

Cambridge Colleges Guide for Postgraduate Students

What is a Cambridge College?

The 31 Cambridge Colleges are social and intellectual communities of scholars governed by Fellows who are generally academics employed at Cambridge. These Fellows have chosen to take on the additional responsibilities involved because they believe in the values of community and interdisciplinary practice. Colleges promote and sustain these values through the care they offer to their students, individually and collectively and can offer you a home as well as services that other universities provide centrally. Colleges are integral to the University's educational and research environment.

What are the benefits of College membership?

Your College experience can be one of the most important and memorable you have in Cambridge. The tuition fee you pay Cambridge includes a College element to reflect the division of resource and support.

The tangible advantages of College membership include induction in your first weeks, ongoing academic and pastoral support; accommodation and catering; financial advice and assistance; social, cultural and sporting facilities and events and opportunities for professional development, through interdisciplinary seminars or intergenerational networks of College members. Other benefits of College membership are intangible, but just as important and the friendship and advice students find in Colleges make these communities indispensable elements of your Cambridge life.

If you are a part-time student you may need to make a conscious decision to engage as fully as possible with your College, but that decision is worth making while bearing in mind both how easy it will be to fit this in around your studies and the time you can spend in Cambridge.

Obligations and responsibilities

The College has obligations to you as a member of its community but you have responsibilities as a member of the College: to respect its rules and conventions; to have regard to the rights and needs of others; to honour commitments. As a member of the College community, you will gain much by helping to make it function effectively.

This document sets out what you can expect from your College, and what your College will expect from you.

1. Pastoral and welfare support through the Tutorial system

1.1 Postgraduate Tutor

As a Postgraduate member of a College, you will have access to a Postgraduate Tutor (also known as a Graduate Tutor). This is a College Fellow who is there to give you advice about any pastoral, academic, financial or emotional problems you

may be experiencing.

In most Colleges, there is a single individual (the Postgraduate Tutor or the Senior Tutor) who has overall responsibility for the whole community of Postgraduate (full-time and part-time) students. Tutors meet regularly within College, and Postgraduate Tutors meet their counterparts in other Colleges along with senior University officers, representatives of the Education Services, the Student Union and the Colleges' tutorial teams. This means they can all share information to ensure a coordinated and effective response to issues affecting Postgraduate students.

Your Postgraduate Tutor is a source of general advice and support on pastoral and academic matters, and will listen to your experiences of studying and research, offer advice where appropriate, and introduce you to academic staff and students in College with similar interests. Your Postgraduate Tutor may not be an expert in your field of study and so you should not expect detailed academic advice from them.

Your Postgraduate Tutor will have access to reports submitted online by you (via the Self-Evaluation System) or your supervisor concerning your academic progress, and can add comments on any reports submitted. Your Postgraduate Tutor will liaise where necessary with academic supervisors and departments or faculties, particularly if you are experiencing difficulties. If you are worried by what a report says, or want a different perspective on any aspect of your work, go and talk to your Postgraduate Tutor.

If you are ill, your work has been disrupted or you need to take time out for personal reasons, your Tutor will support you in making an application to the relevant University bodies. Similarly if you need additional time to complete your studies, your Tutor will advise on how you might apply for this.

In the rare cases when things go wrong, and you need to make a formal complaint or appeal against a University department, your Tutor may have an important role as advocate, and will guide you through the formal [procedures](#)

1.2 Other Support

Your College has a wider welfare team which is likely to include some of the following members of the College senior management team: the College Senior Tutor, (who has overall responsibility for students); College Nurse, Counsellor or Mental Health Advisor; administrative staff in a variety of roles; and College Chaplain. A key figure in many Colleges is the Postgraduate or Graduate Secretary, in some cases known as a Postgraduate or Graduate Officer or Administrator. Available in College during office hours, the Postgraduate Secretary works closely with Tutors, and will often be able to provide immediate answers to questions on routine but essential practical matters. S/he acts as a contact point for international students and advises on the availability of other members of the College's support staff.

The Tutorial Office is responsible for your induction, providing tutorial references and other official letters (for example, to help you open a bank account) as necessary, and will assist you in any applications you may make in relation to disability or learning difference. The Office can also provide advice and information concerning the provision of childcare in Cambridge.

2. Accommodation and catering in College

Colleges will normally give the option of College-owned or College-managed accommodation for at least one year to full-time students who are new to Cambridge, have been confirmed for admission and applied for single accommodation by 31 July. Colleges will consult with MCRs to determine their priorities in allocating accommodation and the details of the contracts they offer. Giving good notice to the College Tutorial Office of your likely needs will increase your chances of being offered accommodation.

Where possible and practicable, offer accommodation to part-time students for study visits, particularly if these visits occur outside term-time.

Colleges will provide clear guidance on access to facilities open to students from another College. Colleges vary in their approach to students from another College who might be renting their accommodation, but are not members of that College. Consequently students residing in the accommodation of a College other than their own should check what their entitlements are in terms of access to facilities such as dining facilities, gyms, library and IT. You should not assume that you are entitled to use any facilities in your host college apart from the room you are renting.

Colleges will provide advice and information on accommodation available elsewhere in Cambridge. The University's Accommodation Service (<https://www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk/>) may also be able to help.

Colleges will also provide informal College catering to enable their members to eat and drink together informally as a matter of routine. Sharing a meal provides a chance for relaxation and a social focus away from work. Colleges also arrange occasional formal dining events, some of which may enable you to invite a guest or listen to a distinguished outside speaker.

3. Academic support

Colleges will provide:

- A College library
- IT facilities.
- Opportunities to exchange experiences across disciplines in an informal setting
- Direction of studies and supervisions for students taking certain taught Postgraduate courses (such as *Clinical Medicine* or the *LLM*)
- For doctoral students and in combination with Faculty schemes and/or discussion with your supervisor, opportunities to supervise undergraduates and apply for College Research Fellowships.

4. Finance and funding

Colleges will:

- Provide advice on identifying and obtaining financial assistance, whether for future study (e.g. funding a PhD course), fieldwork expenses, or presenting work at international academic conferences.
- Provide advice and support in cases of unforeseen and unforeseeable financial difficulties (not including failure to access funds which were guaranteed as part of the admissions procedure).
- Collect fees on their own behalf and for the University: these fees reflect the costs associated with the support for which you are eligible and the benefits and facilities they hope you will enjoy.
- Act as the channel by which the 'maintenance' or living expense element of scholarships, bursaries and loans reach the pockets of individual students. They liaise extensively with various funding bodies, as well as monitoring your own account with the College for catering and other services.

5. A strong social focus

Colleges will provide:

- A student association or Postgraduate society (typically the Middle Common Room (MCR)), run by students with support from the College.
- Opportunities to run and participate in seminars and other events, and to develop presentation skills
- Opportunities for standing for election to representative bodies and committees.
- Suitable facilities for students' social, cultural and recreational activities such as sports and music. Many social and recreational activities in Cambridge are College-based: concerts, plays, competitive inter-college sports, and social events. Colleges provide the infrastructure support: common rooms, TV and games rooms, bars, gyms, boathouses and sports fields, while students run many of the activities.
- Lifetime membership of the College.

6. Administration

Colleges will provide:

- Administrative services concerning a student's registration in the University and progress through it, from initial matriculation through to presentation for a degree.
- Advice, where needed, concerning relationships with funding bodies; and advice and where necessary action concerning a student's financial engagement with the College and the University.
- Assistance in communicating with University authorities on academic and other matters.
- Mechanisms for feedback, suggestions and complaints to the College.

7. What your College may expect from you

- Full and accurate information at admission, for example, about academic and other qualifications (including English language competence); and ability to pay for the course undertaken and other expenses while in Cambridge.
- Regular contact with the College, including the Tutor, and providing contact details when absent from Cambridge.
- Agreement to inform your Tutor of any material changes in circumstances.
- Prompt responses to requests for information from the College.
- Full engagement with the academic programme, and (where appropriate) participation in other aspects of College life.
- Meeting completion dates and similar targets.
- Meeting financial obligations to the College and University, paying fees and

settling bills within the deadlines specified.

- Keeping to accommodation contracts or, if this becomes impossible for unforeseen reasons, negotiating any changes with the College.
- Respecting the rules and conventions of the College.
- Respecting the rights and needs of others in the College, staff as well as fellow students.