

Oxford Myths

DEBUNKED



Life is good

Freshers week is the best time of everyone's life.

While it is true that many people love Freshers' Week, many others find it a stressful and anxious experience. You're entering into a completely new environment and it will take time to fully find your feet - it's unrealistic to expect that settling into your new life will be completely glitch-free. No one likes to admit that they're struggling, but the first week at university is a scary time for most (if not, all) people! Facebook may tell you stories of people having a flawless, fun-filled Freshers' Week, when in reality these same people may be finding it exhausting and nerve-racking. Remember that social media only ever shows you the best snapshots from others' lives. Freshers' week can be an exciting time as well as a scary one, but you'll probably later find that it was far from the best week of your university experience, and end up looking back on it with a mixture of nostalgia and amusement at how you needn't have worried as much as you did. But, if you do feel like you're struggling, do not hesitate to reach out to someone: peer supporters, welfare reps, freshers' helpers and all college staff are here to help! Everyone settles into university life at a different pace, and one week is not going to be long enough for many people - but that's perfectly OK: everyone finds their feet eventually!!

The friends you make (or don't make!) in Freshers week will be your friends for the rest of your time at university.

Maybe you will meet a friend for life in Freshers' Week - but more often than not than not, your best friends from university won't end up being the people that you hang around with in Freshers' Week. There's a lot of pressure to meet people and make friends in your first week, which means that the friends you do end up making aren't always founded on common interests. Even if you don't find someone to click with straightaway, remember that there are so many people you haven't had the chance to meet, nor are nights out or big events necessarily the best places to meet the people you really click with. Big events and nights out might also not be your thing, but rest assured there are plenty of like-minded people and there are so many ways to meet people in college or uni-wide! You'll meet people throughout your time here that you didn't even catch sight of during Freshers' Week, and your subject, sports and societies are a great chance to meet new people - give it time!



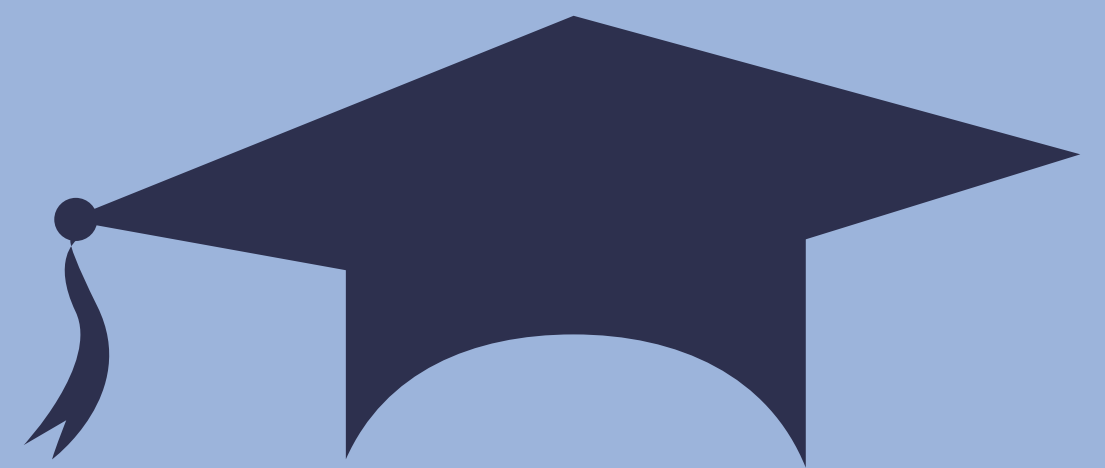


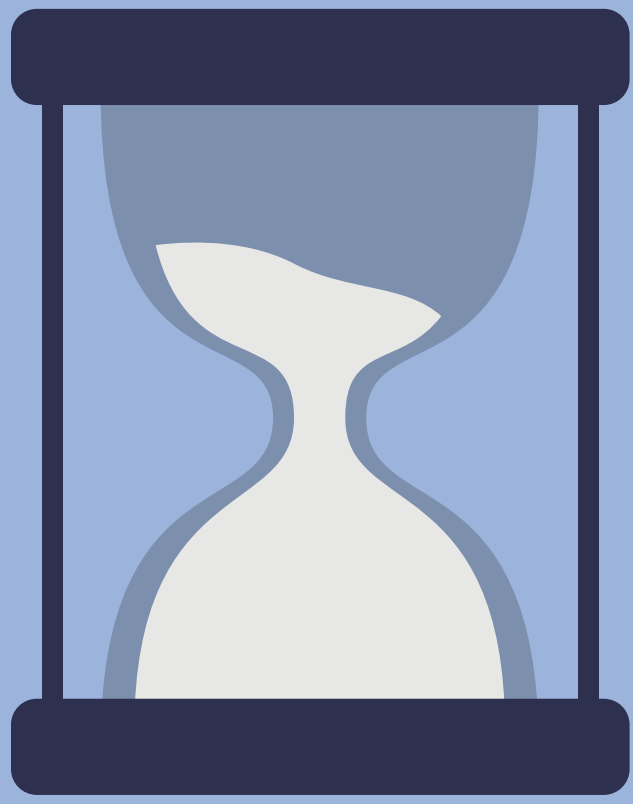
You need to drink or go out every night in order to fit in and be socially accepted.

This is an entirely incorrect assumption! While there will be people that drink and go out regularly, this is by no means everyone and definitely doesn't mean you won't make any friends. Our Entz Reps, Ezra and Kate, along with Niamh and Erin, your Freshers' Week organisers, will make sure that events are suitable for everyone, whether you drink or not. There are plenty of non-drinking, non-clubbing events that you can attend, and often it's the events where you don't drink that you really get to know people. We have made sure that there is an alternative event whenever there is a club night that you can find on your Freshers' Week timetable, including a film night with and arts and crafts evening with plenty of free snacks! And don't be afraid to have a night off, even if you do drink - it can be exhausting and 'Freshers' Flu' gets the best of us!

Tutors are scary and don't care about your wellbeing.

This is perhaps the most untrue myth of all - tutors are overwhelmingly lovely, understanding people who care passionately about your subject and want you to love it as much as they do. University is not like school; tutors treat you as fellow adults. This means that the student-tutor relationship is one of mutual respect; your tutors want the best for you academically, but this entails ensuring you are well and enjoying Oxford, rather than miserable and overworked. Communication is key - if they are aware of a problem, speaking from personal experience, they will do their utmost to work with you and get it sorted. They know that you can't achieve to the best of your ability if you're unhealthy and unhappy!





I can never miss a deadline.

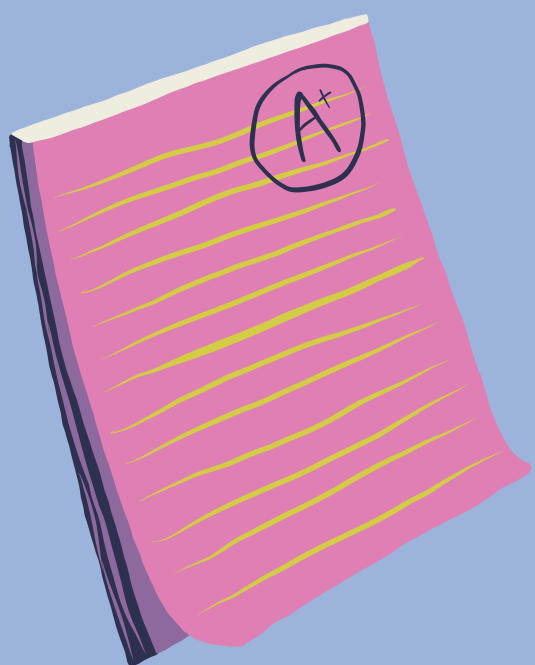
Whilst deadlines are set for a reason, and you should try your best to meet them, life sometimes get in the way and your tutors will understand that!! People missing deadlines is completely normal, isn't the end of your academic career at Oxford and, most of all, isn't something to be ashamed of! As long as you give your tutors advance warning (a quick email should suffice) then they are more than understanding as long as the reason is legitimate. In the rare situation when your tutor is being unreasonable, welfare/junior deans/the nurse can step in and help. But as we said before, tutors want the best for you not just academically but mentally, emotionally and physically.

No mark means a bad mark.

This is definitely not true; whilst it varies subject by subject (and indeed tutor by tutor), many tutors prefer to just leave comments on essays rather than marks as they feel this is more helpful feedback and more conducive to improving your work. You will usually only get a grade on collections (mock exams) or your prelims/mods. It is definitely a big difference from A-level style of marking where most pieces of work are returned to you with a grade and is something a lot of people struggle to get used to at first (us included!), but, in the long run, this kind of feedback is definitely so useful to your academic improvement as it forces you to focus more on what you did well and how exactly to improve, rather than the mark or grade. If you're unsure about your feedback you can always ask your tutor for clarification or guidance - in fact, they would probably encourage you to do so!

Criticism means you're doing badly.

Your tutors want you to develop as much as possible academically; it would be pointless to go easy on you. The tutorial system at Oxford is designed to stretch you as much as possible so that you can be the best biologist/philosopher/historian etc. you can be. Constructive criticism is part of this process! If you are concerned about your performance, you can always talk to your tutors who will do their best to reassure you. Remember that the marking system at Oxford entails that 60/100 is 2:1 quality and over 70 is first class - unlike at school, you should definitely not expect full marks. Imposter syndrome is very real and something most people have to overcome, but you should always remember you are doing amazingly well to have got to Oxford in the first place!





If I see a welfare rep/peer supporter/Chaplain/Nurse/Counsellor, they will tell their friends/tutors/college/censors.

This is nonsense! Everyone in the college welfare team agrees to a strict code of confidentiality: whatever you tell any of the above people will stay between you. The only time any of us might have to extend confidentiality is if we believe that someone is in danger. However, this extension would only ever take place with your prior knowledge, and only be to someone else within the team - we don't gossip to our friends about what you tell us and we will NOT go behind your back. It can be useful to keep your tutors in the loop with anything you're going through but this is to your discretion only to share ONLY what YOU are comfortable with. We want to make sure that you feel safe and happy, and that means making sure that you feel comfortable with using the welfare services in college and have confidence in their confidentiality and support.

The Chaplain can only deal with issues from a religious point of view.

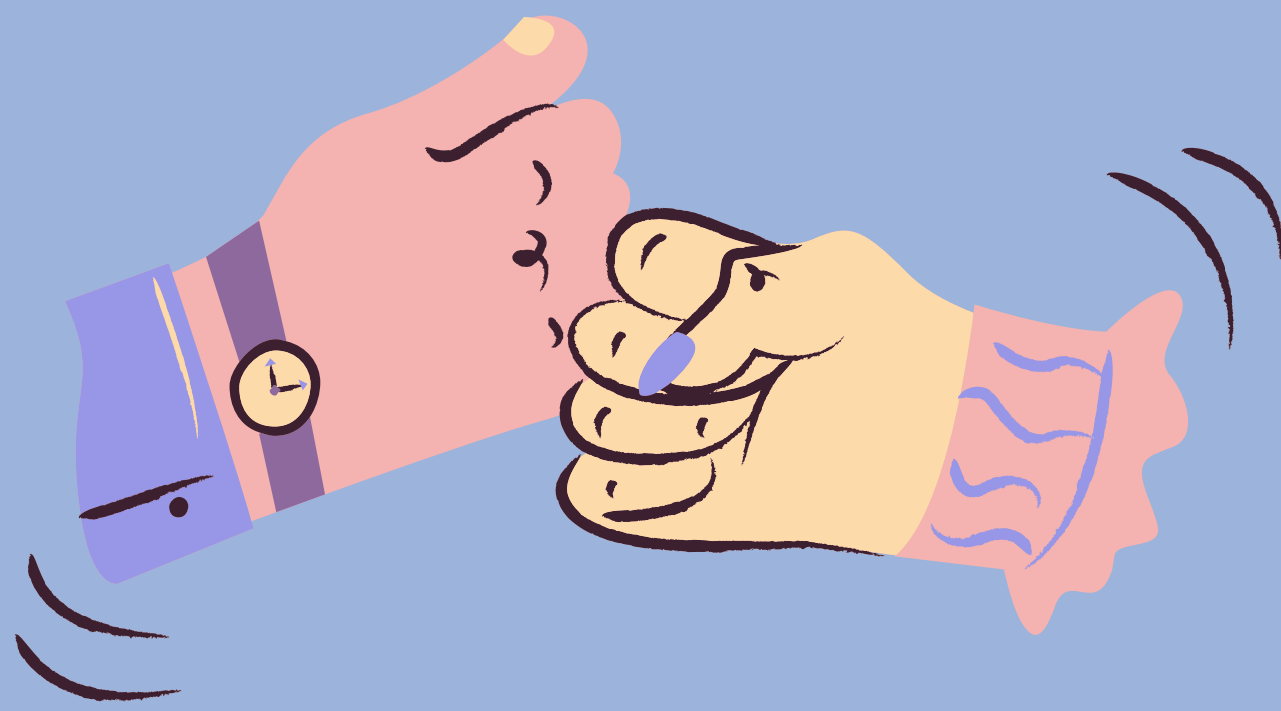
Nope. Julia, our Chaplain, is an absolutely invaluable pillar of support for loads of students at Brasenose, of varying (and no!) religions. She does of course have a religious role within the Chapel community, but she also has a welfare one within the college at large, and she never lets the former affect the latter: she will always listen to whatever you have to say without judgement of any sort (and without trying to convert you!). It is also worth pointing out that our Chapel is a place for people of all faiths or no faiths at all, so whatever your religious beliefs you have every right to use that space and speak to Julia! On top of that she's a genuinely lovely person: it's really worth introducing yourself and you will get the opportunity to do so in Freshers' Week.

***KEEP
going***

Mental health problems mean you are weak.

Mental health problems are never a measure of you in any way whatsoever. They can affect anyone at all, regardless of strength, height, hair colour, favourite band or marmite preference. In fact some people only see how strong they really are when dealing with issues relating to their mental health. Luckily at Brasenose we have an extensive and dedicated welfare support network, so if you are feeling like things are getting on top of you, you need only let us know and we will be there to help support you in whatever way we can. If you are experiencing difficulties, as hard as it can be, I would recommend speaking to someone as soon as possible - there are always ways that you can get help, whether that is through deadline flexibility, support from the Disability Advice Service or just someone to chat to!





You're the only one struggling.

To be frank - Oxford can be a tough place to be. Along with all of the great times you will have, there will probably also be times where you feel low, or feel like you can't manage everything. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE.** In such a fast-paced, high-pressured environment, we are all bound to struggle every once in awhile. The important thing is to seek help when these periods of difficulty strike. Talk to a welfare rep or a peer supporter, or someone else from the Brasenose welfare team. By speaking out, you'll find that you're not alone - and you'll also find that there are people who can help.



You will be forced to suspend if you experience difficulty.

Suspension (taking a year off) is the nuclear option if you are experiencing difficulty. There are many lines of defence before this, from simply asking your tutors for extensions to work, to contacting the college welfare team and University Counselling Service who will be able to help you. Brasenose has an extensive welfare team and is geared up to deal with student difficulties; suspension is a step that is only taken by mutual agreement between the student, their tutors and the Senior Tutor. Forced suspension or expulsion ('sending down') only occurs in the case of serious disciplinary violations - think criminal activity, not persistent failure to hand in your essays!



I won't fit in here as I can't speak Latin!

The general reputation of Oxford is often decades behind what it is actually currently like. So my main suggestion is to forget everything you have preconceived about the university and wait to see that when you arrive (and which hopefully you also already saw on the offer holder day!) is that the student body is very diverse and progressive. If you do know Latin, then great good for you. 99% of people don't and doesn't impact their ability to participate in uni life. The only Latin you will hear (unless it is part of your degree) at BNC is a little said before formal meals and then a little more during the Matriculation ceremony. While there is always more to be done in ways of diversity and inclusivity, BNC is doing a pretty great job, especially through our JCR diversity and access reps, and our admissions office who encourage both of these things. Brasenose welcomes students from every background which makes for a much more inclusive student body and is so beneficial to your acclimatisation to the world beyond your home town, college or household. It's a great environment to grow in regardless of your knowledge of classical languages or lack thereof!



It's going to be really expensive

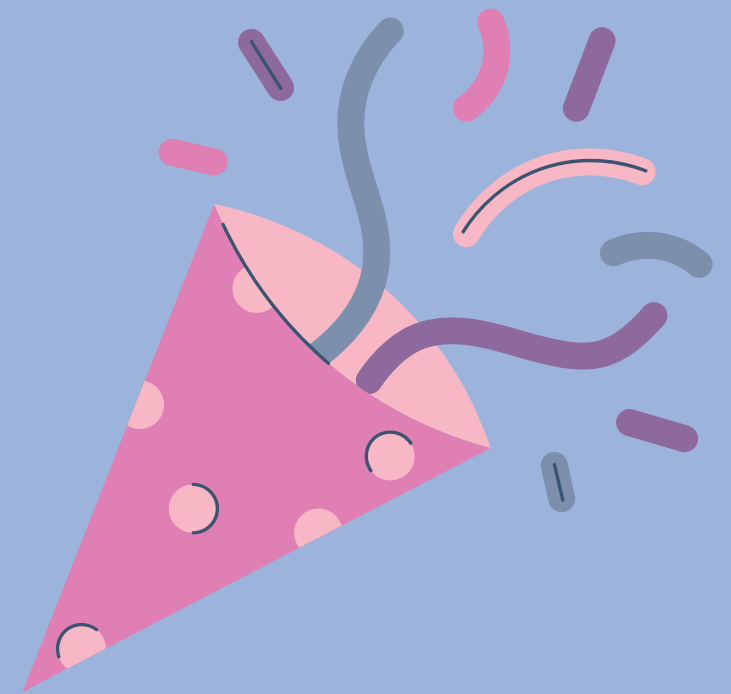
Oxford as a city is expensive in comparison to more Northern cities. However being a student here is not grossly more expensive than being a student elsewhere. You only pay for accommodation during term time and not in the vacation (this unfortunately does mean you have to clear your room out at the end of each term but there are storage facilities available that are prioritised for overseas students). You don't have to buy books usually because the library network is so extensive, and there is a fund from college you can apply to in order to cover some textbook costs if you ask your tutor. Public transport costs don't exist because everything is within easy walking, and even easier cycling, distance. The food and bar at BNC are subsidised so the cost for that is also reduced so there is a lot of scope to feed yourself and go on nights out (if you so choose) as, or if not more, economically as at other universities. One of the big worries a lot of people have is that having a part-time job is not really allowed during term time and so you won't have an income to help you afford living independently. College understands that not everyone is in the same financial position and so there are many bursaries and scholarships available from the university or directly from college. There are also lots of opportunities available for paid employment in college including working down the bar, doing access events such as open days or workshops and the annual telethon. If you are worried about finances, or it becomes a concern while you're studying, please reach out and someone will be there to help!



OXFORD BRASENOSE

I will spend my entire life at my desk studying

Not true! University gives you the freedom to plan your own work times, so some people may choose to spend more time studying than doing other things, and a lot of people don't and fit their work in around a variety of other activities. In all honesty, it is often difficult to fit in all your work here, especially if you participate in lots of extracurriculars. However it does depend how you plan your own time obviously. Lots of people find they are extremely busy in term times fitting in all their work, hobbies and fun in the eight week term time period. But then you have really long vacations to relax after that. Brasenose as a college is very active in pretty much all the extra-curriculars: we have a strong tradition of members participating in drama, sport, debating, journalism and music at uni level, and there are loads of college societies and sports to get involved with too. There is definitely the ability to find balance and be a normal(-ish) student at Oxford!



We hope that this has cleared up any common misconceptions and answered any questions you had about the Oxford, and Brasenose, experience. If there are any more questions or anxieties you have about anything at all to do with Freshers' Week or Oxford/Brasenose in general, please don't hesitate to get in touch by emailing [*jcr-freshers@bnc.ox.ac.uk*](mailto:jcr-freshers@bnc.ox.ac.uk).

In the meantime, enjoy your summers and see you soon! xxx

