

MERTON

Alternative Prospectus



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Welcome!

Hello and welcome to Merton's alternative prospectus!

This has been written entirely by us students here at Merton to give you our perspective of what life is really like at Oxford's oldest college. From living and studying to sports and societies, we hope to cover every aspect of life here to show you just how proud of Merton we all are!

If you've had a chance to visit, walking through our beautiful gardens or chatting to students, you will hopefully agree that Merton is an incredibly friendly and diverse place. We have so much to offer, so please have a look through our prospectus and let us show you why you're bound to love it here! But first, a few fun facts:

- Merton is over 750 years old and has the oldest continuously functioning academic university library in the world.
- We're a relatively small college with around 90 undergraduates per year, making the College environment super friendly and meaning it's really easy to meet people from all years.
- We provide accommodation in the centre of Oxford for every year of your undergraduate degree.
- We have an amazing Entz team who organise an incredible range of social events from Freshers' Week to the triennial Winter Ball, as well as four bops per term - far more than most colleges.
- We pride ourselves for being inclusive and welcoming to all students, regardless of background.
- We've produced many notable alumni, including Sir Roger Bannister, Mark Haddon, Liz Truss, Kris Kristofferson, Theodor Adorno, and T.S. Eliot, after whom our theatre is named!

Whether you're enticed by the stunning scenery, great food or wonderful sense of community, Merton has something for everyone and we're so excited to be able to share a glimpse of College life with you!

Read on to find out more and enjoy!



Charlotte Fields.
Access & Equality Representative



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Merton is a very centrally located College, with the High Street only a five to ten minute walk from all accommodation.

In your first year you will either live in Rose Lane (a collection of houses located within College and next door to the Botanic Gardens) or in one of three houses on Merton Street.



Merton Street room

A bonus of Merton accommodation is being covered by College for every year of your degree - even six for medics! There is the option to live out privately after first year, yet most people opt to remain in Merton-owned accommodation as it is much simpler, and you do not have to sort out living arrangements in your first term at Oxford. Accommodation after first year is assigned using a ballot system (done in your third term), which you can enter with a group of up to six people.



Rose Lane

This system is great as it allows you to live with your friends for the remaining years of your degree. Second and fourth years live in Merton-owned houses on Holywell Street (a beautiful and central street with pastel coloured houses), which is around the corner from the Radcliffe Camera (Oxford's iconic circular library). Holywell Street provides the opportunity to live more independently; everyone lives in individual houses which hold around six to fourteen people while still getting the luxuries of College accommodation which include paying affordable rent, having cleaning services and bins changed for us. Each house has a well-equipped kitchen and is less than a ten minute walk from College.



Second year rooms



Third year room

In the year in which you sit your final undergraduate exams (third year for most) you have the choice to move into the College precinct to live in one of the historic quads/Rose Lane, or to remain on Holywell Street. This is quite a unique experience, as some finalists get to live in Oxford's oldest quad, Mob Quad. Most precinct rooms come as a 'set', so you may be lucky and get a bedroom, study, and en-suite to help you through Finals!



Rose Lane Room

First year rooms are randomly allocated to students prior to arrival and they all cost the same. All rooms have internet access (both Wi-Fi and Ethernet), furniture (desk, shelves, drawers, bed, pinboard), a sink, and there is the option to bring your own kettle and fridge for when you need some tea and snacks to keep you fueled throughout the day! There are also plenty of shared bathrooms (with access to showers and baths), keeping everyone happy!



Holywell Room

Mertonians generally agree that the accommodation is reasonably priced, and is of a very good standard, comparing favourably with other universities in the South East. The division of accommodation into smaller groups makes it very easy to make friends in first year - many of my best friends are people I lived next to as a fresher! Merton's central location within the city - its proximity to lectures, Christ Church meadow and to city centre amenities - means that everything is easily accessible!

Elena Grant,
3rd year History student



Accommodation



Life in Merton

For me one of the best things about living at Merton is being surrounded by stunning buildings dating back to the 13th century, including Oxford's oldest

quadrangle: Mob Quad. Along with historic buildings and a wide array of gargoyles, we have some of the best gardens in Oxford (even if we do say so ourselves). The beautiful Fellows Garden gives us a wonderful green space to relax or even work in (did I mention it has WiFi?!).

Talking of work (because to our dismay we do have to do a little bit of it), we have two libraries just for us: OWL and Mob, that contain many of the books you'll need for your course. Since OWL was once a big Victorian house, all the rooms you can work in have their own character with old fireplaces, comfy sofas and wood paneling which makes it a great place to power through that essay. Open from 7am to 2am, Mob is great if you need to pull a late night or take advantage of Merton's free printing (trust me that will save you a fortune).

As well as libraries, Merton has places to cater for all your procrastination needs. First off, we have our TV Room, perfect for the mass viewing of Sky Sports or Merton's near win on University Challenge. Over in the Junior Common Room (JCR), you'll find more space to reminisce about last week's pre-bop or OGM (more about those later) and maybe even get your artwork put up on the wall. Yet, the crowning jewel of this social hub is the table tennis table, perfect for those not willing to play real tennis. Also, for the talented musicians amongst us, we have six brand new music rooms and for the budding athletes, we have a free on-site College gym.

You really do enter such a friendly community when you live at Merton. With lots to do and lovely people to do it with, you'll hardly want to work at all!

Olivia Webster,
3rd year History student

Hall



Chapel

OWL Library



OWL



+ Food

Food is kind of a big deal, right? Thankfully, Merton has excellent food provision! All three meals can be provided for you in Hall, where breakfast, lunch, early supper (dinner) and formal hall are served every day (although there's no formal on Saturday). There's always a vegetarian option, and meals for other dietary requirements - such as vegan, gluten free, halal and kosher - can also be made upon request. Not to boast, but Merton Hall provides some of the best, and cheapest, food in Oxford - currently a whole day's food is available for just under £10!



The kitchens



Garden



Formal

If you prefer to cook for yourself, there are kitchens available. In the College site, there is a main JCR kitchen available for everyone to use (along with a free coffee machine!), and three other kitchens in the accommodation blocks. Every house in Holywell Street has its own kitchen, making self-catering even easier in second year.



Common room

You'll find most Mertonians fill their evenings with a pre-club or post-formal trip to the Bar. Many a night (and student loan) have been spent here with a power pint, Merton's very own fluorescent cocktail, in hand. Subsidised alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks and snacks are served by the super friendly staff and with a speaker system, quizzes and karaoke the Bar has it all. Finally, no evening would be complete without a trip to the Games Room. Although it could use a fresh lick of paint, the pool table, air-hockey, darts and table football certainly keep the more competitive Mertonians thoroughly entertained.



Games room



Bar

Anna McQueen,
Food & Bar Rep



Entz

Ben Gowers and Emma Ball,
Entz Reps



Oxford is about so much more than just tutorials and the library - every college has an Entz (entertainments) team who work tirelessly to make sure students can kick back and chill out. This much needed stress relief takes on many forms, filling the term with a whole wealth of different events.

At Merton, there are BOPs every two weeks which are basically huge themed parties for the undergraduate and graduate bodies. For these 'Breaches of the Peace', College comes together for a figurative cocktail of cheesy music, stupidly cheap drinks and raucous good fun.

Every Bop has a different theme with examples of past themes being 80s vs 80 year olds, Toga vs Yoga, and the all-important Halloween Bop! Because our Bops are held at Merton's Sports Pavilion, it means they can go on till 2am (later than any other college's Bops), and as such they are the most memorable and most talked about Bops in Oxford.

We also have a vast array of other events put on by our Entz team. These include karaoke nights, wine & cheese receptions, or a plentiful supply of non-alcoholic events such as table tennis tournaments and art nights - it's safe to say that the Merton calendar will have something that will make your time here the best you can imagine.



Beyond Entz, the nightlife in Oxford is incredibly varied for such a small city and you will undoubtedly find your niche. Be that a light-up cheese floor or a large serving of indie galore. Plus, we always welcome anyone who has any ideas for awesome events!



Christmas formal



Freshers

Equal Opps

Hi - me again! As you will see, welfare provision at Merton is great, and the Welfare Reps work alongside a number of other JCR Equality Representatives: LGBTQ+, BME, Gender Equality and Disabilities. These individual Reps aim to ensure that everyone in the JCR is represented and are able to address any specific concerns or ideas you may have.



Disabilities

Charlotte Green,
Disabilities Rep

Hi! My name is Charlotte and I'm the current Disabilities Rep. My role is to liaise between the JCR and College to ensure the continual improvements of all things related to disabilities of all kinds. Merton is a really welcoming place and College has many welfare provisions in place already but are always aiming to improve and adapt their support to what we, as a JCR, need for our best university experience.



Charlotte Fields,
Access & Equality Rep

As well as the equality aspect of the role, the Access Rep co-ordinates JCR participation with the access and outreach work done by the College.

This involves leading the team of student ambassadors in their work giving tours and talks to prospective applicants, visiting schools and colleges to educate students about Oxford, and ensuring the JCR is involved when access-related issues within College (e.g. price of certain events and the transition to university) are dealt with.

BME

In the past Merton JCR has had an International and Ethnic Minorities Rep but we are pleased to say we have recently decided to have a dedicated BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) Representative on the JCR Committee. This role is to help ensure that Merton is as welcoming as possible to people of all races and ethnicities, from the moment they apply and onwards.

BME Representatives are here to make sure that there is always someone who will listen to and respect your concerns, no matter what size. We also reach out to the broader student community: organising social events, interacting with different societies, and protecting the interests of BME students in the College and University as a whole. Whilst Merton has made great progress in creating a diverse community of students, it recognises that there is always more that can be done.

Apollinaire Lalouschek,
BME Rep



Gender Equality

Abigail Manning,
Gender Equality Rep



The Gender Equality activism scene is huge at Oxford and both Merton and the wider University have taken large steps in recent years to ensure that people of all genders feel welcome here from the moment they join (although of course there is always more work to be done, which is where this role comes in!). At Merton we have designated gender neutral toilets and are looking to increase the amount of gender neutral facilities in the future.

We also host an Annual Equality Conversation which brings in guest speakers to talk about many aspects of equality. We know that gender inequalities extend far beyond the issues we may experience here, which is why as a College and University we work to not only improve equality and awareness within our walls, but in the wider world as well.

This role also covers Consent and Sexual Health; the Gender Equality Rep is specifically trained to be a first port of call should you wish to talk to a fellow student about Consent, Sexual Health, Gender Equality or absolutely anything else, in complete confidence. Consent workshops are also provided as part of the Freshers' Week timetable. You will find that people here will be very willing to help you, advise you and listen to you - we have an excellent support network of students, tutors and staff so whatever your concern, there will always be someone willing to hear it.

LGBTQ

Leonie Woodland
LGBTQ+ Rep



Oxford is one of the best places in the country to be LGBTQ and Merton is one of the friendliest and most welcoming colleges. You can feel free to be yourself here, whatever your gender identity or sexual orientation.

I am the LGBTQ Representative for the JCR Committee and it is my job to organise social events for members of the College as well as advocating for LGBTQ rights and talking through any issues that may arise during your time here at Merton.

The University LGBTQ society is also very active and organises a range of welfare and social events. Tuesday drinks is very popular, as are other events such as talks and film nights so there is something for everyone.



Welfare



Emily Pope and Sam Gibbs, Welfare Reps



Starting at university is incredibly exciting but can be a big change in terms of things like work, friends or just living away from home for the first time. The good news is that Merton has a really excellent welfare team and there are plenty of people who can help if you are finding things a bit difficult.

First, there are two JCR Welfare Reps. We're undergraduates who organise various activities in College such as film nights, trips to G&D's (Oxford's chain of amazing ice-cream shops) and ice-skating. We also run 'Welfare Tea' every Sunday which consists of lots of free food - the perfect way to spend an afternoon!

On a more serious note, we have received peer-support training so we've been trained to listen to any issues you or other students are having. If there's anything on your mind we're always around for a chat, run drop-in sessions and can also put you in touch with other helpful resources around College and the University. We also ensure that supplies of free condoms are regularly restocked and also provide free sanitary products, panic alarms and will refund emergency contraception should you require this.

On the medical side, the College Nurse runs a Merton surgery every day, joined by one of the College Doctors once a week.



Welfare tea

Merton also benefits from three lovely Junior Deans for Welfare who are graduate students employed by the College to be a first point of contact for welfare advice, and to liaise with staff and students. Your tutors are also available to help you overcome any problems with studies, and will provide extra support if needed. Being one of the smaller colleges, Merton has a real community feel and means that you will always be able to get the support you need. The College also has a really generous hardship fund so if you ever find you are struggling financially, the College can support you.

International

Sunney Chen,
International Students rep

Hi, my name is Sunny and I'm a second-year PPE-ist. Originally from China, I came to the UK when I was 16. For me, moving to a new country at a relatively young age and having school friends locally made it easier, but I still understand the many challenges of adapting to an entirely new environment. From train cancellations to food prices, some things will be different from what you're used to. Nevertheless, I love Britain and Oxford and as your International Rep, I am here to help you enjoy your experience as much as possible.

Merton is an incredibly welcoming and helpful place. Once you arrive in College, many of us would assist you in setting up your bank account, getting a sim card and anything else you might need. There will also be tours of Oxford and group trips to restaurants and pubs. During the Fresher's Week, many more events would be organised to help you get to know each other and be ready for the new term ahead.

Throughout the rest of the year, the JCR would organise events such as charity formals and film nights. Many different national and cultural societies across the University also host events that are open to all, like the Polish vodka party. One thing I would strongly recommend is to step out of your own comfort zone a little and get to experience other cultures and enjoy the many opportunities here at Merton and Oxford.

Merton has a large community of international students and a lot of support in place. If you ever feel homesick, need anything or just want to talk my doors always open or you can go and talk to one of the Welfare Reps. There are times when things might get a bit stressful (like moving all of your stuff into international storage), but we're here to help. I've had an incredible experience here at Merton and it's definitely been worth it.

Best of luck and see you all soon!



Societies

Charlotte Fields & Adam Carter.
2nd and 3rd year
Medicine students



Within Merton are a huge range of societies, including subject societies, musical opportunities and sports teams (more to follow!). For more niche interests there are many University-wide teams and societies so there is bound to be something for you!



Quad party

Every undergraduate in Merton is a member of the Junior Common Room, more commonly known as the JCR. The JCR Committee of elected student Reps liaise with College to discuss matters relating to the students. Bi-weekly meetings of the JCR (OGMs), run by the Committee and open to all undergraduate students, allow the opportunity for students to participate in College politics and have their say in changes around College. There is also the opportunity to become a student ambassador: participating in events to encourage applications and improve diversity within Oxford.

You automatically become part of your subject society within Merton; a great way to meet the students in other years of your course. Every subject has an annual dinner, attended by students and tutors, which is a really good chance to chat in a less formal setting than a tutorial and over a fancy meal. In the summer, there are also often subject garden parties and barbecues, organised by the students. Throughout the year there are also opportunities to attend talks and debates organised by both College and University-wide subject societies.

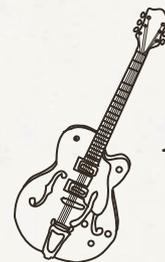


The Neave Society and Bodley Club offer an array of events too. The Neave Society, Merton's politics and current affairs society, host informal debates and discuss contemporary political issues. This allows students to partake in debates in an environment more accessible than that of the Oxford Union.



Choir

The Bodley Club was founded in 1894 as a literary discussion group, but has over the years developed into the College's speaker society. The only criterion for selecting speakers is that they should be "fabulously interesting", and the Club hosts prominent individuals from all fields, with events free for Merton students to attend. Speakers in recent years have included the Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, and Professor David Nutt.



There are many opportunities to participate in music within Merton. The Choir of Merton College is one of Oxford's leading mixed-voice choirs and sings for services in Merton Chapel. Merton is also home to the Kodály Choir, the oldest non-auditioning choir in Oxford, and the Fidelio Orchestra; both of which are run by Merton College Music Society. Recitals and performances are organised throughout the year and anyone who can play/sing is invited to participate, with concerts usually free for members of College to attend.

The College drama society, the Merton Floats, was revived in 2018 and put on an incredibly popular performance of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, with acting, directorial and front of house roles undertaken by students. Once a year, Merton celebrates its Arts Week, with drama performances, art opportunities and musical performances at Mertonbury - our very own festival.

Sport opportunities are offered at both College and University level. For a relaxed option, Merton offers free weekly yoga classes which are very popular with beginners and more experienced yogis!

Sport

Thomas Murphy,
Sports Rep



While Merton may be better known for its academics, we're happy to say that we have a vibrant sports culture in College also. While bigger sports like rowing and rugby have always been popular, in recent years increased funding and interest has resulted in more and more College teams being founded (or in some cases resurrected)! We regularly compete in inter-college 'Cuppers' competitions, with events ranging from canoe water polo to darts and squash.



Merton funds its teams well - we now engage in more sports than ever before, and we benefit from fantastic facilities. Our Pavilion (affectionately known as the Pav) is home to well-maintained football, rugby and cricket pitches, and also an erg room with eight rowing machines for the Boat Club. We have four tennis courts, two squash courts and a Real Tennis court - we really do participate in everything.

No sporting account would be complete without a nod to rowing, Oxford's most famous tradition. We have access to a veritable navy of boats and if you join now you'll be lucky enough to enjoy the new boathouse extension that is in the works. The summer rowing competition - 'Summer Eights' - is a huge party for all spectators at which our barman serves Pimm's and mans a delicious barbeque. Rowing boats aren't the only ones we own!



A famous Oxford tradition is punting and Merton owns a small fleet of punts, as well as several kayaks, all of which are free for College members to use.

In Trinity term, Mertonians regress to childhood by hosting a sports day, which is always a great laugh. Our croquet lawn is also very popular in Trinity for revision breaks and enjoying the sun; used mainly by complete novices interested in having a go at another strange Oxford tradition. And the sport doesn't stop in the evenings! Table football, table tennis, darts and pool are all completely free and foster healthy rivalries - to be decided in the annual Bar Olympics. We also provide extensive support for those interested in competing at a University level. Ultimately, Merton is fantastic for sport, whether you're competitive or just interested in having a run around (just make sure you're an early bird before you sign-up for rowing!)



Student Stories

Hermoine Grassi.
2nd year Biology student



Hi, my name is Hermoine and I have just finished, and absolutely loved, my first year studying Biology at Merton.

There are usually four biologists in each year which means you get to know everyone really well. This allows for a great tutorial dynamic and a fab support network if ever you need any help or advice with a particular essay or lecture. Although, at first, the tutorial system seems somewhat daunting and the workload is quite a step up from A-level (or equivalent), you soon realise everyone is in the exact same position and you very quickly find a routine that allows you not only to efficiently tackle your workload but also allows you plenty of time to enjoy the great social aspects of university life.

At Merton we have great Biology tutors that hold stimulating and thought-provoking weekly tutorials that allow us to expand our knowledge beyond the fundamentals taught in lectures.

This year we have had some particularly interesting tutorial topics ranging from what we think aliens would be like and what defines life to the appropriateness surrounding the use of model organisms in scientific research. The tutors are really open to targeting tutorials to certain aspects of the course that we have found particularly interesting.

I think one of the best things about Merton, and one of the things that made the College stand out to me at the open day, was the incredible community feel and welcoming atmosphere from the students, staff and tutors. To me, this was really underlined by how quickly I settled in and how comfortable and at home I now feel. This is mostly thanks to how friendly everyone is, as well as the huge array of social events held throughout the year (such as the legendary bops, or welfare teas to wine and cheese tasting nights or bar quizzes) that allows you to get to know, and integrate with, everyone from all years.

what living at Merton is like from the students themselves

Hamish Venters, 2nd year History student



Day in the Life

7:00 Your alarm goes off. You turn it off and go back to bed, because it's seven o'clock in the morning.

8:00 Knowing that you're lazy and that this would happen, you've set a second alarm. You turn this off too.

9:17 You wake up again, and it registers that you have five books to read and an essay to plan and write today, so you really need to get up. With a gargantuan effort you manage to roll out of bed and into the shower.

9:32 Coffee, that miraculous concoction which alone makes consciousness before noon plausible, has ensured that your brain activity has reached levels edging on normal, and that you are fully up and running.

9:50 You saunter over to the library, grab your usual place and settle down for the daily grind. Time flitters away as you make little to no progress through the dense pages of Bonney, Gunn and the rest of the gang.

11:55 A lecture fast approaches, which is fantastic because lectures represent the best way to kid yourself that you're working. It also represents one of only three contact hours you get this week, and so is one of the most effective ways of reminding you that, yes, you do actually do a degree.

13:05 At long last you get to have lunch, a well-earned rest from all the hard work you haven't done today, if you're really honest with yourself. You really make the most of it, hanging around the hall until the staff drag you out kicking and screaming, grabbing a coffee, and playing a bit of table tennis. It's now half-past two, however, and it's increasingly dawning on you that this essay you are supposedly going to write remains very much unwritten.

14:30 You would go back to the books, if it weren't for the fact that you have play rehearsals. Reformation Europe slips deep into the recesses of your mind as you frolic around on stage for two hours.

18:00 Dinner requires a quick turnaround, so you've booked early supper. Brilliantly, you're in and out of hall within 20 minutes. This gives you plenty of time to mess around playing table tennis for half an hour.

19:00 Back to the books. Progress remains slow, and you are still nowhere near finishing the reading.

21:56 You decide to up sticks and leave the library. You haven't really done enough reading, but everyone's at the bar by this time and you're loath to miss out.

22:02 You drop the books off in your room and head to the bar, where the sweet kiss of an ice-cool Carlsberg awaits your lips. You haven't done enough reading. Ah well. There's always tomorrow.

Student Stories



Tak-Huen Chau.
3rd year PPE student

Hi there! I'm Tak-Huen from Hong Kong, and I am a third-year PPE-ist at Merton.

While the work is substantial if taken seriously, it is also very enjoyable since you can critically engage with the materials with your tutors! Outside of work, there are many opportunities to take part in PPE-related extracurriculars, such as through Merton's own Neave society, the Oxford Union or seeing eminent speakers. For me, I never thought I would have started 'tea appreciation' and 'Go' clubs before coming to Oxford!

While there are many things in common between colleges, Merton is really fantastic for pursuing PPE! Firstly, Merton's PPE tutors often go out of their way to deliver outstanding undergraduate teaching, providing extra help and feedback. Secondly, our PPE cohorts and tutors are extremely international - five out of six tutors hail from outside of the UK, which enriches student experience through their diverse perspectives and backgrounds. Finally, many of Merton's tutors organise activities and speaker events in College. It's really cool having the opportunity to engage with economists at the IMF, political scientists who conducted the joint broadcasters' exit poll, the former President of Catalonia and philosophers working on the problem of quantum measurement!

If you are passionate about studying PPE, then consider Merton!

Kitty Horsfall.
2nd year
English student



With one compulsory lecture per week, the stereotype about English students swanning about with nothing but a novel in their tote bag, poetry quotations in their beret-ed head, and time on their hands is partially true - however, don't be fooled! It is incredibly liberating to choose how you spend each week, but time management is the main challenge. In a standard week you might have 1 essay, 1 tutorial, 2 classes, and go to 5-8 lectures. In between this you might go over 3 texts, and 8 critics.

Lectures are always running, and it's best if you go to as many as possible in the first week of term and decide from there which ones will be most beneficial. Tutorials are normally a day or two after the essay deadline. These days can be very disorientating, going from working at a high pace to suddenly slowing down to deal with the growing mass of laundry in the corner of your room and the noticeable lack of edible food in the fridge. Take the time to sort yourself out, have a nap, and decide what you need for the next essay to hit the ground running.

The English Faculty Library is invaluable - the sandwich pricing in the cafe is questionable but the extensive selection of resources is not. It's really useful to spend time there working as it has everything you need and is full of people all in the same position as you. If you want to stay closer to College, there are some hidden gems of critical texts in Merton's OWL Library.

Each week is your own so use it wisely, plan well, and find the golden mean between enjoying and looking after yourself!

Jack Allsopp.
3rd year History student



Hi, I am Jack, a third year History student at Merton.

I really enjoy my degree because it is so flexible. The low number of contact hours gives me plenty of time to build my work schedule around lots of different activities, which means that each day is always different from the next. A typical week for me might involve doing some journalism (I was an editor for the student newspaper Cherwell), visiting the cinema, or going out for lunch with my friends. Plus, I normally go to a few formals a week in Merton's beautiful dining hall.

This, of course, goes alongside spending a few hours in the library with my head in a really interesting history book. Studying history means you often work independently which is great as you keep discovering new interests all the time. Over the course of my degree I have learnt about Samurai warriors, Aztec human sacrifice, and just how hard it was for a medieval knight to cut off someone's head!

Although it can get stressful - with so much to do in so little time - support is always close at hand. Merton's tight-knit community means that everyone is looked after, which is helped by the terrific friendships you'll make here. Merton is a great place to be and looking back on my time here so far, the memories are overwhelmingly positive.

So what are you waiting for, apply now!

Morwenna Tamblyn.
2nd year Medical student



I'm Morwenna, a second year medical student.

I chose Merton because it is such a welcoming and friendly College. You will quickly get to know everyone in your year most of whom you will quickly become close friends with!

In a typical week we normally have two essays, three tutorials, around three lectures a day and around two practical classes a week, although you'll find that your weeks can vary quite a lot! Our GP visits are one of the highlights of the course as they give you a taste of what being a doctor is really like!

What I love about Medicine is all the lovely people in my course. You'll soon get to know medics from other colleges and medics are honestly some of the most supportive friendliest people you'll meet! The medics not just in my year, but in older years and in other colleges have helped me so much and definitely made my first year much more enjoyable!

Although Medicine can be hard work, it's important to remember there's still plenty of time to enjoy yourself including societies, balls, formals and of course our bops which are some of the best in Oxford!!



Georgie Fooks.
4th year Languages student

Hi. I'm Georgie, a fourth year French and Spanish student. Studying languages at Merton is a mixture of language and literature, so a typical week for me might consist of several classes that cover translation, speaking and grammar. I also go to a few literature lectures, and one or two tutorials where I discuss that week's literature essay. What I love about studying languages is that I can explore my love for reading and translation at the same time.

One of the most exciting opportunities is the year abroad, where you get to develop your language skills by studying, teaching or working. I have been lucky enough to do all three abroad, and my tutors at Merton have been a massive help - writing references, supporting applications and just checking in on me!

Studying at Merton has honestly been a dream come true - I remember first arriving at interviews and immediately noticing the warm and welcoming atmosphere. Everybody here has been so supportive, and I had plenty of time to do other things, such as rowing and being one of the JCR's Welfare Officers, providing support to other students. I have loved my time at Merton so far and I'm so glad I applied!

day in the life

Olivia Shiels, 3rd year Chemistry student



Hi! I'm Liv and I study Chemistry at Merton.

This is what goes on in a typical day in my life:

8:05 Alarm goes off (this time is a luxury in comparison to sixth form!), manage to shower and just about make myself presentable before...

8:45 Meet other chemists at the lodge before walking to lectures

9:05 First lecture begins! I would definitely suggest taking notes, if only annotating the hand-outs - it helps you pay attention if nothing else!

10:05 Second lecture begins.

11:00 Freedom! Walk back to College, with a stop off at Tesco on the way home to buy dinner/snacks I don't need.

12:00 Make it to a socially acceptable time to eat lunch - head to Hall and get College lunch with some friends - the greatest meal on Earth! Where else can you get soup, salad, main course and dessert for £3.50?!

12:45 Head back to my room and do a bit of prep for my tutorial later.

13:30 Physical Chemistry tutorial. We have tutorials in all three branches of Chemistry (Organic, Inorganic and Physical) which rotate so each week is a different subject.

15:30 Tute finishes - it's supposed to be an hour and a half but always runs over. I guess that's what happens when you have a very passionate tutor!

16:00 Head to the library to get some work done - I try to start every problem sheet as soon as it's set so I don't end up having to do it at the last minute.

16:45 Meet up with some friends to cook pasta, then go to one of our rooms to hang out/watch whatever's currently on.

21:00 Sort out my bag for the next day and do a little more work if I feel like it.

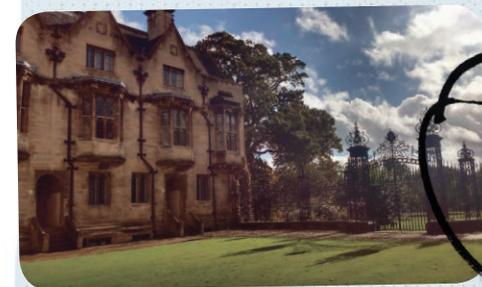
23:00 Sleep!

This is just one day in my life, but it varies! My evening activities change a lot, from Neave Society fortnightly, going to Orchestra (I play the 'cello, fairly badly), rehearsing for a musical, going out or just chilling and watching a bit of Netflix.

Thursdays and Fridays are a little different as we have labs from 11am to 5pm after lectures and I'm usually pretty whacked by the end of that, so I try to get as much work done as possible at the start of the week. At weekends we don't have lectures (though we do have the occasional tute), so there's more time for sleep/seeing friends - although there's usually still work to be done!

On average I'd say I do between 6 and 8 hours of work (actual work - not just half working half on my phone/eating/daydreaming etc.) per problem sheet, which includes any reading (and extensive googling) needed and we usually have 2, sometimes 3, problem sheets per week.

If you manage your time well, there's definitely time to do whatever else you want to do here. After all, there's so much more to life than Chemistry!



Time Ceremony

Rob Lentz
2nd year
History student



Despite Merton's long history (the oldest College in Oxford, depending on who you're talking to...), one of its most celebrated traditions has ever so slightly more recent origins. In 1971, a group of undergraduates at Merton had an undeniably inspired idea which ultimately became the Time Ceremony, a now-famous annual ritual which Mertonians participate in religiously.



It's a surreal experience, especially when done for the first time. At two o'clock in the morning on the last Sunday of October, for the duration of the hour at which the clocks go back, members of the College walk backwards around one of the quads, in groups linked together arm-in-arm, rotating at the corners of the quad, all the while wearing gowns and drinking port or some other refreshment.



It sounds absurd, and it really is. But this strange scene takes place for an indisputably vital reason: as the clocks go back, in a peculiar hour of limbo, the work of Merton students ensures the preservation of the space-time continuum itself. The science behind this is immensely complex, far too elaborate to detail in this brief summary, but I can assure you of its validity.



Whilst this noble activity, of the utmost importance in ensuring the ongoing existence of the world as we know it, may go unthanked, it is nonetheless brilliant - albeit bizarre - fun, and completely unique to Merton!



Olivia Webster
3rd year History student



Ball

Once every three years on an evening in late November, Merton undergoes a transformation to become the venue of one of the most exciting events on the student calendar. The College doors shut, the red carpet is laid out, students past and present clad themselves in beautiful dresses and white tie suits (aka fancy tailcoats and bow ties). With your ticket at the ready and a glass of champagne at the door, you can then enter Merton Winter Ball.



For those with dining tickets, the evening begins with a delicious four-course meal on Fellows Garden. Yet not to worry for those with non-dining tickets, as the College grounds will be littered with food stalls and an array of free drinks to try. The attractions change with each ball depending on the ideas of the dedicated students who organise the whole event (you could be one of them). Common features include live music, from jazz bands to rock singers, performers, often talented dancers, and even rides - Dodgems, Swing Boats and more.



The wintery date of our ball makes it unique from the standard summer ball, meaning we are sometimes even blessed with snow (or fake snow to make up for it). All these magical moments are captured by professional photographers making them impossible to forget - no matter how many cocktails you've had. This is truly an event not to be missed.



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MERTON COLLEGE WINTER BALL

Merton Facts



① Although Univ and Balliol might disagree, Merton is Oxford's oldest college since it was established in 1264 and was the first to offer live-in studying.

② First-years celebrate joining Merton with a candle-lit ceremony in Chapel followed by drinks and a formal dinner.

③ Merton holds a white tie Winter Ball every three years so everyone gets the chance to attend in their time here.

④ Merton has four Nobel Prize Laureates amongst its old members.

⑤ Mob Quad is the oldest quadrangle in Oxford and is supposedly so named because it was home to the "mob" of undergraduates.



⑩ The symbols of the horoscope are carved into the vault of the fifteenth century Fitzjames Arch, but the appearance of the scorpion is questionable to say the least. To be fair, not many people had seen a scorpion in the 1400's.

⑥ The JCR Monkey isn't just a mascot (imagine the PG Tips Monkey in a t-shirt). He's stood in JCR elections in the past.

⑦ In F. Scott Fitzgerald's modern classic, *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby names his library The Merton College Library.

⑧ Thomas Bodley, a fellow here in the 17th century, founded Oxford's Bodleian Library.

⑨ Merton celebrates 'Oxmas' with a beautiful Christmas tree in Front Quad, several more in Hall, 3 carol services and 2 Christmas dinners.



Mob Quad

⑪ The table in Fellows' Garden is said to have inspired C.S. Lewis to create 'the Stone Table' in *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

⑫ Roger Bannister, who ran the first four-minute mile at the nearby Iffley Road fields, is an honorary fellow of Merton College.

⑬ The medieval Upper Library in Mob Quad is the oldest continuously functioning academic university library in the world.

⑭ In the mid-20th century Merton briefly kept white peacocks in Fellows' Garden, but their mating screams kept the students up and they had to be removed.

⑮ Basil Blackwell, who attended Merton College, founded the famous Oxford bookshop Blackwell's.



⑯ Andrew Wiles, the mathematician who proved Fermat's Last Theorem, was an undergraduate at Merton and returned to the College as a Professorial Fellow in Mathematics.

⑰ Henry Savile, Warden in the 16th century, was Elizabeth I's Ancient Greek teacher.

⑱ J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*, was Professor of English Language and Literature at Merton from 1945 to 1959.

⑲ William Harvey, who discovered the circulation of the blood, was once Warden of the College.

⑳ On Ascension Day you can climb to the top of the Chapel Tower to listen to the Choir sing & admire the view.

Oxford Lingo



Battels: Your college bill for your accommodation and a few other bits and pieces, which is kindly waiting for you when you arrive back in Oxford for a new term.

Bod card: Your student card. This little rectangle of plastic is your everything at Oxford so guard it with your life! You need it for books, student discounts, to enter some of the university buildings, and most importantly at Merton, this card gets you your food. How many more reasons do you need?

Crew date: A dinner (and usually a night out at a club afterwards) where one team or society meets up with one from another college, normally of the opposite sex.

Cuppers: Any intercollegiate competition.

Formal Hall: An excuse to dress up and have a lovely meal in Hall (and Merton have them six times a week if you're that keen!).

Hilary: The name of the second term.

Hustings: A group interview/debate held before elections in which candidates attempt to win your vote (with the questions getting steadily more ridiculous!).

Bodleian: Oxford's main library and where you will find all the books you will ever need (and a load of others you won't...). It holds a copy of every publication printed in the UK, and you can find or request any of them but they are never lent out (this rule even stood for King Charles I in 1645!).

Bop: A "breach of the peace" and the college-based fancy dress parties which take place roughly once every two weeks at Merton.

Collections: College exams which take place in Oth Week of each term for most subjects.

Finalists: Students in their last year at Oxford who, funnily enough, will be taking their Finals at the end of the year. Try to be nice to them, they're very stressed.

Gown: The slightly ridiculous black garment which most undergraduates have to wear to exams and normally to Formal Hall as well. The term 'Gown' is another name for students of the University as opposed to the "normal" people who actually live in Oxford and spend more than eight weeks at a time there.

JCR: The Junior Common Room. You and all your other fellow Merton undergraduates are automatically part of the JCR, in which you can vote for the members of your JCR Committee. The acronym also stands for the Common Room itself which is a perfect place to go to whenever you are in desperate need of procrastination.

Mods: Short for Moderations. Formal University exams which some subjects have (essentially equivalent to Prelims).

Oxmas: The Oxford celebration of Christmas in mid-November (the short terms mean that we're never in Oxford for long enough to truly celebrate Christmas).

Pidge: Short for Pigeon Hole. Where all of your mail is sent, as well as countless flyers and leaflets which almost always go straight in the recycling bin (yes, we're very eco-friendly!). It can also be used as a verb if you are planning to "pidge" a letter to someone else.

RadCam: Short for the Radcliffe Camera, which is part of the Bodleian libraries. It is the big round building which is one of Oxford's most iconic structures.

Scout: The wonderful individual who comes round to your room five times a week to empty your bins and even cleans your room for you once a week. The Merton Scouts are absolutely lovely so be nice to them!

Trashing: Covering your friends in confetti after they have finished their exams.

Trinity: The name of the third and final term of the year (and the perfect time for BBQs, Pimmis, punting, and garden parties - as long as you're not a Finalist!).

Matriculation: The odd ceremony held early on in Michaelmas Term of first year which, with only a couple of lines in Latin, formally makes you a member of the University.

MCR: The Middle Common Room. Where all of the graduates hang out.

Michaelmas: The name of the first term.

OUSU: The Oxford University Student Union.

Oxford Union: The debating society which boasts a wide range of famous speakers and interesting debate topics. Students have to pay to become members.

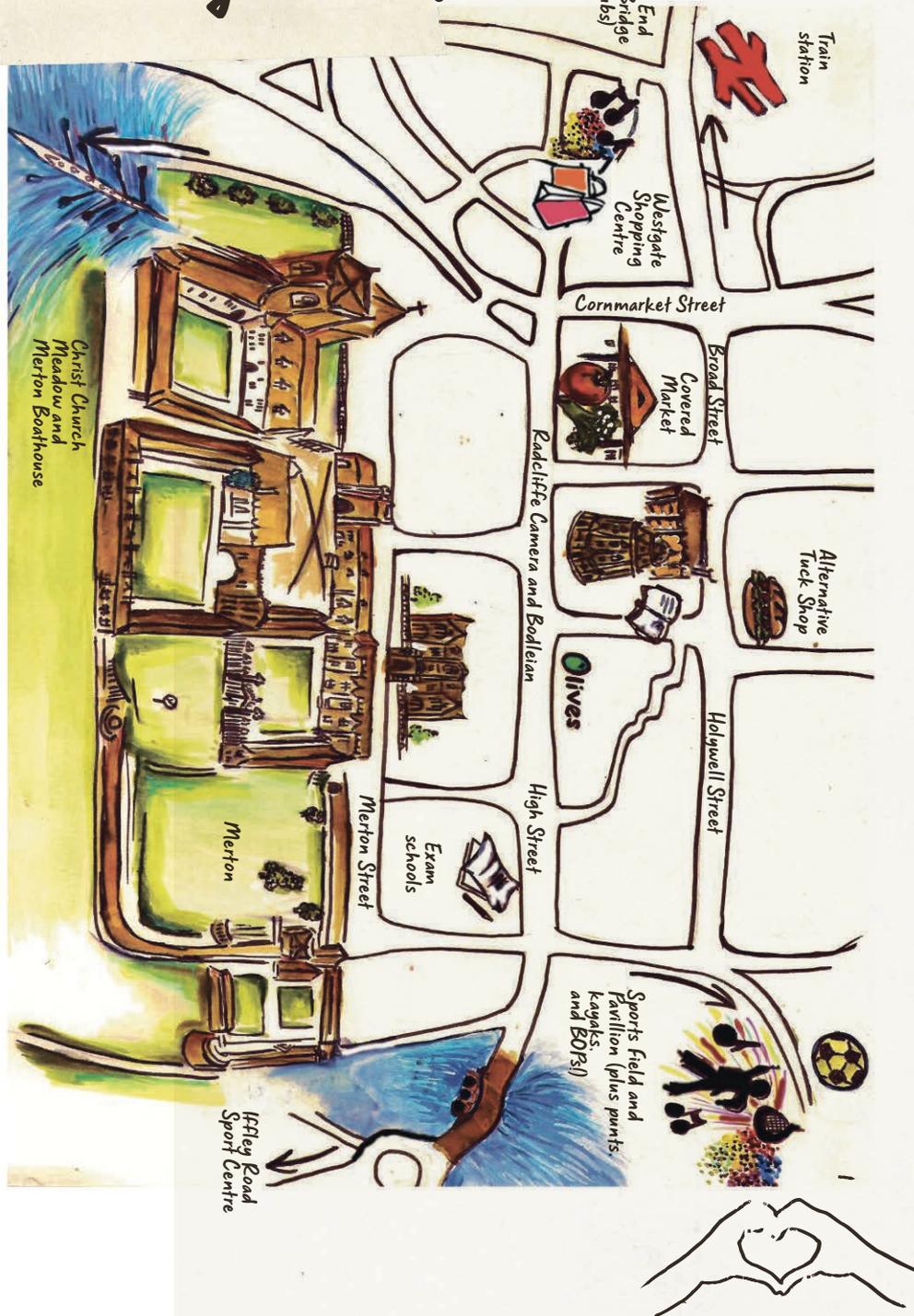
Prelims: The end of first year exams which most subjects have. Don't worry about them too much, they don't count towards your final degree but they show your progress in the first year. You have to pass them to continue to the second year.

SCR: The Senior Common Room. Where all the Tutors and Fellows hang out.

Sub Fusc: Essentially your uniform for exams: white shirt with black skirt or trousers and your gown. You also have to take your mortarboard with you, but you are not allowed to wear it... Don't ask why.

Tute: Short for tutorial. The main form of teaching at Oxford with you, and sometimes one or two others, and a tutor.

College Map



The End

So there you have it!

We hope you think Merton is the college for you, but if you still need a little more info you can find the answers to many questions on our website:

<http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/>

For any other questions about applications you can contact our Admissions Officer:

undergraduate.admissions@merton.ox.ac.uk

You can also find further information about Merton's Open Days on the College website:

<http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/opendays>

Have a look at the University website for more information, and/or to take part in outreach events:

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate>

If you would like to read more about student experiences at Merton, follow us on Instagram @mertonjcraccess and have a read of our blog:

<http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/undergraduate/student-ambassadors/blog>

You can also find all of the major subjects offered by Merton on Twitter: these accounts are run by students so you can see what we get up to on normal working days.

Just search @Merton[subject], e.g. @MertonHistory or @MertonPhysics.

Hope to see you around Merton very soon!

Charlotte Fields,
Access & Equality Rep

Design: Andy Welland





All images and
text by Merton
JCR...



Please contact us on
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if you would like a copy
of this prospectus in an
alternative format.

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<http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk>

JCR website:
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