

## Expectations of teaching and assessment in Trinity Term 2021

*This document presents the final version of the Expectations for Teaching in TT21 produced by ESG and confirmed for publication. It is a reflection of practice across the diverse collegiate University, following consultation with divisions, departments, faculties, colleges and the Student Union and building on our experiences in Michaelmas and Hilary terms. It has been reviewed by HTCG, Bronze and Silver groups.*

### Background

In the academic year 20/21 the University aims to offer an educational experience for all students, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, full time or part time, that preserves Oxford's high quality, personalised education. We are committed to maintaining the highest possible standards of education, with a focus on personalised teaching and supervision from leading academics. Our ambition is to offer a flexible and inclusive educational approach which recognises and minimises the effects of barriers to participation, imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which may be faced by staff and students. This aligns with the expectations set out by the Office for Students<sup>1</sup> to put in place adapted approaches to teaching and assessment that are broadly equivalent to our usual arrangements, such that we can be confident that the outcomes for students are meaningful and reliable whilst protecting the health of staff and students.

### Purpose

This document sets out the expectations of departments, faculties and colleges for teaching and supporting learning in Trinity term, assuming that the University is at Business Continuity Planning Stage 2 (i.e. all buildings open but with mitigation measures including physical distancing in place) and Department for Education Teaching Tier 1<sup>2</sup> (blended learning with face-to-face tuition while following the requirements of government guidance). These expectations may change according to changing national or local circumstances, whether towards more restricted or more normal conditions, as the term proceeds. This document will be reviewed on a termly basis.

This document has been developed by the Education Steering Group. Account has been taken of advice from QAA<sup>3</sup> and detailed planning and assurance activities which took place in preparation for the start of the academic year. This document is available to students and the public and represents practice across the diverse collegiate University following consultation with divisions, departments, faculties, colleges and the Student Union.

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<sup>1</sup> [Guidance on quality and standards during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), Office for Students, (last updated 28 January 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Higher education coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance: UK Gov, (updated 2 March 2021)

<sup>3</sup> [Preserving quality and standards through a time of rapid change](#), QAA, (2 June 2020).

## Expectations

1. The normal expectation for Trinity term would be a mix of teaching, independent study and assessment, with the emphasis on assessment dependent on the subject and year of study. For students with exams and/or assessments in Trinity, this term will be a mix of independent revision, revision classes or tutorials, and completing dissertations, research projects, or sitting exams which would then be marked. PGR students will continue to work on their theses.
2. Formal in-person teaching is expected to resume at the start of term for UG and PGT students on practical and practice-based courses. Teaching for some of these subjects has been arranged to begin prior to the start of term. Following the government review on wider student return at the end of the Easter holidays, it is expected there will be a managed, phased return of remaining students who are able to return for in-person teaching.
3. All residency requirements have been suspended for Trinity term. Recognising that not all students will be able to return to Oxford for in-person teaching, Course Directors have been asked to consider, in particular, the needs of non-UK-domiciled students and those students who are shielding, to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to support them.
4. All teaching and assessment will adhere to the latest national and local public health guidance from the government and the University's Health Measures Advisory Group and to local risk assessments. This includes maintaining two metre physical distancing, enhanced hygiene regimes, and wearing face coverings in University and college buildings (see face coverings [policy](#) for exemptions and exceptions). Special arrangements are in place for start of term. If returning to Oxford, students are asked to arrive in time to take two LFDs before starting in-person teaching, after which they will be invited to continue testing on a twice-weekly basis. Staff and students are expected to self-isolate when unwell with suspected Covid and to seek testing at the University-provided [testing and early alert service](#). Where students are self-isolating, they will be provided with continued teaching, and academic and welfare support.
5. The necessary levels of teaching space and resource will be available, augmented by the significant additional resource and staff effort that is being put into flexible and inclusive teaching.
6. We are committed to supporting all students during the pandemic, given the disruption faced by all. The assessment support package comprises a set of mitigation measures designed to ensure all students receive fair grade, in light of this year's exceptional circumstances. All students, at all levels of study, are encouraged to maintain a contemporaneous log of disruption to their studies caused by the pandemic (e.g. period of illness, disruption caused by periods of self-isolation, any restrictions on access to resources) so that they have a record to hand if they wish to submit a Mitigating Circumstances notice to Examiners (MCE). The MCE process allows students to make examiners aware of anything related to the pandemic that may have affected learning,

revision, coursework submissions and examinations, alongside any personal circumstances which may have had a substantial impact on their academic performance.

7. The following describes what academic provision students can expect at the beginning of Trinity term 2021. Departments, faculties and colleges are encouraged to explain in detail how these expectations align with their plans for the academic year.
  - a) Oxford undergraduate and postgraduate education will remain characterised by their personalised approach, with a strong focus on tutorials or supervisions and high levels of personalised feedback and support. We will maintain the usual levels of student engagement with academic teaching staff appropriate to Trinity term. Students will have opportunities to discuss their work regularly with tutors or supervisors and will be provided with personalised feedback on it.
  - b) Exam support will be available in the form of departmental guidance, college briefings and support, recorded exam preparation briefings, [exam-specific wellbeing resources](#) and the usual exam adjustments in place. Revision support should be provided at the same level as normal, including where classes and consultations are offered online.
  - c) Dissertations or project work will involve the same volume of work and intellectual rigour, and the same level of academic support, as normal. But projects may have to be designed (and ongoing ones redesigned) to account for the inaccessibility of some resources, such as archives or laboratories. For students carrying out their work in a research group, efforts will be made to substitute the day-to-day research environment through weekly online group meetings, social media groups or similar mechanisms, as appropriate.
  - d) Individual and small-group teaching, including tutorials, smaller classes and individual supervisions, will take place in-person where possible. Where this is not possible, because local logistical or public health restrictions or conditions prevent it or because of the absence or vulnerabilities of either student or tutor, alternatives will be devised using remote methods to ensure that students receive teaching that achieves the same learning objectives as far as possible.
  - e) Large-group teaching will generally take place online, through live-streamed lectures and virtual classes, pre-recorded lectures, asynchronous online activities or a mixture of all three. Live-streamed lectures will be recorded and made available to students and may make use of enhanced tools to encourage interactivity. Video recordings available from the Replay service will have automated captions added as standard.
  - f) Colleges and departments as appropriate oversee the mix of teaching that students receive. If a full-time student's teaching is all online, either because all their teaching is being offered online, or because they have been unable to return to Oxford, they will have the opportunity, at least fortnightly in term, of a one-to-one academic

tutorial or other meeting. This could be a teaching or study skills session or a shorter session to discuss academic progress and pastoral matters. Appropriate arrangements will be made for part-time students.

- g) If a student has been invited to return for recommended in-person teaching but is unable to do so, departments/faculties should contact the student to discuss the available options with them. While the focus should be on offering alternative provision, students should also be provided with information about suspension, exit awards and DDH/DDM if appropriate, and withdrawal.
- h) Research students will work as normally as possible in laboratories, libraries and archives, but subject to the restrictions in place at any time. They will interact with their supervisors regularly, but in some cases some or all such meetings may have to take place remotely. Most seminars will take place as usual, but many will be online. Some students will have to restructure their work with the advice of their supervisors, to take account of inaccessible resources. Processes are in place to apply for funding extensions and hardship support, depending on current funding arrangements. Research students who are unable to work on their research at all due to the impact of coronavirus, can apply to suspend their status.
- i) The virtual learning environment (Canvas for most students) will be the single entry point for course information and teaching materials.
- j) University, departmental and college libraries will be accessible in a number of ways. Opening-hours and reading-spaces are subject to restrictions, but slots for reading can be booked in many libraries. Scan-and-deliver and click-and-collect services will supplement access to reading-material, alongside increased availability of online resources. Academic staff will review reading-lists and work with the library service to enable all students to have access as far as is possible to the necessary reading. Service updates will continue to be posted on the Bodleian Libraries website.
- k) There will be in-person teaching for students on practical and practice-based courses which may include practical lab teaching, tutorial and/or revision sessions, depending on the constraints of physical distancing and timetabling. We will ensure that the practical component meets any requirements for professional or external accreditation where necessary.
- l) UG and PGT field work trips will go ahead, where it is deemed there is an exceptional need, with enhanced risk assessments in place, save for travel to countries on the UK government's red list. Trips may take place in smaller groups or be conducted remotely.
- m) Year-abroad and other placements, primarily within the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages, will go ahead, where possible, with enhanced risk assessments in place and with the exception of travel to countries on the UK government's red list. Where travel is not possible virtual alternatives will be provided. A student will not be required to take up a year abroad or other placement against their wishes:

alternative arrangements will be devised as appropriate on a case by case basis, taking into account the intended learning outcomes of the course. In some courses, some options or papers which rely on placements have not been offered this year.

- n) Assessment of all courses will maintain the rigour of Oxford degrees, but will adapt to limited capacity for invigilated examinations and other Covid-induced restrictions. Candidates will usually be expected to complete the same number of papers or assessments as usual. Most exams in Trinity term will be online open-book with provision in place to enable students who are residing in certain time-zones to sit the papers during their local daylight periods; invigilated closed-book in-person examinations will be reserved for those assessments which would be negated by an open-book format or are required to be invigilated by an external regulatory body. Alternative arrangements will be put in place for in-person exams where students are self-isolating or unable to get to Oxford; or if Government restrictions prevent in-person exams from going ahead. These alternative arrangements will retain the original assessment content and format, but may require remote invigilation and digital upload of the responses. The University has outlined a comprehensive package of mitigation measures, designed to ensure all students receive fair grades, in light of this year's exceptional circumstances.
8. Support and welfare services will be available to students in residence and those studying remotely. Full IT support remains available to students – this includes access to university email, VLEs, web services and licensed software. The Careers Service remains fully available and has increased its provision of 1 to 1 careers discussions, panels, workshops, Student Consultancy, and micro internships for all undergraduate and graduate students. Counselling, disability advice and other welfare support remains available and have been enhanced by the increased provision put in place as a result of the University's [Mental Health Task Force](#) (launched in Michaelmas term) and [Togetherall online support system](#). New [study skills resources](#) specific to studying remotely are available on Canvas.
9. Students will be notified by their departments of any planned and possible changes to their course in a clear and timely manner. This should take into account the information that has already been provided for [students and offer holders](#).
10. In the event that government restrictions are eased, teaching and assessment in Trinity Term will continue as already planned rather than risk introducing further disruption part way through the term. In the event that government or local restrictions become more severe or local conditions require it, departments/faculties, colleges and support services are preparing contingency plans which can be enacted in the event of a loss of a significant period of in-person teaching, so that we can switch quickly to remote teaching for individuals or entire cohorts. This may include moving elements of courses online or obtaining approval for contingent changes such that some course elements are no longer required for students to progress.
11. As a public body, the University has an active duty to consider the impact on equality in all decision making. The steps taken to provide flexible and inclusive teaching across the

academic year embody many of the principles of inclusive education intended to eliminate attainment gaps for students with disabilities and for under-represented groups, such as providing recordings of lectures and the introduction of a service to convert files into a wide range of digital and accessible file formats. However, it will continue to be important for departments and faculties to monitor the impact of changes to teaching and assessment timetables for students with disabilities and for colleges to monitor the impact on those from disadvantaged backgrounds in terms of IT provision and, where working from home, the home environment.