**Somerville College**

**Accommodation for students with disabilities, long-term health conditions, temporary illnesses or injuries.**

The College is committed to providing reasonable adjustments where and when possible in the provision of accommodation for students with a disability/disabilities in order to ensure that they are not at a disadvantage compared to students without a disability/disabilities. It will also endeavour to assist students who have specific accommodation needs as a result of temporary illnesses/injuries/conditions which fall outside the Equality Act\* definition of a disability.

However, with a limited number of rooms available in College, demand for accommodation may surpass availability. As such, students with a disability or medical condition cannot be guaranteed a room and so each request for accommodation will be assessed and considered by the College in order to ascertain that accommodation is allocated in an appropriate and fair manner. The types of room features which might be applied for (depending on your specific needs) include, but are not limited to, an en-suite bathroom, access to specific kitchen facilities, wheelchair accessibility or step-free accessibility, a room with a small fridge included, or an ergonomic chair.

**Process for assessing and implementing individual reasonable adjustments**

New students who declare a disability on their application form (UCAS or graduate application form) will be contacted by the College prior to their arrival in order to discuss their accommodation and other domestic needs. The College may ask the applicant / offer holder to provide medical evidence, from a GP or Consultant, of their disability and their accommodation needs.

All on-course students will be contacted by email during **8th week of Michaelmas Term** each yearto remind them that applications for a specific room or room with specific facilities for the following academic year must be made by no later than **Friday of 2nd week of Hilary term**.

**How to apply for specific accommodation or equipment**

If you wish to apply for a room “off-ballot” in any year other than your first you should apply using the self-assessment form available on the [Student Resources](https://www.some.ox.ac.uk/living-here/student-resources/) page of the Somerville Website (right at the bottom). If your request is made on the grounds of a disability, illness or medical condition it must be supported by evidence from a GP or consultant which confirms and explains why you require specific accommodation.

Please note that the College cannot consider requests for accommodation “off-ballot” unless they are made through the online application form, and supported if appropriate by medical evidence. All applications for a room “off-ballot” must be made by no later than **Friday 2nd week Hilary term** for accommodation to be occupied from the following Michaelmas term.

If you experience a change of circumstances after the application deadline has passed, please contact the Welfare Officer and Disability Co-ordinator, Jo Ockwell, at welfare.officer@some.ox.ac.uk. Please note that the college cannot guarantee allocation of rooms after the deadline due to lack of room or equipment availability.

**Applications made on the grounds of disability**

If you are applying for a room off-ballot because of particular needs arising from a disability, the College will expect that you have registered with the University’s Disability Advisory Service. Information on how to register with the Disability Advisory Service can be found here: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/disability/needs>. You can discuss your circumstances at any time during your studies, but you are encouraged to disclose your disability as early as possible, preferably before starting your course. This is so that you can benefit more quickly from the full range of support that is available.

If you have a permanent disability and had a successful application for off-ballot accommodation in a previous year and your circumstances have not changed, then you do not need to complete a new application but ***you must notify the Welfare Officer & Disability Co-ordinator, Jo Ockwell, of this before the application deadline***.

Your application will be considered by a group chaired by the Domestic Bursar (Andrew Parker), and comprising of the College Nurse (Glenys Knighton), the College’s Disability Co-ordinator (Jo Ockwell) and the Housekeeping Manager (Teresa Walsh). The group’s purpose is not to question *whether* a student has a disability. Rather, its task is focused on establishing whether an off-ballot room, possibly with particular amenities, represents a *reasonable adjustment* for that person’s disability.

**Confidentiality**

All information provided in connection with a request for College accommodation “off-ballot” will be used on a need to know basis only and in line with the provisions of UK Data Protection Legislation.

If you have concerns about how your information may be shared, or would like to talk to someone about your application for an “off-ballot” room, please contact the College’s Disability Co-ordinator, Jo Ockwell (welfare.officer@some.ox.ac.uk) .

**What happens after your application has been considered?**

After the deadline for receipt of applications has passed, all applications will be assessed at a meeting of the College’s off-ballot Accommodation Committee. You will be informed of the outcome of your application by **Friday of 5th week of Hilary term**.

If your request has been accepted then the email will contain details of the type of room to be offered to you.

If your application has not been successful you will be provided with a brief summary of the reasons why at the time the decision is notified to you.

**Appeals**

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your application, you may appeal within two weeks of your receipt of the email notifying you of the outcome of your application. Appeals will be considered by the Senior Tutor, who is also the College’s Disability Lead, within two weeks of the appeal deadline. You may wish to consider providing new evidence as part of your appeal. If you foresee difficulties in arranging doctor’s appointments before the appeal deadline, please contact the Disability Co-ordinator.

**Assessment criteria**

The College will take into account the following criteria when considering your request, although all cases are treated according to individual merit:

* Whether you have severe mobility difficulties, such as wheelchair users
* Whether you are blind or visually impaired to an extent that this causes you severe mobility difficulties
* Whether you have a mental health condition that is considered a disability
* Whether you are registered with the Disability Advisory Service

Students with disabilities or medical conditions outside these criteria will be considered, particularly when there are other extenuating circumstances involved. Please ensure that you identify in your application what you consider to be specific needs regarding your accommodation.  If you are not sure whether or not you would qualify for off-ballot accommodation on account of needs arising from a disability please seek advice from the Disability Co-ordinator.

Students will not be prioritised for rooms because of their preference for a specific room type, only for a specific supported need. If your application is successful, the information on what room amenities are required will be given to the Housekeeping Office (no medical or disability information is passed to the Housekeeping Office) and you will then be matched with an available room that most closely meets those requirements. Please note that the College will not normally recommend a specific room.

Students should be aware that the entirely normal stress of participating in the room ballot, of moving day, or of finding accommodation on the open market is not in itself justification for an offer of an off-ballot room. And secondly, a student would not normally be allowed to stay in the same room year-on-year; but such an arrangement would be considered based on specific needs.

**Summary of procedure timeline**

* All on-course students are emailed a notification of the procedure in **8th Week Michaelmas term**. A reminder is emailed in **1st week Hilary term**.
* The application deadline is **Friday 2nd week Hilary term**.
* The off-ballot Accommodation Committee meets in **4th Week Hilary term**.
* The latest date by which students will be notified of the Committee’s decision **Friday 5th week Hilary term**.
* The appeals deadline is two weeks after notification of the Committee’s decision.
* Appeals decisions will be made within two weeks of receipt of the appeal.

Jo Ockwell, November 2020

Andrew Parker, November 2020

\*The Equality Act 2010 considers people as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a significant and long-term impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. ‘Long-term’ means that the condition has lasted, or is likely to last for more than 12 months.

Examples of conditions that would be included:

* hearing impairment;
* sight difficulties (but not low vision that can be corrected by glasses);
* Specific Learning Difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia;
* mental health conditions such as depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, eating disorders;
* musculoskeletal problems such as arthritis, back problems, RSI;
* mobility impairment;
* medical conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome;
* cancer, HIV and Multiple Sclerosis are included from the time of definition (they do not have to have lasted for 12 months).