

# BALLIOL FOR BEGINNERS - MCR EDITION

## Introduction to the MCR

The MCR ('Middle Common Room') at Balliol is two things. First, the MCR is a physical space in Holywell Manor (immediately left after you enter, straight ahead and up the stairs) which is open to all graduates. The space is formally used to host our fortnightly MCR meetings but it is informally a great place for some personal work or for hosting a social event. Second, the MCR is the community of graduates at Balliol. Every graduate student at Balliol is a part of the MCR and we elect a committee of our peers to represent our views to College, organise social events, run the Megaron Bar, support us in our welfare needs, and look after an unparalleled collection of sports facilities and university renowned sporting institutions. Effectively, the MCR is the collection of graduate students at Balliol organising and collectivising to make our time at Balliol as happy and fulfilling as possible.

For a brief history, Balliol MCR was formally founded in 1990, around seven hundred years after the College itself. As with any nascent political community, Balliol MCR has been constantly evolving and is still ceaselessly trying out new avenues for improving our communal life. Today the MCR is a thriving, diverse community of nearly 400 graduate students, many of who live in the graduate centre at Holywell Manor and Master's Field. Recently, Balliol has become an equal undergraduate/graduate college in terms of [student numbers](#). This means that the MCR at Balliol is one of the strongest graduate communities in Oxford, something constantly reflected in our collegiate and collaborative atmosphere.

The day to day running of the MCR is undertaken by the MCR Committee, who are (almost all) elected during Trinity Term. The MCR Committee serves for a year and takes office following the annual Garden Party in Trinity which marks the end of the full-term academic year. If you are interested in getting involved with the MCR more formally, consider running for an MCR position. Positions often open up throughout the year, so if you want to take a more active role, speak to somebody on the committee and they will give you candid advice on how best to go about it. Crucially, the MCR is the body of all graduate students at Balliol and the committee members are elected to represent and further our collective interests. So the committee is there to do whatever you, the student body, may want.

MCR Meetings (OGMs) are held four times a term (Sunday of 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th week - note, weeks in Oxford start on a Sunday!) and all Balliol graduates are encouraged to attend. These General Meetings represent the decision-making body for the MCR as well as providing a forum in which everyone's views and opinions are taken into account. It is here that any member of the MCR may raise a concern or present an idea and be supported by the graduate community in acting upon them. The meetings can be the focus of impassioned debate but this is only because our decisions have real effects on the way College and the University works for us. Any MCR member can bring a motion, so if you want to change or suggest something then don't hesitate in doing so - just ask the Secretary for a hand in writing it if you're not sure how to. There is always a very generous selection of takeaway food at each meeting, provided by our MCR Food Rep., so meetings are a time when the graduate community comes together to discuss any and all things related to graduate life at Balliol and enjoy some good food together. The inaugural MCR Meeting will be at the end of Freshers' Week so please come along and see MCR democracy in action.

Finally, if you want to get a glimpse into what life is like at Balliol MCR before your arrival, check out our [Instagram](#)! The MCR committee posts regular updates about our day-to-day happenings and various shenanigans. We cannot wait to welcome you to our close-knit community shortly.

## Who's Who of Balliol MCR

If you need to get in touch with either a MCR committee member or a College officer, drop them an email at [firstname.lastname@balliol.ox.ac.uk](mailto:firstname.lastname@balliol.ox.ac.uk).

### ***MCR Committee***

<b>President</b>	-	Mara Kelly, M.Phil US History
<b>Secretary</b>	-	Marissa Mueller, D.Phil Physiology, Anatomy, & Genetics
<b>Social Secretaries</b>	-	Maria Pereira da Costa, M.Phil International Relations Mark Eid, D.Phil in Autonomous Intelligent Machines and Systems (AIMS)
<b>Bar Managers</b>	-	Alina Nicheperovich, D.Phil Clinical Medicine Henrik Auestad, D.Phil in Atmospheric, Ocean and Planetary Physics Martin Munoz, B.Phil Philosophy
<b>Arts Officer</b>	-	Chris Lu, M.St in Modern Languages
<b>IT Officer</b>	-	Katherine Benjamin, D.Phil Mathematics
<b>Sports Officer</b>	-	Aaron Leu, D.Phil in Atomic and Laser Physics
<b>Welfare Officer</b>	-	Brendan McGrath, M.Phil Economics
<b>Women's Officer</b>	-	Brittany Gittus, D.Phil History
<b>Disabilities Officer</b>	-	Victoria White, D.Phil Medieval & Modern Languages
<b>Ethnic Minorities Officer</b>	-	Sidra Yousaf, M.Phil in Modern South Asian Studies
<b>LGBT+ Officer</b>	-	Alexander Frangulov, D.Phil Linguistics
<b>Living Out Officer</b>	-	Elena Eliseeva, D.Phil Pharmacology

### ***College Officers***

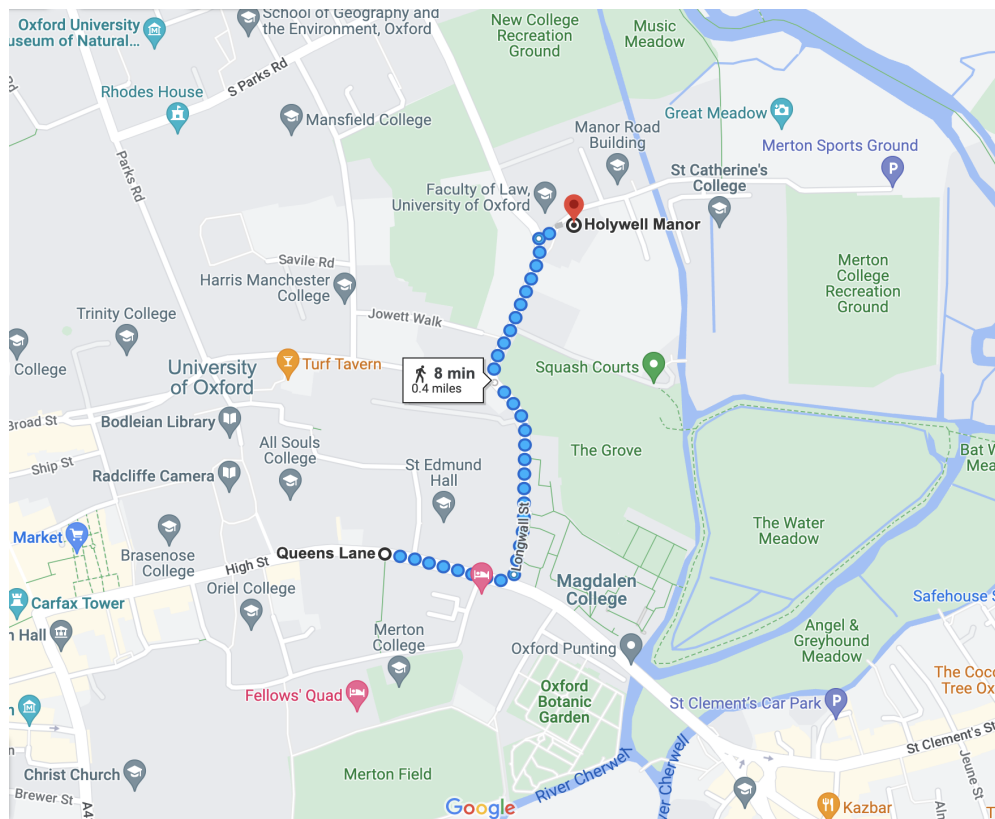
<b>Praefectus</b>	-	Elena Lombardi
<b>Acting Domestic Bursar</b>	-	Keeley Mortimer
<b>College Nurse</b>	-	Christine Smith
<b>Harassment Officers</b>	-	Raghavendra Srinivas, Fiona Chippendale, Janet Quartly
<b>Tutor for Graduates</b>	-	Nicola Trott
<b>Graduate Administrator</b>	-	Sarah Twinn
<b>Junior Deans</b>	-	Ahmed Shalaby, Isabelle Rocroi

## FAQs

- When should I arrive?
  - o If you are staying in the Balliol Graduate Centre, your contract would generally start in mid-September. In any case, you should be moved in by 29th September when Fresher's Week events begin. We highly recommend arriving at least a few days earlier, however, to ensure you have time to unpack and settle in before orientation kicks off. Induction/orientation dates vary by department so don't forget to check your emails.
  
- Where do I go when I arrive?
  - o If you are staying at the Graduate Centre (Holywell Manor/Master's Field/Jowett Walk) please report to the Holywell Manor Porter's Lodge. They will be able to check you in and give you a temporary access fob.
  
- Where is my room? How do I get keys?
  - o You should collect a fob/keys to your room from the Porter's lodge at Holywell Manor. The porter on duty will be able to give you directions to your room.
  
- What furniture is provided in the rooms?
  - o In the Manor, every room comes with a desk, an office chair, a chest of drawers, a wardrobe, a sink. There may be other furniture but that varies from room to room. Some rooms in the Manor have a double bed. Please double check with Keeley Mortimer ([keeley.mortimer@balliol.ox.ac.uk](mailto:keeley.mortimer@balliol.ox.ac.uk)) about the size of the bed in the room before purchasing bedding.
  - o In Master's Field, all rooms come with a desk, small shelves, a wardrobe and an ensuite bathroom. The rooms in B2 have a single bed whereas all other rooms have small double beds.
  
- Is bedding provided?
  - o No, you can get new bedding delivered or get it at one of the shops in Westgate (shopping centre).
  
- Do I have access to kitchens?
  - o Yes, all graduates living in the graduate centre have access to kitchen facilities. Each kitchen comes with a fridge, microwave and kettle. There are two common kitchenettes available as well: one in the MCR at Holywell Manor and another in the D block common room in Master's Field. The cockpit has a large, bookable kitchen with a stove and lots of kitchen appliances.
  
- How to collect my BRP?
  - o Your BRP is generally available to collect from our Graduate Administrator (Sarah Twinn) or from a post office depending on the option you opted for during your visa application.

- Where can I get a UK phone number?
  - o You can purchase a sim card at any supermarket like Tesco or Sainsbury's and top up using the mobile app.
  - o Most services do a Pay As You Go plan for about 5-15GBP a month, with plenty of data.
  
- How do I set up a UK bank account?
  - o To set up a UK bank account, you need to print your enrolment certificate which you can download from your student self-service. You will also need to collect your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) before you go to the bank. Most of the banks are on the junction of Cornmarket Street and High Street near Carfax tower. They have long queue times especially in Fresher's week so we recommend going early with your passport, BRP and enrolment certificate.
  - o Alternatively you can easily open an account on Monzo or Starling, which are online banks. For Monzo, you just need a phone with a phone number and then you can download the Monzo app and set your account up. You can also order a card on the app. Starling requires a document check, but is straightforward and easy to set up online.
  - o A UK bank account will allow you to pay for club fees, buy ball tickets, set up recurring billing for things like external gym memberships, and other expenses. It also makes MCR reimbursements and splitting costs with friends much easier.
  
- Where do I do my laundry?
  - o If in Master's Field, book a laundry slot online.  
(<https://scheduler.balliol.ox.ac.uk/Web/dashboard.php?>)
  - If in the Manor, sign up on the physical sign up sheet outside the lodge.
  
- Is there a printer somewhere in Balliol?
  - o There are two printers available at Balliol: one in HM Lodge and another in the computer room in mainsite. You need to log in to [papercut.balliol.ox.ac.uk](http://papercut.balliol.ox.ac.uk) and use the 'Web Print' option. If you have any queries, please contact Balliol IT ([helpdesk@balliol.ox.ac.uk](mailto:helpdesk@balliol.ox.ac.uk)).
  - o More information about printing can be found here  
(<https://www.balliol.ox.ac.uk/current-members/ict-services/printing>)
  - o This service is not the same as the Bodleian print system, which has its own setup.
  
- What does "bookable" mean? How do I book things and what should I book?
  - o Many of the facilities at Balliol require an online booking to use, including the Master's Field laundry rooms, gym, music room, kayaks, and MCR punt. You can also book the BBQ and Cockpit for parties. The full list of bookable resources is on the booking site.
  - o To book, go to: <https://scheduler.balliol.ox.ac.uk>

- When does hall open? What do I have to do to eat in hall?
  - o Hall opens on 2<sup>nd</sup> October. You need to load money into your bod card before you use the hall. To do that you need to go to [payments.balliol.ox.ac.uk](http://payments.balliol.ox.ac.uk) and then select 'Card Top-Up.'
- What's the best way to get to Oxford from the airport?
  - o If you are flying into Heathrow or Gatwick - take the Airline bus that directly brings you to Oxford. You can buy a ticket when you board and there is no need to book ahead of time. This is also probably the most affordable option. Get off at Queen's Lane/High Street bus stop. It is an 8 minute walk from there.



- Should I be meeting with my supervisor and/or advisor in Fresher's Week?
  - o You can, and it's nice to get to know them before term sets in, but it's not generally expected.
- What about food, should I get groceries?
  - o You should probably head to Tesco for necessities. Hall opens on 02<sup>nd</sup> October, and your college parents will take you there for the first time to show you how it works. You should add money to your card on [payments.balliol.ox.ac.uk](http://payments.balliol.ox.ac.uk)

- How do I pay for things?
  - o You can load money into your bod card using [payments.balliol.ox.ac.uk](https://payments.balliol.ox.ac.uk). Using this you should be able to book formals and also pay for meals in the hall. If you sign up for an event that is *battled*, you don't have to pay it right away and the charge is reflected in your battels in the beginning of the next term.
  
- Who do I ask if I have other questions?
  - o For any admin/academic concerns please write to Sarah Twinn
  - o For information about accommodation, checking in to your room etc. please contact Keeley Mortimer or the Holywell Manor lodge
  - o For any other questions about student life at Balliol, your college parents should be your first point of contact. Also, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Mara ([mcr.president@balliol.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mcr.president@balliol.ox.ac.uk)).

## **Bike storage**

- Where are there local areas of bike storage?
  - The area around Master's Field has plenty of outdoor bike storage. Many of the bike racks are behind locked gates accessible only to Balliol members, including racks near B1, C1, and C2.
  - Master's Field also has an indoor bike storage room located on the ground floor of D3. Use of the indoor bike storage room is based on the bike storage ballot carried out at the beginning of each term. Only those cyclists who are allocated a space in this termly ballot may use the indoor storage room.
  - While both indoor and outdoor bike parking is available, Balliol is not responsible if your bike is stolen while locked on site. We highly recommend buying a secure bike lock for use around Oxford, especially one with an insurance policy attached. Bike theft unfortunately does happen at Oxford, so best to be prepared and careful!



## MCR Facilities

- **MCR** : Large room on the first floor of Holywell Manor. Access is through the painted room. Large comfy sofas, piano and lots of magazines are available. There is a small kitchen as well.
- **Cockpit**: Social space in the basement of Holywell Manor with projector/screen, speakers, pool table, table tennis, and a kitchen stocked with lots of pots, pans, appliances, and cutlery. To use the kitchen, you will need to ask for the key at the Lodge.
- **Megaron Bar**: Self-service honesty bar stocked with lots of liquor, soft drinks, juices and snacks courtesy of our bar managers. You must mark your purchases from the bar on your battels sheet available at the bar.
- **TV Room**: Adjacent to the Megaron, a brightly painted room with sofas, a small library, lots of DVDs and of course a television.
- **D-Block Common Room**: A common space next to the laundry room in block D1 in Master's Field. There is free coffee here with lots of seating and a kitchenette. Lots of power outlets and large windows with splendid views of the field.
- **Laundry**: Residents of B2 and C1 should use the laundry room in A Block. Residents of C2, D1, D2 and D3 should use the laundry room in D1. Master's Field laundry can be booked here: <https://scheduler.balliol.ox.ac.uk/Web/dashboard.php>? If you book laundry for one hour, you are automatically entitled to the dryer for the next hour. There is a separate laundry room in Holywell Manor that you can book by signing up on the physical sheet outside the porter's lodge.
- **MCR Gym**: The gym is located off of the Cockpit in the Manor. The fob to access the gym must be collected from the lodge. In addition, you will need to do a gym orientation before using the gym, and pay the gym levy.
- **Squash Courts**: The squash court is under the pavilion. To use the squash court it must be booked online and the fob collected from the lodge. It can be booked online here: <https://scheduler.balliol.ox.ac.uk/Web/schedule.php?sid=4>
- **Tennis courts**: Masters' Field is home to both a grass and hard court; the grass court is exclusively used for tennis whereas the hard court can also be used for basketball or netball. The grass court can be booked here:

<https://scheduler.balliol.ox.ac.uk/Web/schedule.php?sid=9>. The hard court can be booked here: <https://scheduler.balliol.ox.ac.uk/Web/schedule.php?sid=8>

- **Croquet set:** The Fred Lynam Croquet Court is in front of Jowett Walk. The bespoke Balliol MCR croquet set is stored in a purpose-built wooden unit in the Jowett walkway. The croquet set can be booked online. Having been booked, the key to the croquet set can be acquired from the lodge. The court and accompanying set can be booked online here: <https://scheduler.balliol.ox.ac.uk/Web/dashboard.php>
- **Balliol Centre for Aquatic Excellence (BCAE):** The BCAE is an institution at the heart of Balliol MCR. Focused on supporting the next generation of elite aquatic athletes, the BCAE supports all forms of maritime and amphibious sporting endeavours. State-of-the-art kayaks, paddleboards, and punts can be booked via the booking website, which then allows you to check out the key to access them from the lodge. MCR members must attend a kayak induction before using the kayaks.

## Glossary of Oxford Lingo

- **Battels:** College rent bill, usually charged in the beginning of each term. The MCR Treasurer will be in touch in the 0th week about the charges you can expect on your battels from the MCR. Your course fees are also paid through battels.
- **Bod Card:** Your University Card that grants you access to buildings and libraries and also buildings within Balliol.
- **BOP:** Big-Open-Party. Every college organises several BOPs during the year, each with their own unique theme. There are two MCR BOPs every year, one in Michaelmas and another in Hilary.
- **Domestic Bursar:** College officer responsible for domestic matters like food, accommodation, security, etc.
- **Finance Bursar:** The college's chief financial officer.
- **Formal:** A three-course sit-down dinner that occurs every Tuesday at 7.45. Dress code is smart, no gowns needed. Formals need to be booked on the booking system, and booking opens weekly for dinner the following week. Every student can book up to 5 guests for a formal.
- **Matriculation:** A ceremony marking your official entry into the University. The ceremony is shockingly short and you will have the day to take lots of nice pictures or chill at a pub. You have to dress up in sub fusc for the ceremony.
- **MCR:** A physical space within Holywell Manor and also a term for the entire graduate community at Balliol (or any other college). Only students who pay MCR levies have access to MCR privileges.
- **Pidge:** A narrow rectangular hole in the mail room where your post is kept. Every member has their own assigned pidge.
- **Porter:** Vital college staff who double as receptionists, security and first point of contact for any emergency within college. We have our own porters lodge at Holywell Manor.
- **Punts/punting:** A common Oxbridge recreational activity. A punt is a flat-bottomed boat that can seat up to six people. Instead of using an oar, the punter uses a long pole to push against the riverbed and propel the boat forward. Not recommended if you don't know how to swim.

- **Rad Cam:** Radcliffe Camera - probably the most iconic Oxford building. From the inside it is a very very beautiful library.
- **Scout:** College housekeeping staff who are responsible for cleaning all common spaces including your rooms.
- **Sub fusc:** Your academic dress worn during all formal events during your time at the University, like matriculation, graduation and exams. White shirt or blouse, black socks and shoes. A choice of white bow tie or black ribbon, and dark suit or black skirt (or trousers). Plus mortar board and Advanced student gown. You can rent/buy the gown after you arrive in Oxford.

## **Useful Telephone numbers**

### **Medical**

College Doctors - 19 Beaumont Street Surgery

01865 240 501

College Nurse - Christine Smith

01865 277 737

### **Welfare**

Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre

01865 725 311

Oxford Samaritans

116 123

CALM

0800 58 58 58

### **Miscellaneous**

001 Taxis

01865 240 000

Royal Cars Oxford

01865 777 333