

Email to students regarding return to college

18/09/20

Dear Students,

I am counting the days until I will see you here at Somerville, when we have our full cohort of students in College and when there might be a semblance of a new normality.

We have all the necessary plans in place and college is ready to welcome you back. It is bound to feel strange having to social distance and wear face coverings in College when indoors, even during tutorials and classes (except when in your households and, of course, when eating). I am absolutely sure, however, that these measures are necessary. I have a duty to keep you safe and we all have a responsibility towards each other. It will be vitally important this term to follow the latest guidance on preventing the spread of the virus.

At Somerville we often speak about the respect we have for all members of our community, students, academic staff and non-academic staff. This year that mutual respect is going to be more important than ever. I want you to have the fantastic education you deserve, and I also want to make sure that all of my colleagues keep safe: from those who teach you, to those who enable our College to function including the scouts, the chefs and the porters.

We depend on each other and that means we all have to follow the rules, students and staff. We will have robust measures in place to ensure that we adhere to all the guidance, and this will be particularly strict in relation to hosting or attending social events that do not comply with the safety rules, both inside and outside of College. I don't mean to be a killjoy without good reason, but there is a very good reason: we all have to do everything possible to ensure that we minimise transmission of this wretched virus - even if that will require some creativity around finding ways to socialise together while staying safe and following the regulations.

On our website there is now a comprehensive [list of FAQs](#) which are being updated regularly. They include information about what happens if you need a test and if your household have to self-isolate. It's good to be aware of the procedures. If you have any questions not already answered there, please feel free to ask me or ask your common room president to pass them along to me on your behalf if you would prefer.

Most importantly, I want to reassure you that if you do need to self-isolate, we will take care of you: we will provide meals, books and post delivered to your door, and make sure you have access to welfare and any other support you need.

While we are supplying all the basics, I think it would be a good idea to have a bag of extra goodies stashed just in case you need to self-isolate as a sort of 'covid contingency kit': drinks, snacks, novels or poetry etc. Something else I advise you packing this term are a few extra jumpers and a warm coat - as you will know, we have to ensure that all of our tutorial rooms and common spaces are well ventilated to prevent the spread of the virus, and you might want to spend more time outdoors socialising than you normally would at this time of year.

We are still waiting for guidance about the 'rule of six' and the exact implications for social events. We will put further information on the website as soon as possible. I know, however, that both the JCR and MCR have already made some excellent plans and will continue to be



creative over the term to make sure that everyone, both new and returning students, can have a happy and sociable term.

I am looking forward to meeting those of you who have just joined us next week so that you can ask me questions and discuss any concerns or ideas about next term; and to seeing everyone else back in College sometime in 0th week. It is an amazing opportunity to be a student at Oxford and, while Michaelmas Term will not be quite what you first planned for, I hope you will enjoy these weeks and enjoy your return to Somerville.

With all best wishes,

Jan Royall
Principal