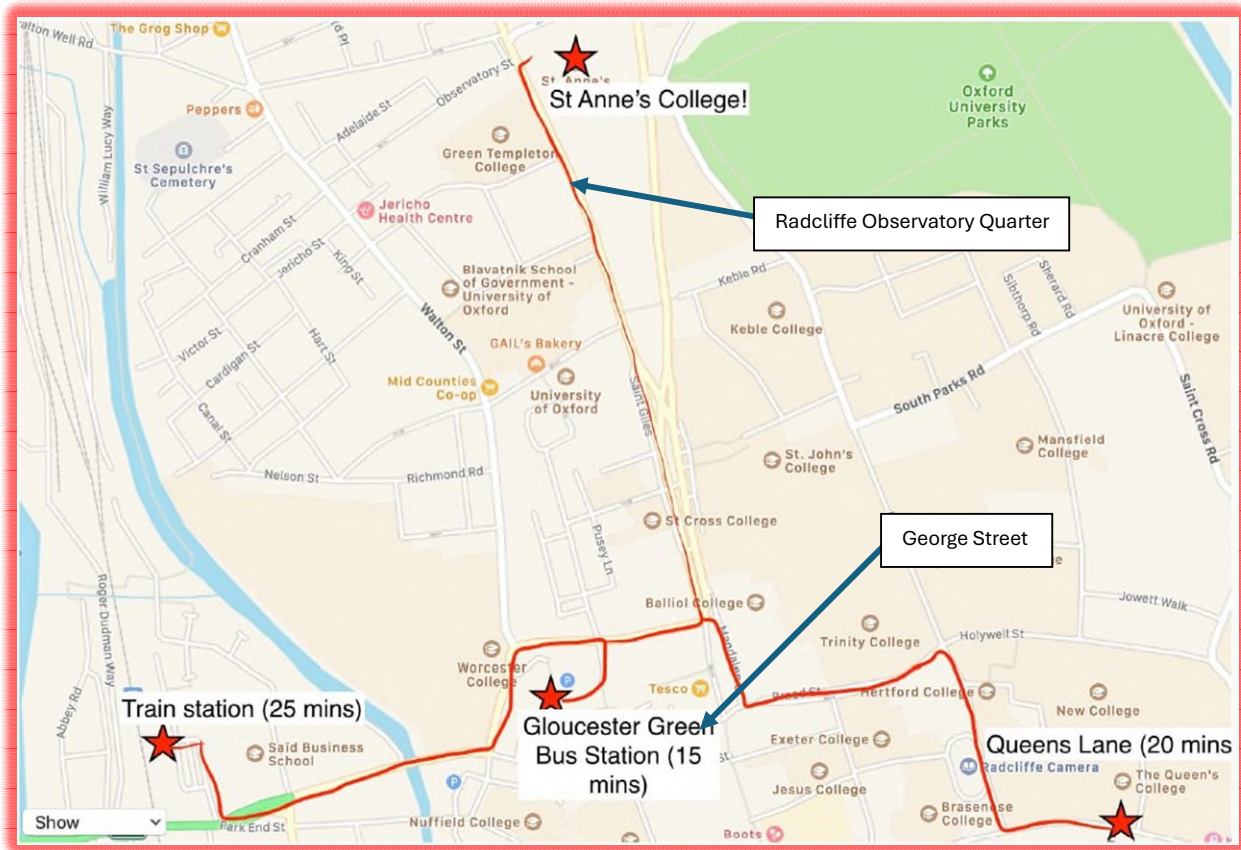
There are sadly no Ubers in Oxford. However, the regular taxi service is quite good.

One recommended service is **Royal Cabs Oxford** (<https://royal-cars.com/>) – you can make on-the-spot or advance bookings either on their website or their app, which is recommended.

From the airport

Alternatively, you can get a taxi straight from some airports to Oxford using the **001-Taxi airport transfer service**, although you typically have to book this service in advance. It may still be worth it if you have a lot of luggage and some extra money to spare.

Getting to St Anne's



Oxford is quite small, so if you don't have too much luggage you could walk to St Anne's. The easiest routes are shown above. Alternatively you can take the bus from George Street to Radcliffe Observatory Quarter.

Once in Oxford:

Banking:

When coming to Oxford, you may want to open a UK bank account. The process can feel quite overwhelming, but in truth it can be a simple task.

The first step is to choose the bank you want to use. There are many to choose from, and while they each have their own perks, they all serve the same purpose in the end - so don't stress too much about picking the "perfect" bank for you. Popular picks include; HSBC, Lloyd's, NatWest, Barclays, Santander, etc.

Some things to keep in mind when choosing your bank are:

- **How fast/easy/expensive are international transfers?**
- **Does the bank offer online banking services?**
- **What is the overdraft rate like?**
- **Do they offer any "rewards" for joining the bank that interest you (i.e. free rail card, online streaming services, travel insurance...)?**
- **Do I have the necessary documentation to open an account?**

You will have to make an appointment with the bank to open an account, unless you choose a digital bank. The first few weeks of term might be really busy so **consider ringing up to make an appointment before arriving or doing so in Fresher's Week.**

To open an account, most banks require the following documents.

- **Oxford Student Enrolment Certificate OR Proof of Residence. This can be found at evision.ox.ac.uk under Student Record and will need to be stamped and signed by the academic office (enquiries@st-annes.ox.ac.uk) – NOTE it is only available once you have been registered with the university, post-Matriculation**
- **Passport/National ID (with visa/BRP if you need one – EU students will have an online BRP)**
- **Proof of Residence (HSBC only – a letter addressed to you at your college address)**
- **Take your CAS Statement or Offer Letter along just in case.**
- ****Use the college's address when setting up your account!**

The university provides a document with lots of useful information explaining how banks in the UK work and comparing banks.

(I chose HSBC – so for any specific queries about setting up an account with them, don't hesitate to reach out!)

DIGITAL BANKING:

Monzo and Revolut are fully online banks and are often popular with international students due to their ease with converting currencies. Also setting up your account is really easy, and they will deliver your card to college, the only thing you should need is your passport and a UK number.

Although it is rare, it may take a long time for the account to be set up. Therefore, I would advise setting up a bank account as soon as possible (during the freshers' week, if possible) as though the payment of battels (college bills for accommodation) can be delayed for a while, college will charge you interest. If something does go wrong, speak to the college treasury - they are there to help.

Phone Number:

You may want a UK phone number for when you're in the UK. I would recommend getting one, although it's not absolutely necessary.

Pay-As-You-Go SIM:

- With this kind of contract, you pay once a month, but with no commitment.
- Easy to cancel and pick back up between terms, making it a good option if you don't plan on using your UK SIM while away from Oxford.
- BUT - you may need to go back to your network's shop each month to renew the SIM, which can be impractical.
- At the same time, it is very useful because if you go back home you do not need to continue to be charged for your SIM card.

Contract:

- You will have to commit to at least 6 months of continuous payments.
- NOTE: Can only be set up once you have a UK bank account.
- Good if you also want to buy a new phone.
- Many phone companies offer contract packages where the included data can be used freely in a number of countries. If you live in one of these countries, this could be a really good option for you!

(I first got a pay-as-you-go, and switched to a contract later in the year after getting a UK bank account)

Options for Providers:

Company	Website	Location	Opinion
EE	www.ee.co.uk	Westgate shopping centre, Cornmarket Street	Pretty good reception across Oxford.
GiffGaff	www.giffgaff.com	No in-person stores (budget, online derivative of O2)	I know a person who tried to get one delivered and it never came. Also, along with O2, it is notorious for having bad service in college.
O2	www.o2.co.uk	Westgate shopping Centre	The pay-as-you-go SIM is kind of hard to renew. And, again, it has bad reception in college.

Three	www.three.co.uk	Westgate Shopping Centre	I know many people that are happy with their Three contract. It has great reception all across Oxford.
Vodafone	www.vodafone.co.uk	Cornmarket Street	I know people who use Vodafone and are very happy with it.

Getting Around Oxford:

Oxford is quite a walkable city – it shouldn't take more than 20 mins to get to most places on foot, and the streets are very pedestrian-friendly. However, one thing many students make an investment in is a bike – **Oxford is also very bike-friendly.**

If you are interested in getting a bike you will find lots of offers for second-hand and new bikes. Our JCR also has its own bike scheme that you can opt into where you pay a fixed sum to be able to use one of the JCR bikes whenever you want. Personally, I find that walking to places works great for me, but I know that many people who tried it say it has been a very good choice for them. If you do decide to buy your own bike, make sure you have lights at night (if not, you may be fined by the police).

Bike theft is common in Oxford, so remember to always lock your bike at a safe place (and also detach your lights if you can) when you park your bike. Make sure to get a strong lock. Also, **remember to register your bike with the University Cycle Registration Scheme because it is much easier to find your bike if you are registered.** You can get a registration pack from the college lodge.

As an international student **you will also be able to store your bike in the bike racks over the holidays provided that you get a tag from the lodge.** For more information **contact the JCR environment representative who can answer questions about the college bike scheme and buying second-hand bikes.**

For longer journeys the Oxford Bus Company offers bus services to most places within Oxford – you can pay once you board the bus, or buy tickets via their app (the same as for the Airline from Heathrow) – a one-off ticket usually costs around £1-2, a day pass around £4-5.

Shopping:

While Amazon might feel like a quick, easy, and cheap option for buying things you didn't bring from home, it's not always the best choice. Below is a list of some nearby shops where you can find

everything Amazon offers and more! Oxford's main mall is Westgate, though it's a little far from college.

1. Supermarkets

- Tesco = The Tesco Metro on Magdalen Street (popularly dubbed 'Tescalator') is probably the largest supermarket in central Oxford. It's not too far from St Anne's and is big enough to have variety.
- Sainsbury's = Recently opened one right down Observatory Street just opposite college – so **the closest of them all**. There is another, larger one right next door to Tescalator - it's basically the same but smaller and closes earlier. Another one is in Westgate, very big with loads of variety, can be a great choice.
- (Note that Tesco and Sainsbury's usually sell much of the same stuff at the same prices – many students prefer Tesco if only because of their Clubcard deal (recommended))
- The Co-Operative = 2 in Jericho, among the closest supermarkets to St Anne's. Can be a little more expensive than Tesco and have less choice.
- East West Provisions = Corner shop right across the street from Anne's. Non basics can be pricey, and choice is limited, but good in case of emergency (or laziness).
- M&S = In Westgate. Can be much more expensive than regular supermarkets but if you're looking for a 'foreign' ingredient you might find it here.
- OxUnboxed = A no-packaging store in Jericho with a lot of cupboard basics.

2. Household/ Electronics

- Robert Dyas = Outside the Westgate shopping centre. Good place to buy adapters, extension cords, batteries etc. Also has some kitchen and laundry items
- Westgate = There are LOTS of shops in Westgate and you could probably find most things somewhere here
- TK Maxx = In the Clarendon Centre, and has a very wide and quite random array of many different things (clothes, kitchen appliances, biscuits!) so you might not find what you're looking for, but, when you do, it is at very affordable prices.

3. Stationery

- Ryman (outside Westgate)
- WHSmith (on Cornmarket Street)

4. Pharmacies/Drugstores

- Woodstock Road Chemist = Right across the road from St Anne's. Good for collecting prescriptions and tissues when you get sick. Very nice staff!
- Boots = On Cornmarket Street. The best place to get shampoo, make up, hand sanitiser, cold medicine, hairbrushes...

5. ATMs/ Cash Machines

- By the Co-op in Jericho
- Between the Tesco and Sainsbury's on Magdalen Street

6. Books

- Oxford's most famous and largest bookstore is Blackwell's, on Broad Street (not too far from college) – check out the Norrington Room downstairs! You'll be able to get many college-set books here if need be.
- The Waterstone's at the entrance to Broad Street from Magdalen Street East is also very comprehensive.

Food From Home:

One of the things I missed most when coming to Anne's was the food I could not get here easily. Finding non-English foods in supermarkets can be really daunting and not particularly easy. For special occasions, though, Oxford does have restaurants from all over the world.

I would definitely recommend bringing some with you, all the same below are some places recommended by other students where you might be able to find ingredients/foods less common in the UK;

- Headington Food & Wine, Oxon Kerala Groceries (Indian, esp. South Indian)
- Tahmid Stores (South Asian)
- Lung Wah Chong (Chinese)
- Seoul Plaza (Korean)
- Baltic Food (Lithuanian, Russian)
- Erdem Food Centre (Turkish)
- Il Principe (Italian)
- Gloucester Green Market (open-air, has stalls from many countries)
- Polski Sklep Littlemore (Polish)

Health Care & Insurance:

If you are registered for a course lasting at least 6 months, you are entitled to **free healthcare from the NHS (National Health Service)**. You should be able to register with the college doctors (**Dr. Leaver & Partners**) before arriving in Oxford – all the information you will need to do this will be provided by college. If you need any more information, please let me know.

There is also a well-stocked pharmacy right across the road in case you need to buy medication – the staff there are also very knowledgeable, so any questions you have about prescriptions, combining medicines, etc. feel free to direct to them. If you have an active prescription, bring enough to last the time you will be in Oxford. You should be able to get a prescription that can be used in the UK from your doctor in Oxford, but this may take time.

The Jericho Health Centre is across the road from St Anne's. There is also an in-college nurse (Julie Osborne) who can help direct you to the right service.

! If you take the pill !

Not every type of pill you may be taking at home is available at Oxford, so it may be good to check first. However, if you still are not sure, it is always better to stock up and bring with you your own pills, so as to cover the entire duration of the stay at Oxford.

Welfare Support:

Moving to university is never an easy task, and especially as an international student it can sometimes feel much harder to settle in. Whether you're struggling with adjusting to a new language, home sickness, culture shocks, loneliness, or anything else, **I can say from experience the college will have support for you.**

I will be teaming up with our two welfare officers and the college's welfare deans to assure that all of your needs are addressed. Our Dean of Welfare, Rachel Busby, and our College Nurse, Julie Osborne, are both almost always available for whatever works for you, whether as a one-off chat or as regular support, and if you are feeling especially apprehensive about coming to Oxford, you could even email them in advance of term to arrange support. However, sometimes it is hard to know where to go or who to talk to about a specific problem, but good news is **that's exactly what I'm here to do, help you find those places and people, as well as being there for you when you need it.** So please don't hold back from reaching out! The best thing for you to do is to always seek help to if you need it, and to do it in the way that makes you feel most comfortable.

The welfare staff, the welfare reps on the JCR, the medical staff, your college parents and your Personal Tutor are all at hand – but equally don't feel especially pressured to speak to all of them. The JCR will also be running various welfare events throughout the year, as will the wider university.

It is very important to keep in mind that, here at Anne's, our community only wants you to have the best experience possible. You deserve it!

Disabilities & Access:

If you already have a diagnosis, it is very important you get in touch with the university's Disability Advisory Service as soon as possible – they will work with you to create a Student Support Plan (SSP) that will be shared with the college's disability coordinator (Sheila Smith), your Personal Tutor, as well as with as many of your tutors as you feel necessary. This may include both information regarding day-to-day living arrangements and more specifically academic adjustments.

As long as you can arrange support well in advance, the university is great at getting things into motion well before Fresher's Week – once the year starts, however, getting the necessary support can be more difficult and time-consuming.

Nevertheless, if any issues do arise during the year that you feel might warrant seeking support and adjustments, do speak to our Welfare Dean and/or our disability coordinator as soon as you can - and feel free to reach out to the Disabilities Rep on the JCR or to me to help out with anything if difficulties arise.

Societies:

Societies are a great way to find others with the same interests as you. Most countries or regions within larger countries have a society, so it's a great way to meet people from the same cultural background, or a completely different one if you want. I've given a few examples below, the best way to keep up to date with them (and societies in general) is to follow them on Instagram – many also offer Fresher's WhatsApp chats, which can provide extra-tailored information. **You can find a full list of all the societies on the Student Union website, and be sure to visit to the Fresher's Fair to explore the fullest range possible.**

There is also a university-wide International Society.

- Oxford American Society
- Oxford India Society (also sub-societies like Tamil Society, Punjabi Society, etc.)
- Oxford University French Society
- Oxford University Australia & New Zealand Society
- Oxford Pakistan Society
- Oxford Belgium Society
- Oxford African & Caribbean Society
- Oxford University Japan Society
- Oxford University Chinese Society
- Oxford University Asia-Pacific Society

Between Terms:

International Storage:

Fortunately, **you DON'T have to bring all of your stuff back home over the holidays (including over the summer break).**

St Anne's has **a shed designated for international storage** where you can keep stuff during holidays as well as during the term time. You can find it behind the Claire Palley building, by the side of the Mary Ogilvie Lecture Theatre.

You will receive forms about this scheme somewhere in the middle of term. **Do remember to sign up for this!** (But if you do forget, **you can contact ASAP via email the accommodation office, they usually will be still happy to help (NOTE they close for the weekend) 😊**)

Anything left in storage needs to be sealed in your own boxes or suitcases and labelled with your name. You can get cardboard boxes from Amazon or buy decently cheap plastic ones (which you can use again) at Ryman (they have a shop near Westgate).

To carry your stuff to the storage, you can use one of the many trolleys lying around college. They can usually be found between the Ruth Deech building and STACS. If not, ask the Porters and they should be able to help you find one.

Just in case, the university also recommends [KitKeeper](https://www.kitkeeper.co.uk) (<https://www.kitkeeper.co.uk>) as a paid alternative option, though I haven't yet heard of any international students using it.

Return Timing:

Do note that **though term officially starts on a certain date, your collections (term tests) will be on the weekend before – so you'll have to return by the Thursday before 1st Week. Do make sure to check with your tutors exactly which dates/times Collections will be set around the middle of term, well in advance, both to remind them and to make sure you can negotiate any changes of date/time and book tickets.** Feel free to contact me for any help on this.

Vacation Residence:

If you don't want to/aren't able to return home between terms, you can apply for vacation residence. A form will be left in your room and an email sent to you sometime during term with the relevant application information.

You may have to pay slightly higher rates than during term time and you might not be given the same room. Hall and STACS have different opening times or may close completely out of term time, so make sure you're aware of this.

While most students do go home between terms, there will be plenty of people around to keep you company and the international society often organize events for those who stay.

We understand that many students will be experiencing financial hardship during this period of crisis. If you are not able to travel back home due to overseas restrictions or any other reason, **please know that the college can help support you financially if necessary.**

Work:

During term time, the **University strongly discourages students from finding part-time work** – though understandably this may be very necessary to help cover costs, the sheer pressure of a demanding degree combined with short terms means few students choose to work during term-time.

However, this does not apply to vacations – do note, however, that if you plan to work or undertake a paid internship in the UK, you will need a **National Insurance number** – this can be applied for online if you don't have one (e.g. if you are an EU student – note you have to be in the UK when applying!), but if you have a physical BRP it should be on there.

Final Tips:

If possible, **do come a few days before fresher's week just to settle into your new environment and adjust to the time difference – this is especially sound if you need some time to recharge before plunging into the social frenzy of Fresher's!** I will not be back to Oxford until midway through Fresher's Week, but plenty of my international friends would be happy to give you a tour if they're in town earlier, so email me if you would like one!

If you are going to use Amazon, activate your Amazon Prime Student trial and use that to buy the stuff you didn't bring from home!

If you are arriving from a warm country (or one with good central heating), bring clothes twice as warm as you think you need. It is not uncommon to see me in a winter coat while my friends are wearing shorts and a t-shirt!

Use this vacation to relax – you'll need it – many subjects do send prep work, but a lot, like mine (PPE), don't!

More than anything, don't be afraid to ask questions! Your college parents, the welfare team, the JCR, and college staff are all here to help you!

VERY EXCITED TO GET TO KNOW YOU ALL SOON!