

Dear Brasenose Freshers,

It's such a pleasure to welcome you to Brasenose College and to the HCR - your new graduate community and, I hope, your home away from home. Before anything else: congratulations!! You've worked incredibly hard to get here, and we're so glad you're joining us!

The HCR (short for Hulme Common Room) is Brasenose's version of what many other colleges call the MCR - our graduate student community and social space. As a Brasenose grad, you're automatically a member. The physical HCR room is tucked away on the right of the Old Quad as you enter College from Radcliffe Square - there's a little wooden sign pointing the way and the room is the door just on the left once you enter into the staircase.

The HCR is here to be your home within college — a space where you can unwind, connect with others, and feel part of a welcoming community. Whether you're coming along to events, joining a sports team, dropping in for a film night or brunch, or simply curling up on the sofa with a cup of tea and a book, there's a place for you here.

As a committee, we're here to help make your time at Brasenose as enjoyable and fulfilling as possible. Throughout the year, we organise a variety of events — from welcome drinks and formal dinners to game nights, pub quizzes, film screenings, craft sessions, welfare teas, and day trips around Oxfordshire. We try to offer a bit of everything, whether you're someone who loves big social gatherings or prefers smaller, more low-key spaces. And if there's something you'd like to see added to the mix, we're always happy to hear your suggestions!

But the committee is here for much more than just organising events. We're also here to support you in all aspects of graduate life — whether that means pointing you toward college or university resources, advocating for your needs, helping you navigate life at Brasenose, or simply being someone you can talk to. We work closely with college to make sure your voice is heard, and we're always happy to listen. If you have questions, run into any issues, or just want someone to chat to, don't hesitate to get in touch with any of us. We've all been where you are now — and we genuinely want to help you settle in, find your feet, and feel at home.

In addition, if you're interested in getting involved in shaping our community, we'd love to hear from you! Come chat with me or anybody else on the committee during Freshers' Week - we'll be holding elections for Committee roles at the start of Michaelmas Term.

I know Oxford can feel a bit overwhelming at first - there's a lot of tradition, a lot of terminology, and a way of doing things that might feel a bit opaque. To help you settle in, we've put together a Freshers' Handbook (2025-26), also attached to this email. It's full of useful info, tips, and explanations- think of it as your Oxford survival guide, glossary, and recommendation list all rolled into one.

A few practical things:

- To help you stay connected, we've set up a WhatsApp group for this year's freshers. It's a great way to start getting to know each other before term kicks off, and it'll also be one of the main places where we'll share updates about Freshers' Week (which runs from 29th September to 12th October). The other main way we'll keep in touch is through your BNC email. The fresher group chat is part of the wider BNC HCR

WhatsApp community, which includes other HCR-related groups and the main HCR chat for the 2025–26 academic year.

- You will also soon be introduced to your College Family — a longstanding Oxford tradition in which returning students are matched with new students to offer support and advice as you settle in.
- The HCR website is another handy resource, with lots of information and links you might find helpful. Keep an eye out for the term card once it's published - it'll give you an overview of everything happening in the HCR each term.

Before I finish, I just want to say — if you're feeling a little nervous about arriving, that's completely normal, and you're definitely not alone. I remember so clearly how overwhelming it all felt before I came to Oxford — the mountain of paperwork, the unfamiliar jargon, adjusting to a new country and education system, and wondering if I'd ever find where I truly belonged... What helped me most was discovering how genuinely welcoming and supportive Brasenose — especially the HCR — really is. You don't need to have everything figured out before you arrive. Step by step, you'll find your rhythm, meet your people, and little by little, this strange, beautiful place will start to feel like home!

Until then, enjoy the last few weeks before term - rest, travel safely, and if you have any questions or worries at all, please don't hesitate to reach out! We can't wait to meet you all and kick off what we hope will be a brilliant year together. On behalf of our whole community, welcome to Brasenose and to the HCR—you're officially part of the family now!

Warmest wishes,
Thyra

HCR President, 2025-2026