Dear Freshers,

On behalf of the entire graduate community here at Balliol, welcome to Oxford! If you chose Balliol as your graduate college, congratulations on making the smartest choice of your life so far. If you had a moment of madness and didn’t choose Balliol, but are joining us nonetheless, congratulations on this extraordinary stroke of luck. Either way, we are eagerly looking forward to welcoming you into the Balliol MCR.

Balliol MCR (‘Middle Common Room’) is the graduate community at Balliol and a unique environment for graduate study. It goes without saying that we have a reputation for academic excellence. What is less widely known (but universally accepted within Oxford) is that Balliol MCR is a community with an unparalleled social and collegiate atmosphere. Through bringing together an incredibly diverse array of intellectual, cultural, and social backgrounds, the MCR is one of the most vibrant graduate centres in Oxford. Besides the academic environment of your department, the MCR will play an integral role in shaping your enormously enriching and rewarding Oxford experience.

We all know that moving to a new college, a new university, and especially a new country can be a daunting and overwhelming prospect. To help you find your feet and to help you feel at home as soon as possible, the MCR has organised a Freshers’ Week for when you arrive, starting on Friday 29th September. The provisional timetable will be available in August on the Balliol Website and will be emailed out to all incoming Freshers. As you will see, it is a busy week, but I cannot encourage you enough to throw yourself in, attend as many events as possible, and take up every opportunity that comes your way. I promise you won’t regret it!

Of course, this e-guide can only do so much. Oxford is quite the quirky and confusing place. To get you acclimated before you arrive, every Fresher will be assigned college parents, who will be in touch at the end of August. They are an extra point of contact who will be able to provide a more approachable welcome and answer any specific questions you might have.

On a personal note, I could not have asked for a more supportive, welcoming, and stimulating community than Balliol MCR during my first year at Oxford. The Balliol community has opened my eyes to new intellectual and cultural frontiers and has provided enough memorable social events to last a lifetime. I hope you will, like me and many other members of the MCR, make the most of your time here. This really is a special community and we can’t wait to welcome you all to it.

All my best,

Mara Kelly
MCR President