



# Oxford University

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Handbook for  
Physiological Sciences

2009

# HANDBOOK FOR PHYSIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

This handbook has been written for distribution to First Year Physiologists.

Comments and corrections should be sent to the Assistant Registrar, Kirstie Fieldhouse.

Disclaimer: information in this handbook was correct at the time of going to press. Changes may be published from time to time during your course.

September 2009

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## THE COURSE

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### Structure and Aims

The subject matter of 'Physiological Sciences' is quite simply the science of animal life, especially mammalian life, in its broadest sense. Because of the variety of options within the course, you can either study a wide range of disciplines or you can choose to become relatively specialist. The course will prepare you most immediately for a career in any of the life sciences, not only in physiology but in related fields such as pharmacology, cell and molecular biology, experimental pathology, developmental biology and biochemistry and genetics. Alternatively, though you may choose to study Physiological Sciences for your degree for the very good reason that you find the subject interesting, that does not mean you must expect eventually to develop a career in physiology. During the course of working for an honours degree, you should develop transferable skills that will prove invaluable in many different and demanding professional jobs outside the life sciences.

The course falls into two parts. In the First Year you will be introduced to the full range of the subject. Starting at a fundamental level, you will study all the major systems of the body and will be introduced to the processes responsible for their regulation. The course includes molecular and cellular mechanisms at one extreme and 'whole animal' topics (like the circulation and its control) at the other. Frequent reference is made to the experimental evidence that supports our understanding. You will begin to learn about scientific method, experimental techniques, and data interpretation; and you should become increasingly critical of what you read in books and of what you are told in lectures. This work is examined at the end of the year in a 'Preliminary Examination' (widely referred to as 'Prelims'). You will then be in a position to choose to study certain topics in more depth in the Final Honours School (FHS) course.

Work for the FHS occupies the second and third years. During this time, you will develop your interpretative and critical skills further. You will become fully accustomed to working from primary sources in the literature (i.e. from research papers), and you will be encouraged to think both critically and creatively (for instance, to propose your own hypotheses and test them against the published results). You should gain an in-depth knowledge and understanding in the areas of your choice, and you will improve your technical ability both in the laboratory and in the use of computers to handle and present experimental results and to search scientific databases. You will learn to communicate clearly and effectively both on paper and orally. None of these skills is specific to the life sciences and they will all prove valuable no matter how your career develops after University.

We trust also that you will enjoy the work that you are about to do.

## Prelims in Physiological Sciences

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### The Courses

There are just three courses during the First Year, and you must take them all. They form the foundation on which all your subsequent work will rest. Each is examined at the end of your first Trinity Term.

The subjects are:

- I        Physiology and Pharmacology of the Systems of the Body
- II        Neuroscience
- III       Biochemistry and Cell Biology

The lecture courses for subjects I and III are shared with the medical students, except that, in Trinity Term, the course for subject I contains lectures on Integrative Physiology (such as exercise physiology and thermoregulation) and that for subject III contains introductory lectures in Immunology. These are specially devised for physiologists. That there is significant overlap in teaching between the physiologists' and the medics' courses is natural and emphasizes one reason for much pure physiological research, namely that it underpins modern medicine. Another valuable lesson is that, whilst disorders of physiology are of interest in medicine because of the illnesses that they may cause, it very often turns out that the effects of these disorders can give a physiologist important insights into how living systems function normally.

In the first two terms, the lecture course in subject II (Neuroscience) covers basic biophysics and cellular neuroscience (i.e. the physics of how nerve and muscle cells work and communicate), and the functioning of the peripheral nervous system, the brain, and the spinal cord. You will also learn about the major sense organs and the sensory and motor systems. In the third term you study neuropharmacology. Much of the Neuroscience course is shared with students reading Psychology, Philosophy and Physiology (PPP). However, in Michaelmas Term, the start of the course for PPP is different and is aimed at students with a lesser grounding in the sciences. If your background is such that you have any difficulty with some of your lectures in biophysics and cellular neuroscience, then you might find it useful to attend some of the lectures for PPP; ask your tutor. A PPP timetable can be obtained from the Faculty Office.

### Timetables

Timetables are given to first-year students when they register at the MSTC, and they are also available on WebLearn. As well as showing the times, sites and subjects of all lectures and classes, these timetables tell you whether you need to 'sign-on' (to register for practical classes) in any of the University Departments before you start the term's course.

You will see that, in comparison with a school timetable, formal teaching is scheduled to take up a relatively small amount of your time. This is to leave you clear time for study according to your own interests and to prepare work for your tutorials. You will, of course, take some time off from work for sports or other pastimes, but you should realise from the outset that the time which will truly be 'free' is considerably less than you might at first think from a glance at the timetable.

## **Medical Sciences Teaching Centre**

The Physiology Course is provided by the Division of Medical Sciences, and many of your lectures and most of your practical classes will take place in the Medical Sciences Teaching Centre (MSTC). Other teaching will take place in other departments in the Science area, particularly in the Sherrington Building (there is a map near the end of this handbook).

## **Lectures and Seminars**

Lectures and seminars are optional, but most students choose to come to all of them, and that is the general expectation of tutors. Physiology is a vast subject, and it is very difficult to tell the level of detail that is appropriate for each stage of the course unless you come to the lectures. Remember, too, that the lectures are the main teaching source that is tailored directly to the course. If you miss a lecture, or if you are late for a lecture or seminar, you will need to spend much of your time simply getting together basic information, time that could have been spent more profitably pursuing in depth some topic that you particularly enjoy.

## **Practical Classes**

Practical classes are compulsory and a register of attendance is taken at each one. The course in Physiological Sciences deliberately emphasizes practical work: only through doing experiments yourselves will you appreciate the magnitude of the inherent noisiness of most biological signals and the difficulties associated with making sense of them. Without this you cannot think coherently about the subject and you would not become truly critical of the literature.

The practicals are specially designed to relate to the lecture course and each one illustrates only a few fundamental physiological principles. There is work in Physiology, Pharmacology, Statistics, and Biochemistry, and also some microscopy to teach you the cellular structure of living tissues. The importance of practicals is often brought home by examiners who may set essay questions which relate directly to a particular class.

At the beginning of each term, you will be given a folder containing practical class instructions. It is your responsibility to see that your attendance at each class is certified (by the demonstrator signing each write-up and, in the Teaching Centre, by your signing a list that is kept in the classroom). In addition, your write-ups have to be marked by the demonstrator. Instructions about this are included in the folders. Your marked practical books are submitted to the examiners at the end of the year. Anyone whose practical work is unsatisfactory may be given additional oral examinations, they may be set a practical examination, or they may simply be failed in the examination. To avoid complications, do take care not to lose your practical notebooks!

If you are ill and have to miss a class, please inform the class organizer as soon as possible using the e-mail address or telephone number given at the bottom of the list of classes which is supplied with the termly protocols. You will find that the teaching staff try to be as helpful as possible to anyone who has missed practicals through no fault of their own: it is usually possible to find some way to make up the lost work. A student may miss one practical class without incurring the disapproval of Examiners but if you miss more than one you should write a brief explanatory note on the top of the page which the demonstrator would sign. It is sensible to obtain the results of a missed class from another student and study them, as they constitute an important part of

the course. They can be included with discussion for completeness in your own folder, although you must make it clear that you did not obtain them yourself. Your tutor will be told if your attendance at practicals is not satisfactory.

A final word of advice on practicals: it is sensible to write them up during the class or as soon as possible afterwards. It is both difficult and ineffective to write up experiments when they are not fresh in your mind. In some classes, it may be possible to tabulate the results during the class, but some additional thought will usually be required for interpretation of your results. Advice about the write-ups is included in the folders.

### **Equipment for the course**

Nearly all that you require is provided by the University. You will need to buy one white lab-coat for use in Physiology, Pharmacology and Biochemistry practical classes. Any other lab-coats you may need for your course will be provided by the Medical School.

When you register at the MSTC on the Friday before the start of Michaelmas Term, there will usually be a limited stock of used lab-coats for sale. Otherwise, you can buy your lab-coat in the men's outfitters shops in the city centre. You will not need to buy your own dissection instruments.

### **Tutorials**

Tutorials are a college responsibility and your tutor (rather than this University handbook) should be your main source of guidance concerning them. Tutorials are widely regarded as a most important form of your education. They take place in small groups (sometimes just one student and the tutor - though that is more likely in your second and third years), and they provide a chance to look at matters in more depth and to be more questioning about a subject than would be helpful in a lecture. Clearly, to work at the ideal level in a tutorial, you will need to have covered all the basic material in advance. Whether you have done so (and with what degree of success) will be apparent to your tutor, who will then advise or help you as necessary. It is wise to go to tutorials well-prepared so that you need to spend as little time as possible on basic matters. That is not to say, of course, that you shouldn't feel free to ask your tutor to help you understand any issue that you find at all difficult.

New students can find tutorials rather daunting: they're not supposed to be – rather, a good tutorial can be fun. It will most likely take a few weeks for you to judge just how much work to put into a tutorial and what level to aim at. So be patient, and you'll have got it right by the second half of your first term.

### **The use of Computers and Information Technology**

It is essential that all scientists should be able to use computers competently. Many of you will already be well acquainted with word-processing, spreadsheets and the internet, but to study effectively it is important that you understand and learn to use the advanced features of current applications, and to find and evaluate information effectively.

Training is available throughout your course with sessions introducing specialist software and bibliographic databases at points in the course. Initial induction sessions will introduce you to e-learning resources and WebLearn, the University virtual learning environment (VLE). You will also have a chance to review your personal skills and identify opportunities for development.

The Oxford University Computing Service offers a wide programme of courses which are free to all members of the University, provides advice, and has a shop which sells software and some hardware. You can find out more by visiting the OUCS website (follow the links from the University's homepage), and an introductory talk is included in the timetable for your first term.

When you collect your University cards in your colleges, you will also be given registration details with OUCS. This will give you an Oxford e-mail address and access to a range of University computing facilities.

### **The Teaching Centre CAL Lab.**

A room in the MSTC has been designed for computer-assisted learning ("CAL"). This is open (swipe-card access) whenever the building is open. When there are no scheduled classes on the computers, they can be used privately for access to learning materials, for internet access and e-mails.

### **Regulations for the use of IT Facilities**

All use of computing and IT facilities throughout the University of Oxford are subject to certain rules. These rules concern what is considered to be unacceptable behaviour and misuse, as well as what may infringe licence terms or may be otherwise illegal.

A collection of documents setting out Oxford University's rules governing the use of computer systems and software, together with documents relating to good practice and general network etiquette can be found at <http://www.ict.ox.ac.uk/oxford/rules/>.

### **How to Approach the Course**

One way to keep on top of the course during term is simply to look ahead in the timetable so you can see its structure and anticipate what you are going to do. You should always look at the instructions for practical classes ahead of time (the instructions are typically provided in the book handed out at the start of each term) so that you arrive at the practical knowing what needs to be done.

However hard you try, you will find that you start accumulating lecture notes that you do not have time to read as much as you would like during term. File your notes carefully by subject, (for instance, in a ring-binder), so that you can add the notes and essays that you will write for your tutorials. Then, during the vacations, spend some time reading through your notes and, perhaps, condense them to make them more suitable for revision. That exercise can bring together related information that you may have come across on quite different occasions, and it is one of the most valuable aids to learning.

### **The Relationship between College and University Teaching**

The different roles that can be served by tutorials and by University teaching have been described above. It might help, though, to comment on how subjects are covered in your colleges and by the University. The University aims to cover the syllabus for the course, and that is done following a schedule that allows for sensible integration between the different aspects of the course. To ensure that your tutorial work is at an appropriate level, you will find that you generally have just one or two tutorials per week, for which you will often be asked to write essays. It follows that what you cover in tutorials will

necessarily be selective and cannot stay absolutely synchronised with the University course, though your tutors will arrange for there to be a useful relationship between the two kinds of teaching. College tutors are also University Lecturers, they helped design the syllabus and they can act as examiners. They therefore understand the content and aims of the University course and they are well-placed to provide complementary tutorial teaching. Sometimes, you will cover a subject first in tutorials, and sometimes in lectures; each has its advantages and disadvantages, as you will soon discover, but to attempt to tie University and College teaching more closely together would remove all the flexibility from tutorials and greatly reduce their value as learning sessions provided by individuals for individuals. When you are working for the Final Honour School, it is very much up to each student to choose which subjects to study in tutorials, most of which will be arranged with appropriate specialists.

### **Recording of Lectures and Tutorials**

Some students may be recommended by an Educational Psychologist or as a result of a Study Needs Assessment to record lectures and tutorials, especially if their disability is such that they experience difficulty in taking notes because of e.g. visual or audio impairments, dyslexia, mobility impairments etc. Guidelines covering the recording of lectures and tutorials are available on the university website at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab/students.shtml>. Students must sign and submit the pro forma to apply for permission to record lectures and to agree conditions relating to use of the recordings.

### **Assessments during the course**

This section is about 'formative assessments', the assessments that are intended to help you see how you are doing during the course. Your teachers will form a view on your progress during practical classes and during your tutorials, and so there are regular opportunities for feedback. If University staff are especially concerned about a student's progress or attitude to work, then the relevant college tutor will be informed.

Voluntary formative assessments of basic Physiology & Pharmacology, Neuroscience and Biochemistry are run at the start of Hilary and Trinity Terms. These assessments are primarily intended to help medical students with the 'core' syllabus that they have to cover, but they are very useful for physiologists, as well, and you are strongly encouraged to sit them (the first will be shown on your timetable for Hilary Term).

Most colleges arrange formal assessments at the start of each term by setting a written test called a 'collection'. You will be told about these in advance, when you see your tutor before leaving at the end of the preceding term. Collections show you very clearly how you are doing - what you have learned and what you have understood; and they give you valuable practice in examination technique. It is hoped they will boost your confidence. If you discover a weakness, then you have sufficient time to sort things out in time for your main examinations.

### **The Syllabus**

The syllabus for the first year will be given to you as a separate document. It sets out the topics you should cover, but it cannot tell you the level at which you should work and how much detail you need to know. Both will be apparent, however, from the lectures and practicals, and from the advice your

tutor will give in tutorials. In parts, the detail in the syllabus resembles the notes that editors commonly use to summarise key points at the end of chapters in text-books, so don't be surprised by its size. You'll soon find it is a valuable guide to the course and a good aide-memoire for revision.

It will also be useful, once you feel you have settled in at Oxford, to look at some past examination papers (see below).

## **The Examination Regulations**

The Examination Regulations are published annually and contain all the formal regulations relating to examinations: for instance, what are the practical requirements, what you must submit to the examiners, etc. You will especially need to read the section 'Preliminary Examination in Physiological Sciences' and, in due course, the regulations for the 'Honour School of Physiological Sciences'. These are the regulations that carry force in the University, and it is ultimately *your* responsibility to see that you fulfil them.

Because of their purpose, the Regulations are written in precise legal terms that do not always make for the easiest reading. They include information about progression, and the right of appeal. Changes to regulations are published in the *University Gazette*. One aim of this handbook is to present much of the same information in a more readable form.

## **'Prelims': The Examinations**

'Prelims' (the First Public, or 'Preliminary', Examinations) are 'summative examinations', which is to say that you must pass them to continue with the degree course. In the case of all University examinations, it is your responsibility to see you are entered. The administration is done in your college office, and you will be advised by your College when you should act. The examinations take place immediately after Trinity Term (Year 1). The dates will be published well in advance, and you must make sure that you do not arrange travel that would coincide with any part of the examinations.

**Warning:** It is essential that you do not miss any part of the examinations, and that includes any oral examination that the examiners may ask you to attend after the written papers. Any student who misses any part of an examination will, unless there are very exceptional circumstances, be recorded as having failed every part of the examination *including even those subjects that would otherwise have been passed*.

About one month before an examination, all candidates receive a letter from the Chairman of Examiners, and you should read it with care. Amongst other things, it will tell you the date and time of your examinations, the names of the examiners, the arrangements for submission of practical books, and the number by which you are to identify your scripts (all aspects of the written examination are conducted anonymously). The letter also contains advice on how to answer examination questions to your best advantage, the use of calculators, the marking and assessment scheme, and *viva voce* examinations. (The most recent information on the marking and assessment scheme for Prelims is included in the 'Notices' section at the end of this handbook.)

The format of the examination papers is simple. Past papers are available in most college libraries, and they can be downloaded from [OXAM](#) (Oxford Examination Papers Online).

Recent Examiners' reports are available on WebLearn. These often highlight common misconceptions, omissions by students, and those aspects of answers which the Examiners found most pleasing. There is one three-hour paper in each subject. In each case, you are given a choice of questions (typically ten) and you must answer five. Your answers should be in essay form, and they will be marked on a numerical scale taking account of the pertinence and accuracy of what you write. Credit is given for well-balanced answers that show an understanding of the subject and that refer to experimental evidence. The results are published simply as 'Distinction' or 'Pass' ('Fail' lists are not published, but your college is notified). Distinctions are awarded for excellent performance in the examination as a whole (provided that all three subjects are passed at one sitting). Your tutors will be told your marks for each subject and the distribution of marks for students in your year, and you can then discuss these more detailed results in confidence.

Oral examinations, or 'vivas' are commonly used to test borderline candidates or to examine some insufficiency in practical work. Any candidate with seriously deficient practical work may be required to take a practical examination. Satisfying the examiners with respect to your practical work is essential if you are to pass the examination.

If you are unfortunate enough to fail in one or more subjects, you will normally be permitted to resit just those subjects in September. Failure to pass those subjects at the September resit will normally lead to the termination of your course, but such cases are relatively rare.

**Conduct in Examinations:** Information concerning conduct in examinations is provided in the Proctors' "Essential Information" booklet: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/index.shtml> . The booklet also sets out details of the arrangements for dealing with special issues such as illegible scripts, candidates with special needs (e.g. dyslexic candidates), illness, bereavement, etc. (see also the section in this handbook on 'Illness and Disability affecting your work').

# The Final Honour School of Physiological Sciences

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## Overview

The subjects that fall within the Final Honours School of Physiological Sciences have been grouped to create large options and so produce programmes of study that are integrated across the classical disciplines. Emphasis will be placed on your developing critical skills and on data analysis and experimental design, and you should have more opportunity to show what you can achieve when working independently. All students undertake a laboratory-based research project and, at the end of their second Trinity Term, they submit an essay on an approved biomedical subject of their own choice. The examination load at the end of the course is relatively light: you will take just four written examinations, three relating to the taught Options, and a 'skills paper' (see below). The following sections outline the main features of the course and explain some of the thinking behind them.

## Making a start to Schools

There is a substantial difference between work for Prelims and that for Schools, and, in the first term of your second year, you will be given help specially designed for the transition. For example, there will be a series of seminars advising you on how to read research papers, and there will be practice in the use of on-line databases to find research literature and information such as gene maps and protein sequences. In addition, you will be offered the opportunity to visit research laboratories and see staff using advanced research techniques.

Your fourth term is also a time when you can broaden the base of your fundamental knowledge by attending some of the teaching provided for second-year medical students in Neuroscience or Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology. In particular, physiologists intending to take the FHS Option 'Infection and Immunity' are advised to prepare as broadly as possible using appropriate second-year medical course material and to wait until the third year before tackling the Infection and Immunity option proper.

Each department puts on weekly seminars by local researchers and distinguished visiting scientists. Although these are aimed at research staff they are open to undergraduates and they cover current ideas and findings which may be of interest to first year students who are thinking of specialising in the relevant field. They are advertised on departmental noticeboards and websites.

## The FHS Options

The scope of the degree includes cell and molecular biology, genetics and development, neuroscience, pharmacology and endocrinology, infection and immunity, and 'systems physiology' (e.g. the study of the cardiovascular, respiratory and renal systems) grouped together to form a number of "Options". You are asked to specialize in two Options, though the timetabling will permit you to go to any lectures that interest you because there is inevitably overlap between the options. There are currently five Options:

- Neuroscience
- Molecular Medicine
- Myocardial, Vascular and Respiratory Biology

- Infection and Immunity
- Signalling in Health and Disease

The courses for all Options are run every year in Michaelmas Term and Hilary Term. It is recommended that physiologists should concentrate their effort on one of their Options in their second year and on their other Option in their third, but there is a clear advantage in the annual cycle of lectures, in that it gives you the opportunity of revisiting some material where that would be helpful.

A paper in Experimental Psychology (where subjects offered may be limited) may be substituted for one of the above options.

Teaching is by lectures, seminar classes and tutorials, and the course for each Option is presented as a series of subjects (referred to as 'themes') each of which is taught over a period of about two weeks. The structure of the course and examination is intended equally to encourage in-depth, focused study and also integrative thinking that seeks out connections between different aspects of biology and different research disciplines.

Further information about the structure and examination of this part of the course will be available before you begin to prepare for the FHS. Currently, dedicated areas on both the MSTC website (<http://www.mstc.ox.ac.uk>) and on WebLearn contain information and resources in support of learning for FHS students. You will be advised later in your course about the location of all the available FHS online resources.

### **‘Schools’: the Examination**

All the key administrative details associated with the examination for the BA degree (including the date and time of each examination, arrangements concerning *viva voce* examinations, and the names of the examiners), are sent to you individually in a letter from the Chairman of Examiners. This will include a description of how your performance will be assessed.

To award a class for your degree, the examiners will take a view of your performance in the FHS as a whole without expecting or requiring uniformity. Details on the current marking schemes and of the method used for degree classification are published online (currently on the MSTC website <http://www.mstc.ox.ac.uk>). In your second year, when you start the degree course, you should read these details with care, since a good understanding of what the examiners will reward will help direct the way in which you work. In particular, you will note the emphasis that is placed on depth of understanding and originality, both of which you might demonstrate, for instance, by developing a fresh and critical approach to the subjects that you study.

### **Prizes in FHS Physiological Sciences**

Currently, there are several prizes that are awarded to students in Physiological Sciences for performance in the Final Honour School. Examples include:

The Gibbs Prize	£200
The Yamanouchi Prize in Cell Biology	£250

The Physiological Society also offers a range of Prizes for which the FHS examiners nominate Physiological Sciences students. One is for £100 and up to six offer a year's free membership of the Society.

## Objectives of the Course in Physiological Sciences

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Now that you have read about the course and how it is delivered, it is convenient to review a list of what you should try to achieve. These 'Objectives' consist of the knowledge, understanding and skills that you should acquire, and of the experience from which you should benefit.

*By the end of your first year*, you will have completed the Prelims Course. You should have acquired:

- An understanding of the basic principles of physiology, pharmacology, neurophysiology (including central neurophysiology), and biochemistry; also basic genetics, and immunology;
- An ability to give a clear account of these basic functions, and an appreciation, in some areas, of the major supporting evidence;
- A broad range of related practical laboratory experience.

For the FHS in the second and third years, you will choose two Options that interest you, and, working in that context, you should aim in particular to acquire:

- The ability to work from primary sources and to assess evidence;
- An understanding of some area of current research;
- The ability to think critically and, for the best students, to show originality;
- Written and oral communication skills (including writing critical scientific essays, and the written and oral presentation of your research project);
- Extensive participation in oral debate of current science in specialist tutorials or in seminars;
- Experience of some advanced laboratory techniques and experience of working co-operatively with others;
- Experience in information retrieval, and experience in data manipulation and statistics.

If these Objectives look at all daunting, do bear in mind that they relate to a full three-year course, and you might gain a sense of perspective by reflecting on all you have achieved over the past three years!

A simple chart giving an overview of the organization of the course is bound as the last item in this Handbook.

# PLAGIARISM

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## What is plagiarism?

This is the University of Oxford's official definition of plagiarism as determined by the University's Educational Policy and Standards Committee and published on the Committee's website:

Plagiarism is the copying or paraphrasing of other people's work or ideas into your own work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition.

Collusion is another form of plagiarism involving the unauthorised collaboration of students (or others) in a piece of work.

Cases of suspected plagiarism in assessed work are investigated under the disciplinary regulations concerning conduct in examinations. Intentional or reckless plagiarism may incur severe penalties, including failure of your degree or expulsion from the university.

## Avoid plagiarism from the start

Plagiarism is becoming an increasing problem in Universities. The work for any degree course can easily lead the unwary to commit plagiarism: it is important to guard from the outset against developing bad habits.

At the start of your course, when you write your first tutorial essays, you will find that you often need to include scientific definitions and accounts of theories that have long been accepted as 'fact'. This means that you will be including ideas that are found in standard textbooks. Common sense applies: presenting such material as an account of generally received science does not require quotation marks and citations, though it is always a good idea for your future reference to list the books that you used at the end of your essay. A good way to write an essay is to make notes from several sources, formulate your own understanding, and write out a plan of your own arguments. Then you will be in a position to write your own essay with minimal further reference to books. This approach forces you to think through the material for yourself, and that brings the benefits of better understanding and will help fix new ideas in your memory.

Some students are tempted to write their essays by copying tracts direct from a book. Others may use their own words to reproduce a published argument but nevertheless copy the thoughts of the original author step by step. Either way amounts to stealing someone else's work and committing plagiarism. Not only is that dishonest, it is a waste of your time as it brings hardly any educational benefit.

The temptation to plagiarize has increased considerably now that it is possible to download text from the internet and use a word-processor to paste it into an essay. This is a temptation that *must* be resisted. Make sure you understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. Visit <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/plagiarism/index.shtml> to read the University's official information about plagiarism, FAQ's, advice on academic good practice, and plagiarism in examinations.

## **The importance of independent scholarly work in the FHS**

Any student who slips into plagiarism when working for the FHS has utterly misunderstood the level at which an honours degree is set. For the FHS, you should read widely, and, in particular, you should make extensive use of original research papers. Though science strives for objectivity, a research paper presents the ideas, experiments, and interpretations of just one group of scientists. Your task is to assess original research critically and to attempt to see what it might mean when the field is considered as a whole. The examiners are interested ultimately in *your* understanding of the underlying biology and in *your* critical appraisal of the literature. You will see that the mentality that might lead to copying out text or arguments has no place in work at FHS level: it will bring no benefit, and, as described below, it could attract severe penalties. In tutorial essays and in written work that you submit to the examiners, you will soon develop the habit of supporting the key steps in your arguments with a citation of the relevant source, just as you see in the best review articles. When you write, you should spend your time and effort in presenting your own arguments: then, provided your citations are complete and accurate, there is no need at all for copying, since your readers can look up the sources for themselves. This is standard in scholarly writing, and it leaves you the time and space to be original.

## **Scholarly presentation of examination answers**

Clearly, in the examination room, there ought to be no opportunity for verbatim copying, so the issue of crude plagiarism need not be considered! However, having just stressed the importance of proper citation of sources, it is perhaps necessary to add here that no-one is expected to be able to remember and reproduce full citations in the examination room. You should, though, try to apply a scholarly approach by indicating in general terms what sources you are relying on. For instance, you might refer to 'recent, or classical, experiments done by Bloggs' (if you can remember the main author), or 'experiments done using such-and-such a technique on material from a specified species of animal'. It is impossible to write sensibly without this level of citation. Different students remember their sources in different ways: if you happen to remember the year of publication, it might save you a little time, but a good degree is awarded for original critical thought and sound arguments, not for performing feats of memory.

## **Penalties for plagiarism**

If your tutors detect plagiarism they will be clear that you have done wrong and will, in the first instance, give you appropriate help and advice. Persistent plagiarism is likely to attract disciplinary proceedings. If plagiarism is detected in material submitted to examiners, the University treats it as serious cheating which is reported to the Proctors: that would put your degree at risk. When candidates submit written work, such as an essay or dissertation, they are required to provide it on a disk so that it can be scanned with plagiarism detection software. Submitting practical notebooks with work copied without acknowledgement from other students is another example of dishonesty that attracts heavy penalties.

## LIBRARIES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

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### Oxford University Library Services

OULS is the main provider of library services, including 30 libraries and a huge collection of e-resources. In addition the Colleges and some Departments manage their own libraries. Your University Card acts as your library card.

For more information go to [www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/science](http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/science)

### Radcliffe Science Library (Parks Road)

The RSL [www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/rsl](http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/rsl) is the main library for science and pre-clinical medicine. It holds lending and reference copies of the books on your reading lists. They are located in the underground reading room on Level 2, and classified by subject:

[http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/rsl/collections/sequence/medical\\_subjects](http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/rsl/collections/sequence/medical_subjects).

The RSL also has WiFi access; reading rooms for quiet study; a bookable group study room; computing, printing, photocopying, scanning and refreshment facilities; a Document Supply service; and an enquiry desk.

Term-time opening hours: Monday-Friday 09.00-22.00, Saturdays 09.00-17.00, and Sundays 11.00-17.00.

Contact the Life Sciences & Medicine Librarian for help or more information: Juliet Ralph on 01865 2-72853 or [juliet.ralph@ouls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:juliet.ralph@ouls.ox.ac.uk).

### You may also need to use

#### Cairns Library – John Radcliffe Hospital Site (Headington)

Part of the Health Care Libraries ([www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/hcl/](http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/hcl/)), it covers clinical medicine and health care. You can use it for reference purposes on weekdays 9-5.

#### College Library

Your college library should stock the core textbooks for all your courses.

### Finding books and journals

Use the library catalogue SOLO (<http://solo.ouls.ox.ac.uk>) to search for books or journals (periodicals), both printed and electronic.

To make reservations and renewals you need to log on, using the barcode number on your University Card (**2xxxxxx**). Your OLIS password is set up as your Date of Birth, in the format **10JAN1988**.

### Accessing Oxford University e-resources

If you are connected to the University network, you will be able to access most of our subscription resources without requiring a username or password.

For access from **outside the network**, log in using your Oxford University Single Sign-On account (Webmail username and password).

## COMMUNICATIONS IN THE UNIVERSITY

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### **The Messenger Service**

You may send written notes free of charge to pigeon-holes in other colleges or in University departments via the 'pigeon post' messenger service which makes collections from your college lodge.

**The most important communications to you from the University on official matters will be sent to your college pigeon-holes and/or to your college e-mail address: it is your responsibility to collect and read your mail frequently. In the case of information relating to examinations, this will be especially important to you.**

### **The University Telephone Network**

You will have access from your college to the University network. This handles local calls within the colleges and University (by a 5-figure system) free of charge.

A telephone directory is published annually and is widely available for consultation, and you can also search online (click on 'Contact Search' on the University home page). Adding a prefix 2 before an internal 'phone number turns it into a public number on the Oxford (01865-) exchange.

### **E-mail**

This can be the most effective way of reaching people. Addresses can be found on the web as for internal telephone numbers (see above). **You are asked to check your Oxford e-mail inbox daily:** the faculty regularly uses e-mail to communicate with students.

### **Noticeboards**

Please read the noticeboards in your college and in the departments. In particular, a wide range of information for students is posted on the boards in the foyer of the Medical Sciences Teaching Centre.

## RUNNING THE COURSE

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### **Using your views: student feedback**

Your views are welcomed on any aspect of the running of the course. For example if you have views on how this handbook could be more useful, then please let us know by contacting the Assistant Registrar.

You might like to raise some matter about the course informally with your tutors or with lecturers or demonstrators, though it is more useful to us if you contact either the Director of Pre-Clinical Studies (the 'DPS'), the Faculty Adviser to Physiologists, or the Assistant Registrar (contact details given below). Anonymous comments are of course possible, but if you tell us who you are, then we can discuss the matter further with you if that is appropriate. There is also a page on WebLearn for comments on the course: <http://WebLearn.ox.ac.uk/site/medsci/undergrad/physiology/diss/>. The Faculty Adviser for Physiologists is automatically notified whenever comments are made on it.

In the second week of every term, the Faculty Adviser for Physiologists holds a free lunch in the Sherrington Building (Physiology) for all Physiology undergraduates. This gives you the opportunity to discuss your views on the course and to prime your student representatives for the course committees that they attend.

Course Evaluations will be conducted on-line through WebLearn and through paper questionnaires. All feedback will be scrutinised by the course organizers, and summaries are prepared for the attention of the Course Committees, the Education Committee and the DPS. These committees decide on action, with reference as needed via the DPS to student representatives, for instance, on the Joint Consultative Committee (these various committees are explained below). Each lecturer is told about the feedback directly relating to him or her, and Heads of Department see the material relating to staff in their department.

You thus have a full range of possibilities, from the informal to the formal, by which you can make your views known. The faculty does its best to take account of your views and improve the course whenever possible.

### **The Committees**

#### *The Divisional Board*

The ultimate responsibility for the course rests with a small body, the Divisional Board ('The Board of the Division of Medical Sciences'). The same body is also responsible for the Medical School and for Experimental Psychology. Major issues concerning the courses and examinations are regulated by the Undergraduate Studies Committee which reports to the Educational Policy and Standards Committee of the Divisional Board (D-EPSC), but the detail is decided by the Medical and Physiological Sciences Education Committee and its Course Committees (see below).

#### *Sub-Faculty*

All those teaching on the medical and physiological sciences courses (a large body of people) have the opportunity to discuss teaching and examining at meetings that are held once per term. The topics for discussion typically

include questions addressed to the Faculty by the Education Committee or Divisional Board.

### *The Joint Consultative Committee*

Students can express their views through the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC), a committee chaired by the Associate Head (Education) of the Divisional or his/her representative. This committee has as its members one representative of the academic staff from each department, the Director of Pre-Clinical Studies (the 'DPS'), The Faculty Adviser to Physiologists, and a student representative for each group of students (for instance, in the case of physiologists, one from each year of the course). The committee meets once per term: staff outline any changes that are under consideration, and students express their views and also make suggestions and raise issues of their own choosing. These discussions inform decision making at the Education Committee and at Divisional level. To improve feedback from the JCC to students and staff, the minutes of the JCC are posted on WebLearn.

### *The Education Committee, the Physiology and BM Course Committees, and the FHS Course Committee*

The Physiology Committee focuses particularly on the Prelims Course, but also takes an overview of provision at FHS level. In both these contexts, it considers the needs of PPP students who share some of their teaching with physiologists. It is chaired by the Faculty Adviser to Physiologists, and the members include the DPS, the Faculty Adviser for PPP, and lecturers representing each branch of Prelims. The student representatives for Physiology and PPP on the JCC are invited to attend. Those Prelims courses shared with medical students are under the control of the BM Course Committees. There is a separate committee directly responsible for the FHS: it consists of the Options Organizers for the FHS, the Faculty Adviser to Physiologists, and a chairman. All the course committees report to the Education Committee, which is chaired by the DPS. That committee brings together the Chairs of the Course Committees, the Faculty Advisers for Physiologists and PPPists, the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Psychology, and the Director of Clinical Studies. Students are also on the Education Committee (one second year from each course). The Education Committee takes an overview of the running and development of the course, its academic standards and educational balance. In addition, the faculty members of the Education Committee advise the Division on the appointment of examiners. The Education Committee is responsible to the Division through the DPS. Any changes to teaching or examining that are sufficiently radical to require changes to the formal Regulations require the approval of the Division (through its Educational Policy and Standards Committee).

### **Examiners' Reports**

After every University examination, the examiners write a report which is then posted on WebLearn. These reports comment on all aspects of the examination: the setting, the administration, the answers written by the candidates, the marking and the results achieved. Examiners can also draw conclusions about the adequacy of the teaching. The reports potentially provide valuable feedback on the outcome of the course, and so they are scrutinised carefully by all the committees described in this section of the handbook. The Education Committee takes action as necessary or makes recommendations to the Division.

## INFORMATION ON THE WEB

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For students beginning the course in Michaelmas Term 2009, 'WebLearn' (the University's virtual learning environment) will be your primary source of course information and access to learning resources. This will include:-

• Timetables	• Notices
• Syllabus for Prelims	• Lecture handouts
• E-learning materials	• Feedback questionnaires
• Examiners' reports	• Names of course organizers

The address is: <http://www.WebLearn.ox.ac.uk> and you will need to click on the links for the Medical Sciences Division and Physiological Sciences. [You](#) will be subscribed to the relevant sites so you can also access them directly from 'My active sites'. You should check 'My workspace' daily for announcements.

WebLearn will be demonstrated to you early in your first term, and you will access it using your University username and password

The MSTC also has its own website at <http://www.mstc.ox.ac.uk/>

The University Website (<http://www.ox.ac.uk>) provides links to information about all aspects of the University.

## OTHER USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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### Your College Handbook

### Proctors' and Assessor's Memorandum

You will each receive this substantial booklet covering

Welfare	Safety and security
Oxford University Student Union	Sport, clubs and recreation
Transport	Academic support (Libraries etc)
Residence requirements	Intellectual property
Conduct & Disciplinary procedures	Examinations

This booklet is a valuable source of information. Familiarise yourself with its scope, and then keep it to hand for reference.

**You are strongly advised to read the section on Welfare (including help with financial hardship, disabilities, child-care, stress, accommodation, harassment and discrimination, and a wide range of health matters).**

The Memorandum also includes Codes of Practice relating to harassment and to freedom of speech. This publication is also available on the web at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/index.shtml>.

## SOURCES OF HELP AND ADVICE

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### The Faculty Adviser to Physiologists

This post is currently held by Dr Piers Nye who is a lecturer in the Department of Physiology Anatomy & Genetics, and a tutor at Balliol. Because of his role in organizing the course for physiologists, he is well-placed to advise you. Contact him in the department -

by pigeon-hole or by 'phone 77756

or by e-mail [piers.nye@dpag.ox.ac.uk](mailto:piers.nye@dpag.ox.ac.uk)

### The Director of Pre-Clinical Studies and the Faculty Office

The 'DPS' has academic responsibility for the Physiological Sciences course as well as the Pre-Clinical Medicine course. He is supported by the staff in the 'Faculty Office' who have administrative responsibility for the course: the Assistant Registrar, two Academic Administrators and two clerical officers. The Office is sited on the first floor of the Medical Sciences Teaching Centre.

Assistant Registrar	Ms Kirstie Fieldhouse	tel. 85782
Administrative Officer	Miss Lindsay Campbell	tel. 85783
Student Administration Officer	Ms Vanina Wittenburg	tel. 85788
Administrative Officer (BM/Physiol)	<i>Mrs Helen McGrath (on maternity leave)</i>	
(Maternity cover)	Mr Anthony Conway	tel. 85784
Senior Clerical Officer	Mr Ashley Morley	tel. 85785

The DPS and the Faculty Office staff are always willing to help students with queries about the course, though do remember that for matters relating to tutorial teaching you should see your College tutor.

The DPS is Professor John Morris, who is also Professor of Human Anatomy, and a medical tutor at St Hugh's.

The best way to contact him is by e-mail: [john.morris@medsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:john.morris@medsci.ox.ac.uk)

or by a note handed to the Receptionist in the Teaching Centre.

### Advice on E-learning and using IT

*MSD Learning Technologies* (MSD-LT) is a small team of learning technologists who help staff and students in the Medical Sciences Division to use technology effectively. E-mail [WebLearn@medsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:WebLearn@medsci.ox.ac.uk).

### Complaints and academic appeals in respect of Pre-Clinical Medical Sciences, and Physiological Sciences

The University, the Medical Sciences Division and our partner departments of Physiology, Anatomy & Genetics, Pathology, Pharmacology, and Biochemistry, all hope that provision made for students at all stages of their programme of study will make the need for complaints (about that provision) or appeals (against the outcomes of any form of assessment) infrequent.

However, all those concerned believe that it is important for students to be clear about how to raise a concern or make a complaint, and how to appeal against the outcome of assessment. The following guidance attempts to provide such information.

Nothing in this guidance precludes an informal discussion with the person immediately responsible for the issue that you wish to complain about (and who may not be one of the individuals identified below). This is often the simplest way to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

Many sources of advice are available within colleges, within faculties/departments and from bodies like OUSU or the Counselling Service, which have extensive experience in advising students. You may wish to take advice from one of these sources before pursuing your complaint.

General areas of concern about provision affecting students as a whole should, of course, continue to be raised through Joint Consultative Committees or via student representation on Education Committee.

### **Complaints**

1. If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision **made by members of our partner departments**, then you should raise it with the chairman of Education Committee (Professor John Morris). Within the faculty the officer concerned will attempt to resolve your concern/complaint informally.

2. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, then you may take your concern further by making a formal complaint to the University Proctors. A complaint may cover aspects of teaching and learning (e.g. teaching facilities, supervision arrangements, etc.), and non-academic issues (e.g. support services, library services, university accommodation, university clubs and societies, etc.). A complaint to the Proctors should be made only if attempts at informal resolution have been unsuccessful. The procedures adopted by the Proctors for the consideration of complaints and appeals are described in the Proctors and Assessor's Memorandum [<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/pam/>] and the relevant Council regulations [<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/>].

3. If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision **made by your college**, then you should raise it either with your tutor or with one of the college officers, Senior Tutor. Your college will also be able to explain how to take your complaint further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of its consideration.

### **Academic appeals**

4. An appeal is defined as a formal questioning of a decision on an academic matter made by the responsible academic body.

5. For undergraduate or taught graduate courses, a concern which might lead to an appeal should be raised with your college authorities and the individual responsible for overseeing your work. It must not be raised directly with examiners or assessors. If it is not possible to clear up your concern in this way, you may put it in writing and submit it to the Proctors via the Senior Tutor of your college. As noted above, the procedures adopted by the Proctors in relation to complaints and appeals are on the web

[<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/>].

6. Please remember in connection with all the cases in paragraphs 4 - 5 that:

(a) The Proctors are not empowered to challenge the academic judgement of examiners or academic bodies.

(b) The Proctors can consider whether the procedures for reaching an academic decision were properly followed; i.e. whether there was a significant procedural administrative error; whether there is evidence of bias or inadequate assessment; whether the examiners failed to take into account special factors affecting a candidate's performance.

(c) On no account should you contact your examiners or assessors directly.

7. The Proctors will indicate what further action you can take if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or appeal considered by them.

### **Counselling**

The University's professionally staffed Student Counselling Service provides free, confidential support to all students. *Nightline* is a listening, support and information service, run for and by students. Colleges are able to provide considerable advice and support, and they publish information about how to seek help. In many instances your first port of call, if you need some help, will be your tutor, but there may be circumstances when you would wish to look elsewhere for advice. If your concerns relate to the course, you might like to discuss them with Dr Nye or Professor Morris, and either is willing to see you in confidence should you wish.

### **Other Sources of Help**

**The University Counselling Service**, 11 Wellington Square

Appointments can be made by calling tel. 01865 270300 or emailing [reception@counserv.ox.ac.uk](mailto:reception@counserv.ox.ac.uk).

The Counselling Service aims to see students for an initial assessment within five working days of the student making contact and then to offer regular counselling at an early date. Waiting times for a first appointment can be longer than five working days at busy periods such as the beginning of the Michaelmas and Hilary terms but every effort is made to avoid a delay which involves two weekends.

**Student Advice Service Welfare**, tel. 01865 288461, email: [welfare@ousu.org](mailto:welfare@ousu.org).

The OUSU Vice-President for Welfare and Equal Opportunities, is available at any time to see individuals who have an issue they would like to discuss, on any topic. The Vice-President for Welfare provides resources, advice and training sessions for all students involved in the welfare network across the University and oversees the production of a number of guides including the Oxford Survival Guide, The LGBT Handbook and the OUSU Living Out Guide. The Vice-President for Welfare has a bank of information on many issues ranging from finance to coming out, to eating disorders and unplanned pregnancy and where s/he is unable to help directly can advise students on where best to seek help.

**Nightline Oxford**, 16 Wellington Square

Nightline Oxford provides a student-run listening service, which you can reach

by calling tel. 01865 270270 from 8pm to 8am, from Sunday of Week 0 until Saturday of Week 9.

It is also possible to go down to the office at 16 Wellington Square to talk over coffee and biscuits.

**The Oxford Samaritans**, 60 Magdalen Road

The Samaritans can provide counselling, as well as an emergency service for the suicidal and despairing, which can be reached 24 hours a day by calling tel. 01865 722122.

**Oxfordshire Specialist Community Addiction Service (SCAS)**, Rectory Centre, Rectory Road

SCAS provides assessment and treatment to people with drug and alcohol addictions. The service is largely community based and is provided jointly with GPs in health centres or resource centres (shared care) across the county. You can reach SCAS by calling 01865 455623. An answerphone is available for non-urgent messages out of hours. In an emergency, call 01865 778911.

This service accepts referrals from GPs, CMHTs, self referrals and non-statutory agencies. However, all prospective service users must have an Oxfordshire GP.

**Harassment Support Line**, tel. 01865 270760, website: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/har/>.

The Harassment Support Line is a free, confidential advice service available to all students and staff. There are trained Harassment Officers from every college and department who can offer assistance if you feel that you are being harassed. They can give advice about what harassment is, how to approach the problem and who to talk to. You can talk to a man or a woman, and you do not have to talk to someone from your college or department.

**Oxford Sexual Abuse And Rape Crisis Centre**, tel. 01865 726295, freephone 0800 7836294

Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre is a collective of women committed to supporting survivors of sexual abuse, rape, domestic violence, and harassment. They offer a free and confidential service to women and girls who are dealing with the effects of sexual violence.

**Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans Society (LGBT)**, website: <http://www.lgbsoc.com>

LGBSoc offer a wide range of welfare services for members, from regular social events, to listening services for people who are exploring their sexuality and sexual health resources. There are two Welfare Officers, and the President who can help you through issues and provide information. Students from across the University attend LGBSoc events, but it can feel a bit intimidating the first time, so if you're feeling nervous about things have a chat with your common room LGBT Officer.

## Students with Disabilities

The University aims to provide excellent support to students with disabilities. The disability contact for Physiological Sciences is the Assistant Registrar in the Faculty Office at the MSTC, Ms Kirstie Fieldhouse. Any student encountering problems is welcome to come and speak to her at any time, whether the disability was disclosed at the time of application or not. There will also be a disability contact in your College.

The role of the University's Disability Advisory Service is to provide information and guidance so that disability-related study support can be put in place throughout Colleges and Halls, University Departments and Faculties. Along with keeping Colleges and Departments updated regarding students' disability support needs they guide students through application for Disabled Students Allowance, or other disability related funding.

## Illness and Disability Affecting Your Work

If illness seriously affects your academic work, make sure that your tutors are aware of the problem. If it might be embarrassing to confide directly in your tutor, you need to use one of the other avenues available within college. Help may involve excusing you from tutorials for a while, sending you home for a short break, asking the University to give you dispensation from that term's residence (you are normally required to be resident in Oxford for nine terms to qualify for a BA); or permitting you to take a break before resuming your course. In appropriate circumstances, arrangements may be made for you to repeat part of the course.

If illness has interfered with preparation for a University exam, or has affected you during the exam, or has prevented you from attending part of the exam, your college **MUST** report the fact without delay to the Junior Proctor, who will pass the information on to your examiners if it is likely to assist them in their assessment of your performance. Special pleading after examination results have been published is unlikely to be admissible.

Your college should also contact the Junior Proctor if illness or disability makes it desirable that you should be examined in a special place or at a special time. The college officer concerned is the Senior Tutor, who will communicate with the Proctor on your behalf. Deadlines for applications for special arrangements for examinations are set out in the booklet *Essential Information for Students*. You will need a medical certificate and college doctors have the appropriate university form.

Your college also reports to the Proctors if illness or disability has prevented you from attending part of a University examination. In Schools, the examiners will consider whether you have submitted enough work to allow them to determine your proper class, and if so, they may award you that class. Otherwise, they may be able to award you 'Unclassified Honours' or a 'Pass Degree', according to the circumstances. The full regulations are given in the *Examination Regulations* (the 'Grey Book').

## **CAREERS AND RESEARCH**

The Degree in Physiological Sciences is an excellent preparation for a career in the Life Sciences, but, as has been implied above, our graduates go on to a wide variety of jobs. Whether you want to stay within the Life Sciences or to make a change, the University's Careers Service (56, Banbury Road: tel: 74646) has expert staff and a great deal of experience which you should find useful. Early in Trinity Term they present a seminar tailored specially for Physiology undergraduates who are approaching their final year. You may also contact them for a one-to-one appointment early in your final year. The Physiological Society, jointly with the British Pharmacology Society, run excellent Careers Days in Michaelmas Term and the OU Physiology Society invites past Physiologists, and others, to give talks about 'Life after Physiology' at least once per year (see below).

Every year, about half of our Physiological Sciences students decide that they would like to do a research degree, either a one or two-year MSc, or a three-year DPhil. If you are interested in this possibility, you should seek the advice of your tutor and discuss the possibilities with any members of staff whose work interests you. You should also look in the journals and on departmental notice boards for advertisements for studentships at other Universities and Institutes. The question of research typically arises in a student's final year, and you should act as early as possible. Because of the need to seek a funded studentship, you must usually reach a decision no later than your eighth term, and many advertisements will give earlier closing dates than that. Studentships are in short supply, and you will need a First or a 2.i in order to obtain one.

## **THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PHYSIOLOGY SOCIETY**

The OU Physiology Society is affiliated with the national Physiological Society (PS). It exists for students reading Physiological Sciences, and it brings them together both for social and for academic functions. It also provides a forum for discussion and for the development of physiologists' interests. For further information, follow the link from WebLearn <http://WebLearn.ox.ac.uk/site/medsci/student/student/societ/physoc/>. Members of the OU Physiology Society are eligible for PS grants for the costs of travel, registration and accommodation at a meeting of the PS. The PS has useful web pages which are aimed at undergraduates – see [www.physoc.org](http://www.physoc.org) and click 'Young Physiologists'.

## **THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL STUDENTS' SOCIETY**

Despite its name, the 'OUMS' is open to pure physiologists as well as medics, and you will be most welcome. The Society organises a number of speaker meetings throughout the year, as well as social functions, an orchestra, and sports teams. It also arranges lots of charity events, allowing the Society to make one of the largest contributions to the Oxford University RAG. More information about MedSoc can be found in the 'Rough Guide', which is distributed by the committee at the beginning of the year.

## STAFF AND DEPARTMENTS

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**Head of the Division of Medical Sciences:** Professor A Buchan  
**Secretary to the Division of Medical Sciences:** Dr D E H Bryan  
*Medical School Office, John Radcliffe Hospital, Headington OX3 9DU*

**Director of Pre-Clinical Studies:** Professor John F Morris  
*Medical Sciences Teaching Centre, South Parks Road OX1 3PL*

Reception	<i>tel. 85777</i>	
Assistant Registrar	<i>tel. 85782</i>	Ms Kirstie Fieldhouse
Administrative Officer	<i>tel. 85783</i>	Miss Lindsay Campbell
Administrative Officer (on maternity leave)		<i>Mrs Helen McGrath</i>
Maternity cover:	<i>tel. 85784</i>	Mr Anthony Conway
Senior Clerical Officer	<i>tel. 85785</i>	Mr Ashley Morley
Student Administration Officer	<i>tel. 85788</i>	Ms Vanina Wittenburg
Events Officer (room bookings)	<i>tel. 85779</i>	Mrs Suzie Engela
Chief Technician	<i>tel. 85770</i>	Mr Colin Cook
IT/AV Officer	<i>tel. 85780</i>	Mr Christian Jones

**Faculty Adviser to Physiologists:** Dr Piers Nye  
*Dept. of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics,  
Sherrington Building, Parks Road, OX1 3PT tel: 77756*

### Division of Medical Sciences: Non-clinical Departments

#### Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics

Head of Department: Professor Kay Davies  
*Reception 72500*

#### Department of Pharmacology

Head of Department: Professor Antony Galione  
*Reception 71850*

#### Sir William Dunn School of Pathology

Head of Department: Professor Herman Waldmann  
*Reception 75500*

#### Department of Experimental Psychology

Head of Department: Professor Oliver Braddick  
*Reception 71444*  
*Teaching Matters Mrs S A King 71353*

#### Department of Biochemistry

Head of Department: Professor Kim Nasmyth  
*Reception 75263*  
*Teaching Matters Mrs G McLure 75267*

## **Security of the Buildings and Students' Lockers**

Please help to keep all departments safe and secure. Remember that work in physiology can attract criticism, and from time-to-time serious threats are made. Please be patient if you are required to prove your identity.

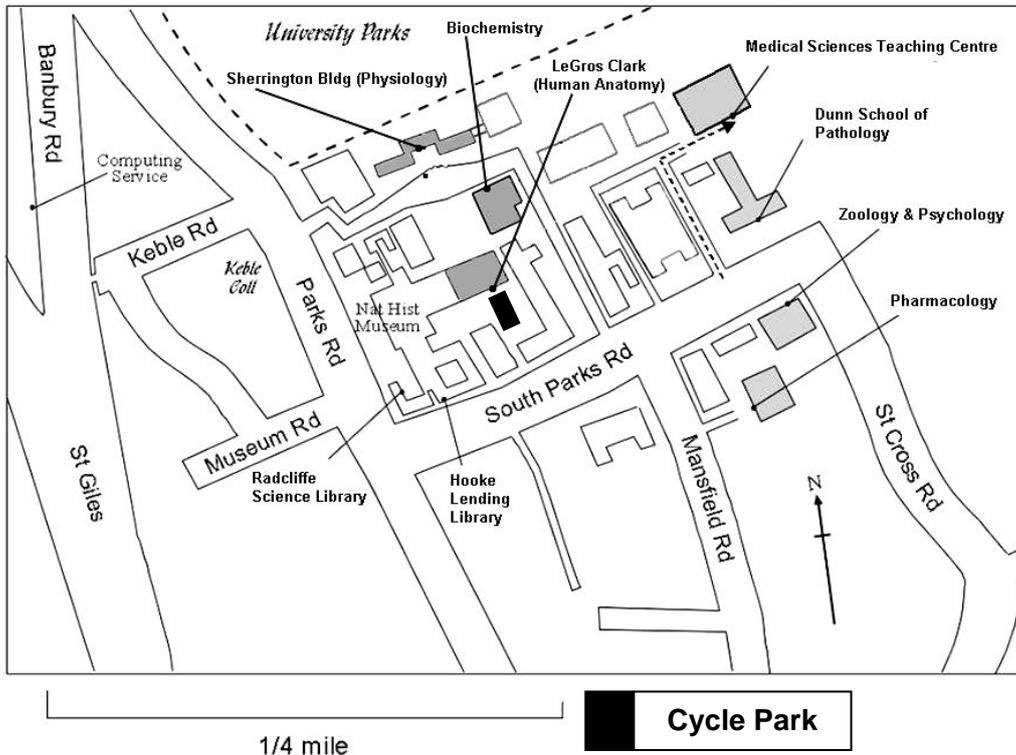
**You will need your University swipe-card for access to most buildings, including the Medical Sciences Teaching Centre. You must report the loss or theft of your card to the MSTC reception as soon as practicable so that access rights can be suspended on the relevant card.**

**Please take care not to leave unattended belongings in the circulation areas where they could cause concern.**

Lockers – You will be allocated a locker in the Teaching Centre. Please do not use any other type of lock on these lockers. Please keep your locker locked at all times when not in use.

# Map of the University Science Area

## University Science Area



## Cycles

Cycles should be parked in the cycle racks provided throughout the Science Area. There is also limited cycle parking available in the moat immediately in front of the Sir William Dunn School of Pathology.

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES MAY CYCLES BE BROUGHT ON TO THE SITE OF THE MEDICAL SCIENCES TEACHING CENTRE.**

## NOTICES

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### MARKING AND CLASSIFICATION OF UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS

The following sections provide further detail about how examinations are marked: a simpler overview has been given above in the appropriate section of this handbook. What follows is an account based on current practice. Changes can be made from time to time (typically in response to examiners' reports, and, in particular, in response to the suggestions of external examiners). Any such changes will be notified to candidates in good time before the first examination to be affected.

All University examinations offer candidates the protection of anonymity except where the use of examination *viva voce* intervenes. Where anonymity is not possible, then a candidate may not be examined by a member of his or her own Society, and, in all *vivas*, at least two examiners are present. In the FHS, all work is double-marked. In the Prelims, the examiners double-mark as necessary to check that different examiners are applying uniform standards. Candidates are liable to be penalised if they depart from the Rubrics on the examination papers or from the provisions of the published Regulations for an examination. Candidates who essentially repeat information in different parts of any examination will only be assessed and rewarded in respect of the first instance. Plagiarism, just as any other kind of dishonesty, in any part of an examination is regarded as a serious offence and will be reported to the Proctors.

#### Data Protection and Freedom of Information

Candidates should note that they cannot be required to provide to third parties details of their examination results over and above the published results of the examination. Marks such as the averages scored in each essay paper are provided to Colleges for the private information of tutors and candidates.

If any candidate wishes to seek some variation of the routine practices for distributing examination results within the University, he or she is asked, in the first instance, to contact the Director of Pre-Clinical studies in writing. Information held in connection with the results of examinations is subject to statutory provisions for data protection and freedom of information.

#### Marking the Preliminary Examination

Information will be provided in the letter from the Chairman of Examiners.

#### Marking and Classification in the Final Honour School of Physiological Sciences

Any changes to the practice detailed below will be well publicised with due notice.

##### Criteria for assessing written papers

For papers 1 and 2, each question is given a mark indicating that it is towards the top, the middle, or the bottom of one of the following classes (or else, Pass or Fail). A third class answer will be given 1, 2, or 3 marks (bottom third, middle or top, respectively); a 2.ii will be given 4, 5, or 6; a 2.i, 7, 8, or 9; and a First, 10, 11, or 12. With Pass and Fail, this makes a 14-point scale.

A **First Class** answer should be an excellent answer to the question set. It should be well structured and make its points clearly and logically, and show originality. There should be evidence of a depth of knowledge and understanding of the field, and the candidate should use examples from published work to support the points made.

An **Upper Second Class** answer should be a very good answer to the question set. Again, the arguments should be presented with clarity and supported with experimental evidence. Candidates should display a good understanding of the field, be knowledgeable in it and able to apply their knowledge. These answers may be slightly weaker than First Class answers in their originality and depth of knowledge, but they must answer the question, and the information used must be relevant. No answers that do not directly address the

question actually set can get an Upper Second or a First Class mark, however good they may be in their own right.

A **Lower Second Class** answer should make an attempt to answer the question, and the candidate should show some understanding of the field. The candidate is likely to have less depth of knowledge and less ability to use it, but should bring in the major points. There may be some misconceptions. In this category may come those answers that are not addressing the main point of the question, answers that might have achieved higher grades if the question had been slightly different. This category may also include those answers that are seriously short-weight through lack of time, but which look as if the candidate might have achieved an Upper Second Class mark had they been completed.

A **Third Class answer** will be a relatively poor answer, showing some knowledge of the field but being badly constructed and lacking in relevant detail. It is likely to include misconceptions.

A **Pass** answer is one that is considered unworthy of honours according to the above criteria but which presents some relevant and accurate material.

A **Fail** is awarded in respect of no answer at all or one that is wholly or very substantially irrelevant or wholly or very substantially inaccurate.

A high standard of literacy will contribute to good marks in the written parts of the examination.

For Paper 3, each answer will be awarded a numerical mark with a weighting shown on the question paper (the questions will carry either single or double weight). In the light of the total, the paper will be given a single overall mark on the standard 14-point scale indicating the class of the paper.

#### **Criteria for assessing the submitted essay**

Criteria equivalent to those described above for essay papers will be applied to the submitted essay.

#### **Criteria for Assessing Research Projects**

It is important to note that no original research can have a guaranteed outcome. The examiners will be mindful in particular that the time available for laboratory work is short, and so any lack of 'success' in achieving the original aims of a project will not be penalised. If experiments are limited in what they achieve, it will be important that the candidate should be honest and claim no more than is justified. Candidates will be able to comment on the reasons for any difficulties they encounter and, where possible, make sensible suggestions for appropriate further work. The supervisor will be asked to report to the examiners on any special difficulties that arose.

The examiners will seek to assess the written and oral presentations and give reward for clarity, for soundness of scientific approach and scholarship, and for intelligence and insight in interpreting the findings and in dealing with the issues (either of technique or of theory) that arise from the work. Naturally, the conclusions should be justified. A proper appreciation of the context and significance of the project and its findings will also be expected. As in the case of the purely written parts of the examination, the research project will be marked on the 14-point scale. Although the examiners will use check-sheets to remind them to make a qualitative assessment for as many as possible of the attributes listed above, no particular scheme for weighting would be appropriate, and the examiners' final assessment will represent their overall judgement of the exercise as a whole.

#### **Classification**

To award a class (or an unclassified pass) for the degree as a whole, the examiners take a view of a candidate's overall performance without expecting or requiring uniformity.

#### **Marking schemes and method of classification**

- There are six parts to the examination [Two Papers 1, *viz.* one in each of two Options (or Paper 1 in one Option and a paper in Experimental Psychology); Papers 2 and 3; the submitted essay; and the research project] and the marks from these will be weighted so that the research project carries 25% of the total marks and each of the other five parts carries 15% of the total marks for the School.
- In the case of Papers 1 & 2, each answer will be marked separately. A single mark will be given for each of the remaining parts of the examination.
- The marking scale for each part of the examination will be a 14-point numerical scale related to the classes of degree so as to indicate an outcome as 'top', 'middle', or 'bottom' of each class, or pass without honours, or fail. The criteria used are described above.
- For every mark to be generated, at least two examiners (or an examiner and assessor) will give an independent mark. They will then confer and produce an agreed mark. Marks one grade apart will normally be averaged, and marks two grades apart will be reviewed to reach a decision (though

averaging may be the agreed outcome). Marks more discrepant than two grades will be discussed and the material re-read as necessary. One or both markers should revise his or her mark to allow an agreed mark to be reached. If two markers fail so to agree, then a third marker (possibly the external examiner) will be consulted.

- A central record will be made during the marking process of all examiners' independent and agreed marks. These will be available to candidates on application according to Freedom of Information legislation.
- The agreed marks will be converted to the university percentage-scale using the following fixed points:

Examiners'		Examiners'	
Mark	% scale	Mark	% scale
Fail	0		
Fail/Pass	15	6	58.3
Pass	30	6.5	60
Pass/1	35.9	7	61.7
1	41.7	7.5	63.3
1.5	43.3	8	65
2	45	8.5	66.7
2.5	46.7	9	68.3
3	48.3	9.5	70.4
3.5	50	10	72.5
4	51.7	10.5	75
4.5	53.3	11	77.5
5	55	11.5	80
5.5	56.7	12	82.5

- An average of converted marks will be produced in the case of each written paper, and these 'paper marks' will be combined with the converted marks for the remaining parts of the examination to produce a weighted overall mean for the examination (weightings: project = 5/20, each other part of the examination = 3/20). In addition, a median mark for the examination will be determined, the project mark being counted twice (to give a total of 7 marks the median of which is taken).
- The class achieved in each *part* of the examination is determined administratively from the marks according to the university scale:
  - >= 70 1<sup>st</sup> class *or*
  - >= 60 2.i
  - >= 50 2.ii
  - >= 40 3<sup>rd</sup>
  - >= 30 Pass
  - < 30 Fail
- A consideration in determining the class of degree will be the balance of classes achieved in the parts of the examination. Consistent with the extra weighting given to the project when calculating the mean and median marks, the class achieved for the project will be counted twice. The following considerations thus apply to a set of seven class results for each candidate.
- **For a First**, a candidate should *normally* have an honours level mark for every part of the examination. Then:-
  - The number of 1<sup>st</sup> class parts *less* any third class parts should be *four* or more
  - or*
  - The overall mean mark >= 70
 Marginally weaker candidates to be considered for Firsts should include at least the following:
  - Both*
  - All candidates whose number of 1<sup>st</sup> class parts *less* any third class parts is *three*

*and*

All candidates with at least one 1<sup>st</sup>-class part **and** an overall mean *or* a median mark  $\geq 68.5$

Considerations (in no particular order) in all borderline cases include:-

(i) the actual value of the mean mark, (ii) the actual value of the median mark, (iii) the distribution of paper marks, (iv) the distribution of essay marks, (v) performance in any Supplementary Subject, and (vi) special circumstances notified by the Junior Proctor.

▪ **For a 2.i**

A candidate should have **both** an overall mean mark **and** a median mark  $\geq 60$ .

Borderline candidates to be considered for a 2.i should include:

All candidates with **either** an overall mean **or** a median  $\geq 60$ .

Considerations are those listed above for the First class.

▪ **For other classes and the Pass Degree**

The same rules as for the 2.i apply but with lower criteria applied to mean and median:

$\geq 50$  2.ii

$\geq 40$  3<sup>rd</sup>

$\geq 30$  Pass

- Candidates will be penalised if they depart from the Rubrics on the examination papers or from the provisions in the Special Regulations for the FHS (in particular, those relating to repetition of information). Plagiarism or other dishonesty will be penalised.
- The published results will be a class list indicating class of honours, or unclassified honours, or a Pass Degree.
- For the information of candidates, colleges will routinely be sent the overall marks for each of the six parts of the examination. These marks use the standard 100-point scale agreed for classified examinations by the University. It should be remembered that these marks do not actually indicate a *percentage* of correct response or of expected knowledge or understanding: they are simply a standard numerical representation of a qualitative judgement.

**Late Submission of or Failure to Submit Coursework**

- The Examination Regulations stipulate specific dates for submission of the required pieces of coursework to the Examiners (1. Library-based dissertations or synopses of laboratory-based projects; 2. Submitted essay). Rules governing late submission and any consequent penalties are set out in the 'Late submission of work' sub-section of the 'Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations' section of the Examination Regulations 2007, 2006, 2005 & 2004, respectively on pages 45, 45, & 44).
- Normally the relevant Examination Regulations for a particular candidate are those in force at the time the candidate embarked on his/her FHS. **However in the specific case of the abovementioned regulations on late submission of work the Proctors and the EPSC have stipulated that the 2006 regulation shall apply to all work submitted for examination from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006 onwards including that by candidates who are otherwise governed by earlier issues of Examination Regulations.**
- Under the provisions permitted by the 2006 regulation, late submission of coursework for Medical Sciences examinations will normally result in the following penalties:
  - (a) With permission from the Proctors under clause (1) of para 16.8, page 45, no penalty.
  - (b) With permission from the Proctors under clauses (3) + (4) of para 16.8, a penalty of a reduction in the mark for the coursework in question of up to 10% of the maximum mark available for the piece of work; the exact penalty to be set by the Examiners with due consideration to the advice given in the document 'Academic Penalties for Late Submission of a thesis or other exercise: Proctors Notes for Guidance', dated Michaelmas Term 2006.
  - (c) Where the candidate is not permitted by the Proctors to remain in the examination he or she will be deemed to have failed the examination as a whole.
- Where no work is submitted or it is proffered so late that it would be impractical to accept it for assessment the Proctors may, under their general authority, and after (i) making due enquiries into the circumstances and (ii) consultation with the Chairman of the Examiners, permit the candidate to remain in the examination. In this case the Examiners will award a mark of zero for the piece of coursework in question.

- This concludes the published marking and classification scheme approved by the D-EPSC. **The examiners are asked to apply this scheme, but have express permission to make variations if that proves to be essential to ensure fairness (any such modification should be justified in the examiners' report).**

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES: STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS**

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The University's Integrated Equal Opportunities Policy is available at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/policy/index.shtml>. The following is an extract from that website.

### **The University's aims**

The University of Oxford will work to remove any barriers which might deter people of the highest ability from applying to Oxford, either as staff or students. The University aims to provide an inclusive environment which values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected to assist them in reaching their full potential.

### **The University's commitment**

No prospective or actual student or member of staff will be treated less favourably than any other, whether before, during or after their study or employment at the University of Oxford on one or more of the following grounds, except when such treatment is within the law and determined by lawful requirements: age; colour; disability; ethnic origin; marital status; nationality; national origin; parental status; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; or length or type of contract (e.g. part-time or fixed-term). The University has approved a separate Race Equality Policy to meet the specific obligations of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act.

With regard to students, this policy applies to (but is not limited to) admissions, to teaching, learning and research provision, to scholarships, grants and other awards under the University's control, to student support, to University accommodation and other facilities, to health and safety, to personal conduct and to student complaints and disciplinary procedures.

In order to realise its commitment, the University will:

- promote the aims of this policy;
- be proactive in eliminating discrimination, including harassment and bullying, through training and the production and dissemination of codes of practice and guidance;
- have regard to its obligations under relevant legislation, including the requirement to carry out impact assessments in certain areas, and for its policies, codes of practice and guidance to mirror the same and be changed to meet the demands of new legislation;

- whilst acknowledging that they are not legally binding, have regard to any Codes of Practice issued or adopted by the Commission for Equality and Human Rights;
- make this policy, as well as all codes of practice and guidance available to all staff and students; and
- regularly review the terms of this policy and all associated codes of practice and guidance.

## **Responsibilities**

### *Divisions, Departments & Faculties*

Heads of Divisions, Departments and Chairs of Faculty Boards, of both academic and administrative departments, are responsible for the day to day implementation and delivery of the University's strategic objectives for diversity and equal opportunities in that Division, Department or Faculty in accordance with the guidance attached to this policy.

### *All staff and students*

This policy applies to all members of the University, both students and staff, whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time or on fixed-term contracts, to job applicants, to student applicants, current and former students, to associate members and to visitors to the University.

These members of the University have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, and therefore to treat colleagues with dignity at all times and not to discriminate against or harass other students or members of staff, whether junior or senior to them.

The University expects all its staff and students to take personal responsibility for familiarising themselves with this policy and to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner at all times to respect equality of opportunity for all staff, students, applicants and visitors. The University regards any breach of this policy by any employee(s) or student(s) as a serious matter to be dealt with through its agreed procedures, which may result in disciplinary action.

## **Complaints**

The University of Oxford takes seriously any breach of this policy. Disregard of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. The University encourages any prospective or current student or member of staff who has a complaint concerning a breach of this policy to bring such a complaint to the University.

## Chart overview of course

1 <sup>st</sup> Year			2 <sup>nd</sup> Year			3 <sup>rd</sup> Year					
Physiology Prelims			Physiology FHS								
MT	HT	TT	MT	HT	TT	MT	HT	TT			
<b>3 Subjects:</b>  1. Physiology and Pharmacology of the Systems of the Body  2. Neuroscience  3. Biochemistry and Cell Biology			<b>Option A</b> (see below)  Two options chosen from the five options listed below: <i>(from the Medical Sciences FHS)</i> 1. Neuroscience  2. Molecular Medicine  3. Myocardial, Vascular and Respiratory Biology  4. Infection and Immunity  5. Signalling in Health and Disease			<b>Option B</b> (see below)			Synoptic Teaching (Wks 1 & 2)		<b>Paper 1</b>  (Specialist: two Paper 1's compulsory – or one Paper 1 plus a Psychology Option)  <b>Paper 2</b>  (Synoptic)  <b>Paper 3</b>  (Critical Appraisal)
			<b>EXAMS (after term)</b>			<b>EXAMS (circa Wks 5 &amp; 6)</b>			<b>EXAMS (circa Wks 5 &amp; 6)</b>		
			Bridge Course (Wks 1-3 of MT)  Information Retrieval Design of Experiments Working on the Literature Neuroanatomy  Research Techniques (Trinity Term)			<b>Extended Essay</b>					
						Get faculty approval for essay title by registering it by Wk 8 HT.		<b>Essay to be submitted by Wk 8 of TT</b>			
			Statistics (optional)  (Wks 3-8 of HT)			<b>Lab-Based Research Project</b>					
						Arrange a project during HT of year 2.  Get project approved by Wk 5 of Trinity (you cannot start working on your project until it has been approved).  Submit your pre-submission confirmation of project details by Wk 12 of MT of year 3.		<b>Project to be submitted by Wk 8 of HT</b>  Submit your project presentation to the MSTC in Wk 0 of TT			

[Correct as of July 2009. Regulations for any component of the course may be changed provided the change is announced before students start work on the affected component.]