
MCR FRESHERS' GUIDE

2026-2027

Girton



MCR

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Welcome to Girton College!

Huge congratulations on making it to Cambridge, and welcome to what we are entirely convinced is the best College in town!

Girton is genuinely a place like no other. Founded in 1869 as the UK's first residential college for women's higher education, it has always been built on inclusion, equality, and ambition. Today, that legacy lives on in our warm, tight-knit, and unpretentious community. Yes, we're about 2.5 miles from the city centre (a 15-minute cycle or a 40-minute scenic walk), but having 33 acres of orchards, sports pitches, an indoor heated pool, and our legendary black squirrels means we get a peaceful sanctuary to unwind at the end of the day.

What is the MCR?

You'll hear 'MCR' thrown around constantly. It stands for Middle Combination Room, and it essentially means three things:

- Your community: The entire body of postgraduate and mature students at Girton, meaning all of you!
- Your space: The physical common room, usually in College but in Girton's case in Swirles Court, where we hang out and relax.
- Your committee: The team of students (us!) elected to organise events, advocate for your needs, and make sure your time here is incredible.

How to use this guide?

We know that arriving in Cambridge means being bombarded with lots of administrative emails, forms, and acronyms. Take a deep breath. You do not need to memorise this booklet nor do you need to read every page today.

Think of this guide as your survival kit and reference manual. Keep it handy on your phone or desktop: whenever you find yourself asking 'how does laundry work?', 'where can I find information on college grants?', or 'which societies can I join?', the answer will almost certainly be right here.

What's next?

We (the MCR committee) have organised a series of events and activities running across the first two and a half weeks after your arrival: from casual lunches to games nights, and our first formal dinner. Our own Freshers' Weeks were a truly special time for us; it gave us space to adapt to Girton softly, enjoy those first exciting weeks, and establish lifelong friendships. We sincerely hope that is the case for you, too!

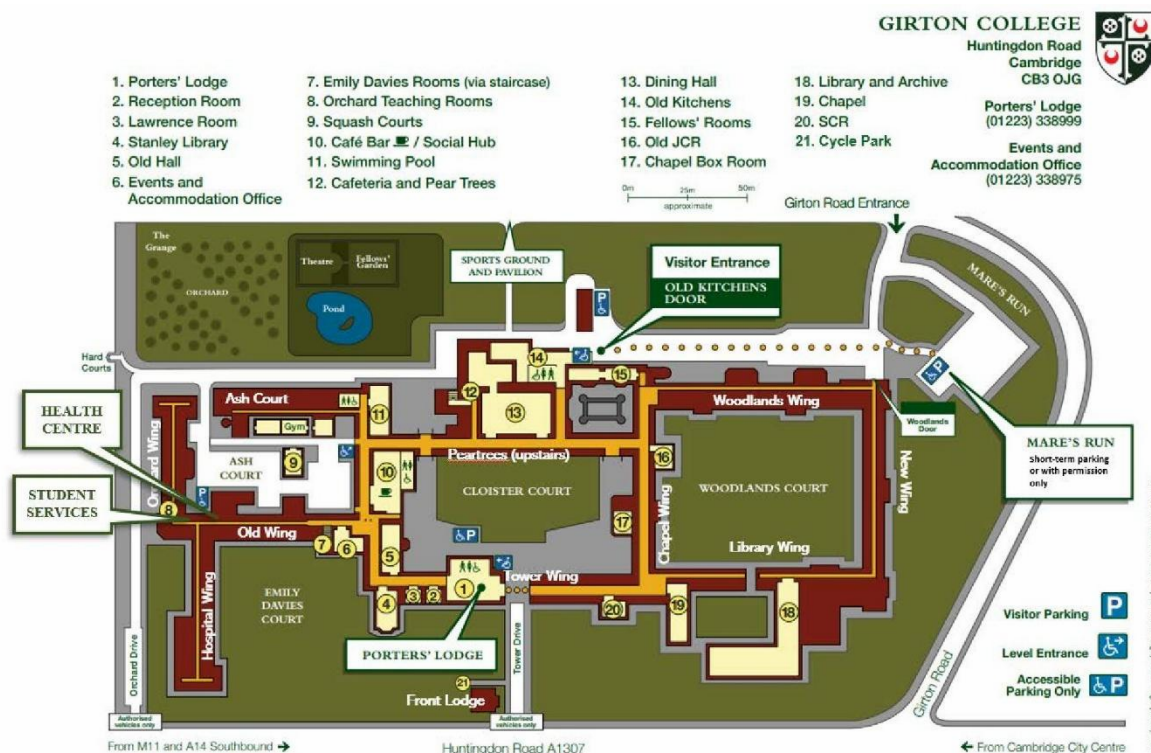
Overall, our key message is simply that we want you to enjoy this year as much as possible. Your time in Cambridge will be an unforgettable experience: get involved, learn a lot, meet new people, and above all, take good care of yourselves.

Your MCR Committee is always here to lend a hand, answer questions, or just chat.

Have fun and see you around College!

Your Girton MCR Committee

1. College Map



Tip: We call the Porters' Lodge 'Plodge', the Social Hub 'Schlub', and Dining Hall just 'Hall' (formally 'Great Hall').

2. Key dates and websites 2026-2027

The academic year in Cambridge has three terms: Michaelmas, Lent, and Easter. Full term is an 8-week period during which undergraduate teaching takes place.

Full Michaelmas Term: Tuesday 6 October 2026 – Friday 4 December 2026

Full Lent Term: Tuesday 19 January 2027 – Friday 19 March 2027

Full Easter Term: Tuesday 27 April 2027 – Friday 18 June 2027

As a postgraduate, your year runs for the full 12-month period, so, in most cases, does not include the Christmas, Easter and Long vacations as the undergraduates' year does. Students on full-time taught Masters courses should remain in Cambridge for the duration of their course and are required to be in Cambridge for submission of the final piece of mandatory assessed coursework (which denotes the end of the course). College services are usually reduced outside full term (dining hours may be more limited, the College library is open for fewer hours, there are no Formal Halls, etc.).

College social media

Website: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/
Instagram: @girtoncollege
Facebook: facebook.com/GirtonCollege/
X: @GirtonCollege
Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/girtoncollege/>

MCR social media

Website: sites.google.com/cam.ac.uk/girton-mcr/home
Instagram: @girtonmcr

All relevant information regarding MCR events throughout will be sent through the WhatsApp group chat and email list, as well as included in the live calendar in our website.

College website for incoming postgraduates, including Freshers' events and mandatory practicalities to take care of

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/postgraduates/incoming-postgraduates/your-induction

Note: During the first weeks before and after your arrival this website will be one of the most useful ones to keep track of your to-do list and relevant information.

Student guides

CamGuides: Information & Digital Essentials for studying at the University of Cambridge (with separate guides for Master's and PhD students)
<https://libguides.cam.ac.uk/camguides/index>

CamGuides for Master's students aims to introduce you to some of the principal academic and research practices that Master's students at Cambridge commonly engage in, and to help you to identify ways that you can prepare for your Master's degree.

CamGuides for PhDs aims to introduce you to some of the research practices that PhD students at Cambridge commonly engage in, give you tips for settling in, and point you to people who will help in your journey.

University's website for students (a centralised hub with information about getting around, extracurriculars, rules and processes, teaching and assessment, graduation, skills development, and fees and funding): www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/

3. General information about the College and the MCR (incl. key contacts and addresses)

Cambridge is a collegiate university and is made up of University Faculties/Departments, Colleges, and the University administration. Students are members of the University and of an academic Faculty or Department. Students also belong to a College. There are 31 Colleges within the University. More information: www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/how-the-university-and-colleges-work.

Girton College has a 150-year pioneering history. Founded in 1869 by Emily Davies and Barbara Bodichon, the College is distinctive for being Britain's first residential college for the degree level education of women. Girton received its Royal Charter in 1924 and achieved full college status in 1948. In 1976, it became a coeducational community. Today, we have a large and diverse community of postgraduates from over 60 countries. The gender balance is fairly even, and we have a yearly intake of approximately 200 new students and have another 140 or so continuing students. The balance between research and one-year degrees is about one-third to two-thirds.

Girton history: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/index%20php/about-girton

Girton is now known for its inclusive and relaxed (yet studious!) environment, excellence in the arts and sciences, massive woodland grounds, beautiful gardens, and super tight knit community. We are a college and community to be proud of!

The MCR (or Middle Combination Room)

The MCR is the Postgraduate Student Society at College. Every postgraduate is automatically a member of the Girton MCR. The MCR is run by a committee elected from within the postgraduate community. Members of the MCR represent the interests of the postgraduates at many of the College's strategic meetings.

The term 'MCR' refers to the student body, to the elected committee and to the common room for postgraduates. The MCR Room is on the main floor of Swirles Court, to the right from Porters' Lodge. It is accessible to all postgraduates to hang out or work in, regardless of whether they live in Swirles or not.

The MCR Committee is made up of President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary (these four are the Executive Committee), Social Secretary, Welfare Officer, Dining Officer, BME Officer, LGBTQ+ Officer, Women's Officer, Academic Officer, Green Officer, and Communications Officer. The Executive Committee is happy to entertain new posts if you have a passion for something in particular. Committee elections are normally held at the end and the beginning of the academic year. This means that postgraduates starting in Michaelmas 2026 can still get involved with this year's Committee – please do join and get involved if you are interested! Positions which will be available to run for are Treasurer, Dining Officer, BME Officer, Women's Officer, Academic Officer, and Green Officer.

The MCR is here to support you throughout your time in College. Whether you need advice, a listening ear, or just want to suggest improvements to College life, feel free to reach out to any of the MCR officers.

The Mistress

The Mistress, Dr Elisabeth Kendall, is the Head of the College and therefore the main public-facing representative of the College.

The Mistress's work is a mixture of ambassadorial and strategic policy in the running of the College. All new postgraduates will be invited to meet her at drinks in Lent Term as well as around College before then, including before the Freshers' Formal on Thursday, 1 October.

More about the Mistress: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/people/dr-elisabeth-kendall

Senior Tutor

The Senior Tutor, Professor Toni Williams, has overall responsibility for all academic and pastoral matters for both undergraduates and postgraduates.

More about the Senior Tutor: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/news/professor-toni-williams-elected-senior-tutor-girton-college

Postgraduate Tutors

Each postgraduate student is allocated a Postgraduate Tutor for the duration of their time in Cambridge. Tutors are all senior academic members of College (Fellows). Their role is to support their students' wellbeing (e.g. by sign-posting to relevant bodies and/or agencies such as mental health services) and to support their students in case of illness, if the student's work has been disrupted, if the student needs to take time out from their studies for personal reasons, or if the student needs additional time for the completion of their studies.

Your Tutor will normally be your first contact for non-academic matters, and they are always there for you even if all you need is just a chat.

In addition to being available to talk to students on all things pastoral, your Postgraduate Tutor can access and add comments to the online self-evaluation reports submitted by you and reports submitted by your supervisor concerning your academic progress. If necessary, your Postgraduate Tutor can also talk to academic supervisors and Departments or Faculties, particularly if you are experiencing difficulties. If you are worried by what a report says or want a different perspective on any aspect of your work, go and talk to your Postgraduate Tutor.

When you arrive in Cambridge, you will be notified of your Tutor's name and contact details, and their 'tutorial office hours' held in College and/or online each week during which you may call or visit without an appointment. There will be formal and informal opportunities to meet with your Tutor at the start of the year, including over drinks before the Freshers' Formal on Thursday, 1 October.

Read the Tutors' Welcome Letter by clicking on "1 October, 6 for 6:15pm: Meet your Postgraduate Tutor at a Drinks Reception": www.girton.cam.ac.uk/postgraduates/incoming-postgraduates/your-induction

Student Services and key contacts

The Student Services Office is in room A28 in College.

Vicky Argent, Head of Student Services

Vicky oversees the Student Services department for Undergraduate and Postgraduate study, as well as dealing with complex queries and EAMC applications.

tutorial@girton.cam.ac.uk | +44 (0)1223 338972

Paula Harper, Administrative Assistant

Paula provides administrative support for Postgraduate applications, matriculation and inductions, transcripts, tutorial files and graduation ceremonies.

postgraduate.office@girton.cam.ac.uk | +44 (0)1223 765992

Nicky Shevlane, Financial Welfare Officer

Nicky provides finance support, including College Grants and Awards, University of Cambridge Grants and Awards, budgeting advice and College arrears.

fwo@girton.cam.ac.uk

Finance Office

finance@girton.cam.ac.uk | +44 (0)1223 338974

Accommodation Office

accommodation@girton.cam.ac.uk | +44 (0)1223 339032

Deji Olaniyi-Maxwell, Head of Welfare & Wellbeing and BME contact for students

headofwelfare@girton.cam.ac.uk

College addresses and contact

Girton College Main Site: Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0JG | +44 (0)1223 338999

Swirles Court: Pheasant Drive, Eddington Cambridge CB3 1AQ | +44 (0)1223 760021.

Porters' Lodge

The Porters' Lodge (which is also the First Aid post) is staffed 24 hours a day throughout the year at College and Swirles Court. All the Porters are trained First Aiders, and they should be the first contact in the event of an emergency (though if you need an ambulance, call that first). If you do call an ambulance yourself, you must notify the Porters' Lodge so that paramedics can be given appropriate directions and assistance.

The Porters are also there for such things as letting you back in if you lock yourself out of your room, helping you find a room or facility in College, chatting on the phone as you walk back to Girton at night if you feel uneasy, or if you just need a chat, even in the middle of the night. You will also need to check in with them upon arrival to get your room key and University card.

Tip: Don't ask the Porters to carry your bags for you when you arrive unless for accessibility reasons. They are not luggage carriers!

Accidents, health emergencies, near misses, and safety hazards should be reported to the Porters' Lodge. Of course, in life-threatening emergencies, emergency services should be contacted first.

porters@girton.cam.ac.uk

T (Girton): +44 (0)1223 338999

T (Swirles): +44 (0)1223 760021

Tip: It's always a good idea to save these numbers to your contacts as soon as you get to Girton.

4. International students

The University's International Student Office offers all visa advice and important information about arriving in the UK and Cambridge (incl. travelling in the UK, healthcare in the UK, and opening a bank account): www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/arriving/pre-arrival-information.

If you are studying on a visa in the UK, you must abide by the conditions of your visa. The Student Services Office will check your ID and scan your documents after you arrive. You will be asked to present your immigration documents (passport, immigration stamp in your passport) and/or proof of travel (e.g. boarding pass) to the College Student Services Office staff before you begin studying. The boarding pass is needed if you entered via eGates at the airport or if for some reason you do not have an immigration arrival stamp in your passport. You will need to send your visa share code to the Student Services Office before having your passport scanned. Instructions on how to do this will be sent to you before starting your studies.

More information: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/postgraduates/incoming-postgraduates/your-induction (section 'Identity and Student Visa checking')

More information about studying on a Student Visa:
www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/studying-student-visa

Your responsibilities on a Student visa:

www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Your_responsibilities_on_a_Student_visa.pdf

5. Accommodation

The College has four accommodation areas available for postgraduate students: Swirles Court (where most postgraduates reside), the Grange (a manor house on the Main College site), Girton Gate (a large house across the road from the Main College site), and three small shared houses. The College may have a small selection of properties for students with children and / or partners, but these are not available every year.

The standard tenancy is 49 weeks, from 22 of September 2026 until 31 August 2027. Shorter tenancies, related to course length, are available by arrangement at the beginning for students on courses that end before August. The shortest tenancy ends 13 July 2027. In certain circumstances, including if the student is continuing to the following year, their tenancy may be extended to 52 weeks (the full year).

New Girton postgraduates should apply for accommodation as soon as they have received an offer of a place at Girton by completing the application form.

Current continuing Girton postgraduates should apply for a room usually by the end of April each year by completing the application form on the College accommodation website.

“Continuing” refers to students entering their second year or above and who are not beginning a new degree. If you are moving from MPhil to PhD or from taught to research Masters, you are a ‘new’ postgraduate.

More information: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/postgraduates/accommodation

Accommodation handbook: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/college-members/student-information/accommodation-handbook

Postgraduates’ residence requirement

“Keeping” a term of residence means being in Cambridge for the central 8-week period of each term, known as Full Term, which is the period when lectures, seminars, teaching etc. take place. Postgraduate students should be in Cambridge throughout their course except for mutually-agreed-upon vacation periods (in the case of research students) or applied-for Leaves to work away or Intermissions.

Read about postgraduates’ residence requirements here:

www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/postgraduate-research-students/terms-study

Heating

Central heating is supplied to all College rooms from mid-October to mid-April each year. If conditions are very cold or very warm before or after these dates, the heating will be adjusted.

Central heating is supplied to Swirles Court through the district heating system. Residents are not permitted to use electrical type heaters in their rooms; only College-approved heaters are allowed.

Electrical appliances and equipment testing

All mains-powered electrical appliances brought into College accommodation by students will be tested by College Maintenance. This is called Electrical Equipment Testing (EET), and it starts in Michaelmas and takes approximately three weeks to complete. You will be notified when your room is due for testing. Any appliances purchased or brought into College must be taken to Maintenance to be checked if they are not included in the testing done at the start of the year.

Appliances with heavier consumption (e.g. electric fires or heaters, deep fat fryers, microwave ovens, and electric blankets) are strictly forbidden. This includes kettles, coffee machines or any other appliance with a heating element as well as plug-in air fresheners / diffusers.

NOTE: Any device that does not pass the test will be taken by Maintenance but you will be able to get it back at the end of Michaelmas.

What is included in accommodation

Residence fees are fixed so they do not change for the duration of your course. Heat, light, power, internet, and contents insurance are all included in the single-occupancy rooms. There is a termly charge for the use of laundry facilities.

To see what is included in the bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen facilities (scroll to the bottom of the page):

Swirles Court – www.girton.cam.ac.uk/accommodation/swirles-court

The Grange – www.girton.cam.ac.uk/accommodation/the-grange

Girton Gate – www.girton.cam.ac.uk/accommodation/girton-gate

College Houses – www.girton.cam.ac.uk/accommodation/college-houses

NOTE: Bed linen, pillows, cooking utensils, saucepans, crockery and cutlery are NOT provided.

When you arrive, there will be an inventory form for you to check and return detailing the condition of everything in your room. This should be completed and returned to the Porters' Lodge within seven days.

Guests

For Fire Safety reasons, College needs to be aware of who is in residence at any given time. All overnight guests (max. one at a time) must be signed in at the Porters' Lodge, and they are allowed to stay for up to three nights in a given week.

6. Mail

Each student, whether resident in College, a College House or living out, will have a shared pigeonhole (*tip: a pigeonhole is a mailbox, also known as a 'pidge'*) in the Porters' Lodge at Girton. The Porters will place all mail which is personally addressed in the pigeonholes. Only the Porters and members of Girton College may place mail in pigeonholes.

Those living in Swirles Court will have a pigeonhole there and their mail will be delivered to Swirles. The number on your pigeonhole will match your room number.

Letters are put into pigeonholes as soon as they are delivered; registered mail (e.g. parcels too big to fit in your pidge) is kept at the Porters' Lodge. You will be notified with an email from the Porters when your parcel is available for collection from the Lodge.

Please collect your mail and any parcels or registered mail promptly. Note that the College cannot accept any responsibility for parcels and registered mail delivered to College for students not in residence or if it is left uncollected for more than a few days.

Your address for mail, depending on whether you have a pigeonhole in College or in Swirles, is:

[Name]
Girton College
Huntingdon Road
Cambridge CB3 0JG

[Name]
[Room number,] Swirles Court
Pheasant Drive
Cambridge CB3 1AQ

More about mail: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/college-members/student-information/accommodation-handbook (Section 8.6)

7. Laundry

Washing machines, dryers, irons and provision for drying in College are located in Ash Court, Woodlands D Corridor, Orchard A Corridor, Hospital A Corridor. The washing machines and dryers in Swirles Court are located by the Porters' Lodge; each floor should have their own communal iron and ironing board.

Available washing and drying machines in Swirles Court can be checked on the JHC Laundry app.

Everyone living in College accommodation pays £20.89 per term for the use of laundry facilities. You'll see this included in your College bill.

Laundry in Swirles

Laundry facilities in Swirles are in extremely high demand during term so please make sure to set an alarm for yourself and pick up your laundry as soon as it finishes so others can use the machines too. Do not expect other people to empty the machines you are using for you.

If the person using the machine you're waiting for is not there immediately when the cycle is finished, it is best to wait for a few minutes for them to arrive and get their laundry – they are probably on their way and not everyone will be comfortable for their clothes to be handled by others! If you do have to empty someone else's machine, please make sure you place the clothes on a clean surface.

When you use the dryers, remove the lint that accumulates in the lint filter at the front of the dryers when you are finished. This will not only help the next people to use the dryer, but also keep your own clothes lint-free as you take them out.

There is a help sheet for laundry settings on the bulletin board opposite the machines.

Tip: You should download the JHC Laundry app, which will show you which machines are available and any time left on laundry cycles currently running. Search for 'Swirles Court, Cambridge' in the Location search box to find the machines in Swirles. The machines tend to be the most free in the mornings. During busy times, it helps to arrive a few minutes before a cycle ends to secure your spot.

8. Cleaning and maintenance

Kitchens in College are cleaned daily Monday to Friday by College staff. Kitchens in the houses are cleaned at least weekly by contract cleaners. In Swirles Court, kitchens are cleaned daily Monday to Friday by contract cleaners.

The kitchens are communal areas so make sure that you are considerate of other users. Clean and wash up after yourself right away. Cleaners are not required to clear up kitchens after you, so washing your dishes is your responsibility. Surfaces and sink areas need to be left clear so that they can be cleaned.

In College, communal bathrooms and toilets are cleaned daily from Monday-Friday and two times a week in the College Houses. All en-suite bathrooms (e.g. in Swirles Court) will be cleaned once every two weeks – Housekeeping will send a cleaning rota by email so you will know when cleaning is due.

All the rubbish bins in common areas, including the kitchens, have labels on them to let you know what goes in them – read these labels and make sure to dispose of your rubbish correctly (brown lid – general waste, grey lid – dry mixed recyclable material, yellow lid – glass, green bin – food waste) so that cleaning staff do not have to go through and reorganise your rubbish, and to help the environment. Batteries can be recycled in the Porters' Lodge.

Note: You are responsible for cleaning your room and emptying the rubbish bins in your room. Cleaners will not do this for you.

Maintenance and repair requests:

The College uses the CASC Room Management System (RMS) to log all maintenance requests and incidents. Any maintenance problems (such as blocked drains, leaking taps, damaged appliances, light bulbs that need changing, etc.) should be reported to Maintenance via the Management System: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/college-members/requests-and-forms/college-maintenance-requests.

9. Computing and IT

UIS (University Information Services) have collated information for new students here: <https://help.uis.cam.ac.uk/new-starters/get-started-with-it-for-new-students>

The wifi used in all University buildings and the Colleges is the 'eduroam' network. For personal devices that can't use eduroam, you can connect to UniOfCam-IoT (e.g. media streaming devices like Apple TV, smart speakers like Amazon Echo or Google Home, and equipment such as printers). About connecting to wifi, see: <https://help.uis.cam.ac.uk/new-starters/get-started-with-it-for-new-students/it-services-students#wifi>.

The College IT Department (ithelp@girton.cam.ac.uk) is located on the A Corridor in College. Further information can be found here: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/computing

You will not have a Cambridge email address until you go through the Student Registration procedure. Your email address will be your CRSid (your Cambridge User ID, a combination of the first letters of your names and some numbers) followed by @cam.ac.uk: [CRSid]@cam.ac.uk. You will be sent the Student Registration email once you have fully confirmed your offer.

Set up your IT before you start: <https://help.uis.cam.ac.uk/new-starters/get-started-with-it-for-new-students/set-up-your-it-before-you-start>

Printing

You can print via Web Print using a web browser, for which you don't need to install any software. With Web Print you can only print in A4 with black ink, and it prints on both sides of the page. Print Deploy (printing software) gives you more flexibility in your printing settings and you will be able to print directly from your Word documents etc.

You pay for printing using credits on either your Common Balance or Local Balance. Many Colleges and Departments use the University-wide Common Balance. Girton uses both. You can top up your Common Balance print credit online using a debit or credit card.

There are printers in the College library and by the Old Kitchens entrance in College. In Swirles, the printers are located next to the laundry area, down the corridor from Porters' Lodge.

More about printing: <https://help.uis.cam.ac.uk/service/printing>

Printing portal: managedprint.uis.cam.ac.uk/ (you must be connected to the University Data Network, or on the VPN)

CamSIS

CamSIS is the system for managing student information, records, and transactions. This is where you maintain your contact information, request transcripts, view academic results and evaluations, and fill in self-evaluation forms.

More information: www.camsis.cam.ac.uk/

University ID cards ('Camcard')

On arrival and on presentation of photo ID, you will be issued with a University card. The bulk of cards for those living in Swirles Court, for those living out of College accommodation, and part-time students will be available at the Swirles Court Porters' Lodge after 22 September. Those living in the Grange should collect their cards at the College Porters' Lodge.

The card gives you access to College gates, doors, and your room at Swirles Court; enables you to pay for food in the Dining Hall and Social Hub at the internal (lower) rate via UPay in College; and allows you to borrow books from the College Library.

Access to your Department, Faculty, and University Library can be added by the personnel at those places.

If you lose your card, inform the IT Office (ithelp@girton.cam.ac.uk) immediately. They will order you a replacement, which you will be charged for £12.50.

Unique student number (USN)

Your USN is the unique student number that is allocated to you when you are admitted as a student at the University. It is a nine-digit number which can be found on copies of academic transcripts, verification documents or correspondence from the University prior to admission (i.e. conditional offer, student registration exercise etc).

Current students can find their USN in the 'Personal' section on CamSIS.

You will need to provide your USN e.g. when graduating, so it is good to know what it is and where you can find it.

10. Food and drink in College

Hall (main cafeteria)

Two meals a day are available, served buffet-style, with a wide choice of hot and cold food, including daily vegetarian and vegan dishes, and with provision made for special diets. Brunch is served on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Fish and chips are usually served for Friday lunch and Sunday roast is served for dinner on Sundays.

Social Hub (Schlub)

The Social Hub is the College café and serves a range of hot and cold food and drinks in an open and friendly space that can be used both for socialising and informal study. By night, the counter opens up as a Bar.

Deep Schlub (College bar)

In the cellar beneath the Social Hub is a more traditional student bar. It also includes a range of bar games such as pool or darts.

Tip: Check the opening hours, as Deep Schlub doesn't open every night. Sometimes there are events with live music or karaoke!

Menus, opening times, and paying

Weekly menus and opening times are sent by email in an internal newsletter (sent out every Friday) or by separate email from the Catering Office. Allergens are advised on the daily menus. If you are in any doubt, please speak to Catering: catering@girton.cam.ac.uk.

Payment for all food is by University card (internal rates; a meal from Hall will usually cost about £5). Non-Girton members can pay by a credit/debit card but will be charged at the external rate.

Tip: If you bring guests, you can pay for their food with your University card, and their food will be charged at the cheaper, internal rate.

Formal Halls

Girton's Formal Hall dinners (formal, three-course waiter-service dinners) take place on Thursday evenings in term. The dress code is usually 'smart' (no jeans or running shoes) and gowns are worn (see the section on Gowns for more information). More information about Formal Halls will be sent out at the beginning of the year, and the Formal Hall dates for the term will be sent out at the beginning of each term.

Internal price is £16 and guest price is around £24.

Postgraduates are invited to attend pre-dinner drinks in the Fellows' Room from 6.45 pm. This is where University cards will be scanned for checking in.

During the Formal, Fellows (senior academic members of College) sit at High Table, which is situated at one end of the Dining Hall on a raised platform. Students can sit freely at other tables, unless the formal has a seating chart (this usually happens only on special occasions). The Mistress enters the Hall first at 7.15 pm, followed by the Fellows, and then postgraduate students. When everyone is in, the gong will sound, everyone will rise from their seats, and the Mistress will say a short Grace in Latin. Service of the dinner will then commence. After dinner the gong will sound and everyone will stand for the Mistress to say Grace again. The Mistress then leaves the Hall first, followed by the Fellows. After dinner, postgraduates may leave with the Mistress and Fellows to go back to the Fellows' Room, where port and coffee are served.

You should remain seated during the dinner and not wander around the Hall. Drinking games are strictly forbidden. While the Fellows are in the Hall there should be no toasting or singing. Photography is also not allowed during dinner. These activities are permitted after the Fellows have left the Hall as long as no inconvenience is caused to the staff.

All tickets to Formal Halls are booked online via the UPay booking system (a guide for UPay will be sent to you by Catering after arrival). Formal Hall tickets open for booking at 8 am one week before the Formal. Booking will close at 12 noon two days before the Formal, after which no further bookings can be made. Normally up to two guest tickets can be booked via UPay (at external prices), unless otherwise stated.

Tip: Tickets to formals sell out FAST, usually within the first minute or two after the booking opens. If you wish to attend a formal, you should set an alarm and be ready to book tickets immediately at 8 am.

Drinks are usually not included in formals, but bottles of wine can be brought into formals by attendees. No more than 1/2 bottle of wine per person is permitted; no spirits or cans of beer are allowed. Bottles of wine can be purchased in the Social Hub before each Formal. Students can also bring their own wine but must pay a corkage fee in Schlub and obtain a stamped sticker on the bottle as proof of payment. This must be shown to the staff when entering the Dining Hall.

An information session and question period about formals hosted by the MCR committee will be held during Freshers' Week where we will discuss everything you need to know about things like dress code, which cutlery to use when, corkage, what side of your plate your bread and glasses are on, and overall formal etiquette. Don't stress it if you're unfamiliar with this type of formal setting! Most people aren't and it is easy to remember everything after you've done it once.

UPay

You can see all your spending on College food and book Formal Halls on UPay (downloading the app is easiest): www.upay.co.uk/

11. Girton library ('the Glib')

The College library is open to all members of the College. The central iDiscover catalogue of the University does not always show items in the Girton Library collections. Girton Library has its own catalogue for items available, which you can find here:

girton.cirqahosting.com/HeritageScripts/Hapi.dll/Search1. PIN codes linked to your University account, enabling you to reserve items or renew loans, are available on request at the Library desk or by email (library@girton.cam.ac.uk).

Updates and opening hours are displayed in the Library News section:

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/library-archive (scroll down on the website). Updates and opening times are also posted on the Library's Instagram account (@girtoncollegelibrary) and on the bulletin board just outside the Library door. When opening hours change or are in some way non-standard, you will normally receive an email letting you know.

College study rooms

There are several study rooms available for booking in College, most of which are generally open 24/7:

D33 (Hyphen corridor) is a group study room for two to four people. It features an interactive whiteboard.

D34 (Hyphen corridor) is a group study room for up to six people. It also contains a small collection of general books.

D35 (Hyphen corridor) is a group study room for up to four people. It features an interactive whiteboard.

Middle & Top Chapel Wing study rooms are both quiet study rooms.

Postgraduate-only study room F.40 (anyone wishing to use the F.40 postgraduate study room MUST book – the key to the room can be collected from the Porters).

All the study rooms must be booked. You can book study rooms here:

libguides.cam.ac.uk/GirtonStudyRoomBookings

Department and Faculty libraries

Most Department/Faculty libraries usually admit members of the University studying other subjects, and some also let them borrow. Each library has its own rules and different opening hours.

More information: www.libraries.cam.ac.uk/libraries-directory/libraries-a-z.

The University Library (UL)

All members of the University can use the UL and most can borrow its books. All new undergraduate and postgraduate students are registered with the UL, so you don't need to apply to join.

Upon arrival, you will need to leave bags and coats in the Locker Room. You are only allowed to take essentials into the Library, and you will need to scan your University card both to enter and to leave. For more practical information: www.lib.cam.ac.uk/using-library/person-services/practical-information-your-visit.

The UL website: www.lib.cam.ac.uk/

Cambridge University Libraries offer free orientation tours and research skills training (e.g. on managing references, literature searching, note-making, publishing, and copyright). You can see the schedule and book your place here: www.training.cam.ac.uk/cul/search. Your faculty might also provide you with this orientation on your first day if you are in a subject that requires heavy library usage like most of the Humanities.

12. College facilities (sport and music)

The College has full-size football, rugby, and cricket pitches. Hard courts for basketball, netball, and tennis are also available. During the summer the College also has grass tennis courts. Inside, there is a squash court, an ergo room, a multi-gym equipped with free weights and a range of other equipment. Girton is the only College to have its own heated indoor swimming pool!

The sports facilities, including the swimming pool, pitches, gyms, tennis, netball and squash courts, are for use by Girton College members, employees, postgraduate partner card holders, and residential guests only.

Gym

The Gym can be accessed with your University card.

- The **Multi-Gym** is open to Girton College members only. *No membership required.*
- The **Weights Gym** is open to Girton College members. *Annual Membership required.* Membership is for one academic year, from 1 September to 31 August. You can apply for membership at any time during the year:
 - 1) Complete the online application form and medical questionnaire: girtoncollege.wufoo.com/forms/weights-gym-application-form/.
 - 2) Complete the online Gym Safety Induction on Moodle. You will need to make sure all three sections ('Online application completed', 'Gym rules read' and 'Video induction completed') are marked as "Done" on Moodle: www.vle.cam.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=253310.

- 3) After completing this, you will be eligible to book gym sessions via the Porters' Lodge at the main site. A door card will be issued for the booked slot; this card will need to be returned after your session.

- The **Ergo Gym** is open to the Girton College Boat Club members only.

NOTE: The Weights Gym is out of action between 5 and 27 October 2026 because equipment is being replaced.

Pool

The pool is 1.35 meters deep and that there is no lifeguard on duty at any time, which is why the College allows no lone swimming – so make sure you bring a friend, partner, or a swimming buddy with you. You can access the pool with your University ID card. Opening times are found on College's Facilities website.

Tip: There will be a separate informal MCR group chat on WhatsApp where people can ask for others to join them for swimming.

More information on sports facilities: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/sports-facilities

Music rooms

There are two music rooms (with pianos) available to all members of the College. They are both on main site and they don't require booking – just pick up the keys from the Porters' Lodge.

A40: Because of its proximity to College offices and student rooms, it may be used only at the practice times listed below.

D36: Normally, there are no time restrictions; however, this room may not be used while the Chapel is being used for services and rehearsals (which take place during term at the following times: Tuesday 20.00–22.00; Wednesday 17.45–19.00; Friday 17.45–19.00; Sunday 16.00–19.00).

Practice hours: Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 10.00 am; 12.30 pm to 2.30 pm; 6.00 pm to 9.30 pm. Weekends 9.00 am to 10.30 pm.

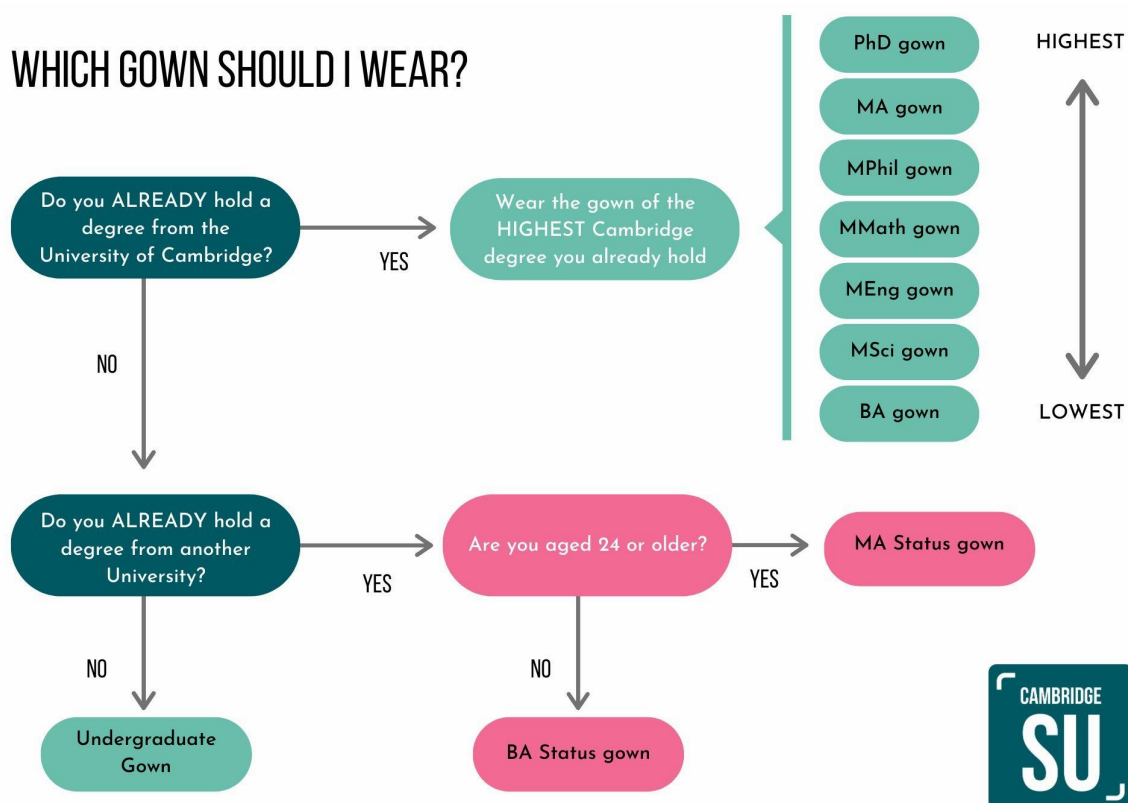
There is also a piano in the Swirles MCR, which may be used between 5–6 pm Monday to Friday.

More information: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/college-members/student-information/accommodation-handbook (Appendix J in Section 17)

Music at Girton: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/life-girton/music

13. Gowns

You will need a gown throughout your studies both to wear at Formals and for graduation. The type of gown you need will depend upon your age and your previous studies. The Students' Union has made the following chart to determine what kind of gown you need to buy:



More information: www.cambridgesu.co.uk/aboutus/services/gowns/gownguide/

Gowns can be bought from a variety of places, including the Students' Union, Churchill Gowns, Ryder & Amies, and Ede & Ravenscroft. Churchill Gowns will be selling gowns onsite at Swirles Court (in the MCR) on Monday, 28 September, 10:00-13:00. Prices and fabric type will differ by seller.

14. Finance

Students receive a College Bill at the start of each term and at the start of the long vacation (summer vacation). The College Bill includes the University Composition fee (UCF) and College accommodation charges (Residence charges). Contents insurance is included for students in College residence at no extra fee. At the start of each term (with the exception of the final term of their course) each student's card comes with a £500.00 credit – this is what you use to pay for food in College. At the end of each term the amount that has been spent is added to the following term's College Bill for payment.

You are responsible for paying your tuition fees and living costs on time and will sign a Declaration form to that effect when you are made your College offer. Late payment fees will be

charged for overdue payments. If you can't pay on time, it is important to contact your Postgraduate Tutor and/or Financial Welfare Officer before the due date. Please contact the same if you would like to make an alternate installment plan for the payment of your UCF.

If you require a letter to open a UK bank account, email postgraduate.office@girton.cam.ac.uk with the request, letting them know which bank you've chosen. Try to limit it to one bank and allow a 48-hour turnaround (Monday to Friday). They will prepare the letter and send you a pdf version. Bank letters are only available after you have arrived in Cambridge.

More information: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/life-girton/college-fees-and-charges/postgraduates

How and when to pay your College bill: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/index%20php/life-girton/college-fees-and-charges/how-and-when-to-pay

Postgraduate College charges 2026-2027: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2026-07/PG%20charges%202026.pdf

Information for international students about how to open a bank account: www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/moving-cambridge/opening-bank-account

University guide to costs: www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/finance

Additional University funding opportunities: www.student-funding.cam.ac.uk/

College funds

The College offers financial support for students for a variety of activities. For detailed information, see: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/postgraduates/financial-support.

The Academic Development Fund: e.g. for attendance and presentation at key subject conferences, travel to gather data or to study source material essential for research, participation in research and course-related workshops, student-led seminars and workshops in Cambridge that bring together experts in the research field, and public engagement activities that widen research horizons and impact.

Pillman Completion Grant: intended for students writing up their PhDs.

Languages Programmes Fund: for partial reimbursement of the fees for one University language programme during your course.

Enrichment grants: e.g. for clubs & societies, sports club or team memberships, drama, dance, or music groups, kit or equipment for the above clubs or societies, and volunteering.

College travel, music, and sports awards

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/index%20php/postgraduates/financial-support/sports-travel-and-music-awards

College academic scholarships and prizes

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/index%20php/postgraduates/financial-support/academic-scholarships-and-prizes

University funds

www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/fees-and-funding/financial-assistance

Unexpected financial difficulties

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/index%20php/postgraduates/financial-support/unexpected-financial-problems

Students with medical needs

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/index%20php/postgraduates/financial-support/students-additional-needs

15. Welfare

GP Surgery (the doctor's)

All students are required to register with a local GP (doctor) when they start their studies. The majority of Girton students register with the Huntingdon Road Surgery (www.huntingdonroadsurgery.nhs.uk/). The Nurses at Girton will send you information on how to do this in the coming weeks.

College wellbeing

The Head of Welfare & Wellbeing at Girton is a trained mental health practitioner and therapist. At times student might be able to access in-house mental health advice.

The College has three Nurses who can help with a wide variety of health and welfare needs, ranging from help and advice with minor illnesses and injuries to support for emotional issues. They are available each week day during term and no appointment is necessary. To check their availability, see: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/health-welfare-centre.

Tip: Our Nurses are extremely kind and willing to help. We really advise you to go talk to them whenever you have any minor medical concern – you will be very well treated.

The College wellbeing team can do the following:

- Offer timely access to one-to-one support for students seeking support for their wellbeing, or where staff have raised appropriate concerns about the student.
- Carry out a professional assessment of the student's needs, including a basic assessment of their functioning and presenting distress or risk in the session.
- Sign-post the student to additional support at the University or elsewhere.
- Engage with the student's Director of Studies, Tutor and others as needed to support the student.

More information: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/health-welfare-centre

Information for incoming postgraduates (incl. the 'New student checklist' at the bottom of the page): www.girton.cam.ac.uk/postgraduates/incoming-postgraduates/health-and-wellbeing-centre

Head of Welfare & Wellbeing: headofwelfare@girton.cam.ac.uk

Nurses: nurses@girton.cam.ac.uk

What to do in an emergency

If you require emergency healthcare, call 999 or go directly to the Accident & Emergency (A&E) department nearest to you. In Cambridge, this is Addenbrooke's Hospital, Hills Road, Cambridge CB2 0QQ. The Porter's Lodge can help you by booking a taxi to the hospital if needed. For additional guidance or advice, you may want to call NHS 111.

If you need urgent support, contact your Tutor and/or the Porters, who can reach out to the duty Tutor if necessary.

More information: www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services/when-to-use-111/

University wellbeing

The Postgraduate Wellbeing Service

The Postgraduate Wellbeing Service (PWS) supports postgraduate taught (PGT) and research (PGR) students with challenges that may be affecting your life, studies, or research. Their aim is to provide early intervention and guidance to support students' mental health and wellbeing.

www.studentsupport.cam.ac.uk/postgraduate-wellbeing-service

Counselling

The University Counselling Service offers rapid-access (less than a 10-day wait) to a one-to-one appointment with a trained and accredited counsellor. Students will not normally be seen more often than fortnightly. This support can continue indefinitely if this is appropriate and the student is finding it helpful and if the student's needs can be accommodated within the service.

Student Services Centre
Bene't Street
Cambridge
CB2 3PT
+44 1223 332865
reception@counselling.cam.ac.uk
www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/

Mental Health Advice

This service provides one-to-one support for students struggling with more severe or complex mental health difficulties which are having a significant impact on their life at Cambridge, or students who present with significant risk issues. Students can be seen for up to 8 sessions, depending on need.

mhas@studentsupport.cam.ac.uk
www.studentsupport.cam.ac.uk/mental-health-advice-service

Therapeutic groups and workshops

The University provides therapeutic weekly groups to address specific topics, such as bereavement, emotional dysregulation, and interpersonal difficulties, strengthening a sense of belonging for UG (undergraduate) and PG (postgraduate) students and supporting survivors of sexual violence. The University also offers a wide range of workshops, addressing practical issues such as exam stress, sleep, and imposter syndrome.

www.studentsupport.cam.ac.uk/groups-and-workshops

Specialist mentoring / disability advice

Where a mental health difficulty is sufficiently enduring and impactful to be categorised as a disability, the Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre (ADRC) can provide access to a disability adviser and the production of a Student Support Document setting out any reasonable adjustments, support, and assistance which the student may require to effectively access their studies and address any disadvantage faced. In addition, where justified by the evidence, the ADRC may be able to provide a specialist mentor who can support the student to develop strategies to assist them to remain engaged in their studies.

www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/
disability@admin.cam.ac.uk

Harassment and violence support

Students can self-refer to this service for one-to-one advice and guidance about reporting options, and/or for emotional support in the aftermath of (recent or historic) sexual, religious, or racial discrimination, harassment or violence and intimate partner abuse.

www.studentsupport.cam.ac.uk/harassment-and-violence-support
HVSS@studentsupport.cam.ac.uk

Financial support towards specialist treatment

The Medical Support Fund (Crane's) is a university trust fund, managed by an independent board of 'distributors', which can provide financial awards to individuals in need of specific medical treatments. The criteria for this Fund are currently under review.

Contact the College Financial Welfare Officer for more information: fwo@girton.cam.ac.uk.

Porters' Lodges

There is a Porters' Lodge in the main College building and one at Swirles Court, both of which are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Porters are responsible for safety and security and are all trained first aiders. They are a great source of help and support whether you have locked yourself out of your room or need someone to chat to at 2 am. It's a good idea to add their phone number to your phone contacts.

porters@girton.cam.ac.uk

T (Girton): +44 (0)1223 338999

T (Swirles): +44 (0)1223 760021

College Chaplain

The College Chaplain is regularly available in College and can provide support to all students, irrespective of their faith. The College Chapel and the non-faith Prayer Room are always available for private prayer, worship or meditation.

MCR Welfare Officer

The MCR has an elected Welfare Officer who can provide advice and support and help students to access appropriate resources. They also organise welfare-related events throughout the academic year.

Students' Unions' Advice Service

The Students' Unions' Advice Service is provided by the Cambridge Students' Union and offers free, confidential and independent support to all students. They can help you understand University and College procedures and regulations and offer support with mental health issues and welfare concerns.

www.cambridgesu.co.uk/advice/student-advice-service/

Support for students with disabilities

The College has six wheelchair accessible en-suite rooms and a flat specifically designed for wheelchair users, with an adapted kitchen and bathroom and an annex for an assistant if needed.

All student rooms can be adapted for students with hearing impairments and there are hearing loops installed in a number of public rooms.

Further information: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/accessibility

See also The Accessibility & Disability Resource Centre: www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/

Academic support

The majority of academic support for postgraduate research students is provided via the department. For some Master's students, your Director of Studies (DoS) is responsible for your academic welfare in general, from organising supervisions to advising on what courses to take and helping to address any work-related issues you might have.

The College offers an additional academic environment where students get the opportunity to engage in academic-related activities to enhance their skills and promote interdisciplinary work, for example through the Girton Skills programme: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/life-girton/academic-life/thrive.

16. Graduating

At Cambridge you can choose your graduation date after your course has ended. The College presents graduands at certain graduation ceremonies; not all Colleges present graduands at all ceremonies. The graduation ceremony dates for Girton students can be found here: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/college-members/student-information/degree-ceremonies.

You will need to apply to graduate using the form on the College's Degree Ceremonies website. The form for each degree ceremony will open closer to the date. This form also offers you the option to request up to two guest tickets for the ceremony at Senate House and up to three tickets for the celebratory Buffet Lunch at the College held before the graduation. If you would like additional tickets, you can request them by emailing congregation@girton.cam.ac.uk (you will get an email about receiving requested additional tickets within a fortnight of the ceremony).

There is a section on CamSIS for applying for graduation; you should NOT apply to graduate via CamSIS.

There is a strict dress code for graduating. The detailed instructions can be found here: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/Dress_Instructions_updated%20Feb%202024.pdf.

Instructions for academical dress can be found here: www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/graduation/degree-ceremonies/academical-dress. In

addition to your gown, you will need to get a hood and potentially some other items required by the dress code, which you can purchase or rent either at Ede & Ravenscroft or Ryder & Amies (note that the two companies have different delivery times so make sure to buy or hire in advance accordingly).

17. Cambridge Students' Union (the SU)

The Cambridge SU is the representative body for all students at the University of Cambridge and its constituent Colleges. Its job is to represent, campaign for, and support students at the University. When you start your degree, you are automatically made a member of Cambridge SU.

Note: The SU is to the University what the MCR is to a College.

The SU organises the annual Freshers' Fair, which features hundreds of societies, commercial and University stalls (including freebies). Whatever you enjoy doing and wherever you are from, you will pretty much find a University society that you can join (list of societies: www.cambridgesu.co.uk/opportunities/societies/). The College also has student societies (www.girton.cam.ac.uk/student-societies/), which you can get to know at the College Societies' Fair on Monday, 5 October, 14:30-17:00.

The SU Freshers' Fair is free to attend. The 2026 Freshers' Fair will be on Parker's Piece, 6th and 7th October, 10:00-16:00. Access hours will be 15:00-16:00 on day 1 and 10:00-11:00 on day 2. During access hour there will be no music, stallholders will stay behind their stalls, and entry will be limited.

Tip: Check out the Freshers' Fair and any interesting stalls there for some possible free merch and useful items!

The SU also offers all kinds of student support, including exam support, support for trans students, a student advice service, and a sexual health scheme.

More information: www.cambridgesu.co.uk/

Instagram: @yourcambridgesu

X: @yourcambridgesu

Facebook: www.facebook.com/yourcambridgesu/

18. University Sports Centre

The University Sports Centre has a Gym, Strength & Conditioning room, Sports Hall, Squash and Fives courts, Studios and a Team Training Room used by international performance athletes. They offer a wide range of sports clubs and fitness classes for both members and casual users. They are the hub for sports at Cambridge, including the Give it a Go programme (sports sessions that are free, open to all, and particularly encourage beginners to join), University sports clubs, and competing for Cambridge.

Tip: Trying out new sports is a great way to spend your first weeks in Cambridge. This is a place where students are encouraged to try out new things and gives us space to be beginners.

The Sports Centre is located on the West Cambridge site, near Eddington (where Swirles Court is).

The Sports Centre also organises the annual Sports Fair, where you can find over 70 sports clubs and societies, information on the Give it a Go programme, guidance on how to get into College Sport, sports demonstrations throughout the day, various activities to get involved in and try, and great deals on Cambridge Sport and UNiVersal memberships. The 2026 fair will be on Monday, 5th October, 12:00-17:00. Accessibility hour will be 12:00-13:00; this is when capacity will be lowered and music will be switched off.

More information: www.sport.cam.ac.uk/

Sports Centre app: www.sport.cam.ac.uk/membership/membership-admin/mobile-app

University sports clubs: www.sport.cam.ac.uk/student-sport/university-sports-clubs

Give it a Go: www.sport.cam.ac.uk/student-sport/give-it-a-go

19. Transport

Bus and train

The U bus (operated by a company called Whippet) is the main University bus service that travels throughout Cambridge from Girton or Eddington (which is where Swirles is) to West Cambridge, Sidgwick site, city centre, the Railway station, Judge Business School, and Addenbrooke's Hospital. You can buy discounted fares from the driver by showing your University card (this is currently £1.50 for a single ticket and £4.20 for a day ticket). It's very useful to download the Whippet bus app as it gives real-time route information: www.whippetbus.co.uk/app/.

Tip: The U bus (like most buses in Cambridge, unfortunately) can often be late or not show up at all so real-time information is invaluable.

There are two U buses. U1 goes from Girton to Addenbrooke's. U2 goes from Eddington to Addenbrooke's. The last U2 of the night will usually drive all the way back to Girton.

You can also use Stagecoach buses to get around Cambridge and neighbouring areas. If you show your University card when buying a ticket from the driver, you will get a discounted fare, but this is still more expensive than the U bus. Stagecoach fares depend on the distance you travel. The Madingley Road Park & Ride (operated by Stagecoach) is close to Swirles and can take you into town quickly.

If you are under 25, you can apply for a Tiger Bus Pass, which allows you to pay only £1 for a single fare both on Whippet and Stagecoach buses.

Tip: You need separate tickets for the U bus (and all other Whippet buses) and for Stagecoach buses.

As you may have noticed above, buses in Cambridge are not organised centrally but are rather run by multiple bus companies. For each bus you take, you will likely need to buy an entirely new ticket, even if it is run by the same company as a previous bus you take. When you enter the bus, you will need to tell the driver which stop you're getting off at (except for the U bus, where the rate is the same regardless of where you get off) and show your University card or Tiger Pass for a discount. The driver will charge you for the specific distance you travel.

If you need to travel with both Stagecoach and Whippet buses in the same day, you may want to consider the Multibus ticket, which is £8 for a day and £33 for 7 days. See:

<https://transport.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/buses/bus-tickets/>.

Tip: Buses need to be hailed by sticking your arm out while looking at the bus, otherwise they will not stop for you.

Trainline is a good app to download for UK train info and booking. The app includes any delays, cancellations, and the platform each train is set to arrive at. They also have a 'split save' option where the app will automatically give you the cheapest rate, often by combining multiple train tickets together (usually without making you change trains).

Tip: You should consider applying for a student Railcard as you can save 1/3 off rail travel (the College can sign the application for you). It pays for itself in just a few train journeys!

More information on the U bus: www.whippetbus.co.uk/universal/

More information on Stagecoach buses: www.stagecoachbus.com/

More information on Madingley Road Park & Ride:

cambridgeparkandride.info/madingleyroad.shtml

Tiger Bus Pass: www.stagecoachbus.com/promos-and-offers/east/free-tiger-bus-pass-for-under-25s

Stagecoach bus app: www.stagecoachbus.com/promos-and-offers/national/stagecoachbusapp

More information on Trainline: www.thetrainline.com/

The Trainline app: www.thetrainline.com/information/apps

Student Railcard: www.16-25railcard.co.uk/

Bikes

All students must register their bikes to park them on College property. The registration form can be found here: www.girton.cam.ac.uk/college-members/requests-and-forms.

The College has a "no e-scooter" rule on site. Swirles Court has very good secure bike storage for each accommodation block.

You will need good bike lights, both front and back – you may be stopped by the police if you do not have them. You also run an increased risk of having an accident if you are unseen by drivers, especially in the winter when it gets very dark earlier in the day. Helmets are also highly recommended but not a legal requirement.

There are a number of bike shops in town, along Mill Road, or on Jesus Lane. Mike the Bikeman can be found selling second-hand bikes in Market Square. Also, check out Kingsway cycles and University cycles, they have reasonably priced second-hand bikes. A decent bike should cost £150-250 with lights, mudguards, etc. A good second-hand bike should cost around £90-120.

Facebook or WhatsApp groups, Amazon and Gumtree (<http://www.gumtree.com>) are also good options for buying bikes online. Remember to always be careful when buying bikes online.

Tip: Bike theft in Cambridge is high so make sure you also have a good lock (preferably a D-lock) and make sure to lock your bike by its frame rather than the wheel whenever possible. An additional wire lock that can be attached to your D- (or other) lock is ideal as this allows you to avoid locking your bike only by the wheel and often lets you keep both tires attached to the lock as tire theft is also common. Never leave your bike unlocked, even on College grounds.

Porters' Lodges have bike pumps and small tools for bike maintenance.

Cambridge is a very cycle friendly city, and you'll quickly notice that cycling is a primary mode of transportation here, but you should be careful with tourists and other vehicles. Cyclists have to obey all traffic laws, including stopping at zebra crossing crosswalks when pedestrians are present, not turning left on red light, and driving on the left hand side of the road. Some streets in the historic city centre are one way or don't allow cycles, please be aware of traffic signs.

Information about biking (incl. relevant traffic signs):

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/WelcomeToCyclingA4_0.pdf

Eddington Dr Bike offers free 20-minute check-ups and light bike maintenance for Eddington residents (you must book your slot): outspokencycles.co.uk/eddington-drbike/

20. Groceries and cafés

Grocery stores

The closest grocery store is the Eddington Sainsbury's, which is a couple minutes away from Swirles Court. There is also an organic food store called Green Nest in Eddington. There is a Co-op on Girton Road, approximately a 10-minute walk away from College.

You should sign up for a Nectar card for Sainsbury's, which will allow you to get discounts on many of their products. More about Nectar: www.nectar.com/welcome.

There is also an ALDI on Histon Road, which you can reach by bike (10 minutes), by walking (35 minutes), or by bus (Tiger 2 from Eddington; 13 minutes). The closest Lidl is on Newmarket Road and is only really accessible by bike (20 minutes) or by car (12 minutes). These two offer the cheapest groceries.

Tip: Eddington Sainsbury's closes early (at 4 pm) on Sundays.

Cafés

There are two cafés in Eddington: douce (which is also a hair salon) and Dulcedo Social (café and bakery). There is also a cocktail bar called Dutch in Eddington.

21. Essentials to bring to/buy in Cambridge

Suggested packing list

(Obviously choose what feels most important to you and leave what doesn't fit!)

- Smart attire
- Formal (black tie or cocktail) outfit
- Some comfort items, like your favourite blanket, or anything that will make you feel more at home
- Any wall decorations (note that in Swirles these can only go on a large bulletin board in your room)
- Your musical instrument (especially if you'd like to keep up with playing anything other than the piano, which you can access in College)
- Literary essentials, whether books needed for your research or your favourite pieces of fiction
- Essential spices and small-sized treats from home that may not be available in Cambridge
- Rain jacket (waxed is recommended but plastic jackets work perfectly fine as well)
- Sturdy umbrella
- Jacket suited to wet winters that sit around 5 degrees Celsius
- Your favourite makeup items and toiletries
- Your laptop/tablet
- Stationary
- Bedding (*Tip: Duvets etc. are quite large, so if you can't vacuum seal it and fit it in your luggage, you can always bring your sheets and covers and buy larger items here*)
- Any favourite dishware or cooking supplies
- Electricity converter from your home plug to UK plugs

Useful shops for essentials as you get set up

Argos is a shop with home, kitchen, and decor items located right next to the Eddington Sainsbury's (right by Swirles Court). They are a click-and-collect shop where you order online and then collect your item within seven days. Often your item will be available for pick-up the very day you order. They have pretty good prices and a wide variety of most things, especially cooking supplies.

Sainsbury's, the grocery store located just outside Swirles, also has a section with home essentials. These will be the same brands available at Argos but are sometimes slightly more expensive.

The Porters' Lodge offers a basic bedding set for purchase including a duvet and pillows. Many people prefer to purchase these items elsewhere as you can get better quality for cheaper, but the convenience of having these available at Plodge on your first day can be a huge help.

Charity shops in town are a great place to get second-hand items like decorations, dishes, and formal (among other) outfits. They normally have lots of things like bowls and plates but their selection of cookware can be quite limited – generally the Oxfam or British Red Cross near the Grafton Centre are your best bet for this type of thing. **The British Red Cross** even has a store just for home supplies. Charity shops are also really great places to get affordable formal outfits! Cambridge has so many formal events and there is always a great formal selection at almost any charity shop. Most charity shops in Cambridge are located on the streets around the Grafton Centre, especially Burleigh Street.

TK Maxx, H&M Home, and most large grocery stores also have various home essentials. The Tesco in Bar Hill has a sizeable home section with good prices and is just one bus stop away from Girton by bus 5.

University Cycles comes highly recommended for second-hand bikes, cycle repairs, and nearly all cycle-related supplies. They have some of the best prices in town.

Decathlon is another great stop for cycle-related purchases with a wide variety of items like bike lights, reflective gear, repair tools, helmets, etc.

22. A Cambridge glossary

There are a lot of Cambridge-specific words and terms that you will hear throughout your studies. A very useful glossary of Cambridge-related terms can be found here: glossary.lib.cam.ac.uk/glossary-index.

Some terms:

BOP: Big organised party – a party, usually featuring drinks and loud music, maybe also a theme.

Bumps: The most important rowing races between College teams that take place in Lent and Easter. The aim of each boat is to bump the one in front, hence the name 'Bumps'.

Bridgemas: Cambridge Christmas, celebrated in early December, usually with a Formal Hall, so that undergraduates can get to experience it while living in Cambridge.

Camcard: The University ID card.

Director of Studies (DoS): a Fellow in College, responsible for the oversight of the student's studies and the appointment of supervisors. DoSes mostly organise undergraduate teaching and most postgraduates will not interact with them, except if they want to start supervising undergraduates.

Fellow: A senior member of a College, elected to a particular position of authority and responsibility in relation to the academic work and government of the College.

Glib: Girton library.

Gyp: Formerly a male College servant, now refers to small kitchens in most undergraduate accommodation.

Jack's: Jack's Gelato, the most iconic and best gelato shop in Cambridge. The main shop is on Bene't Street and another one is located on All Saints Passage.

JCR: Junior Combination Room, the room and body of members of undergraduate students at a college.

Matriculation: Registration as a member of a College and the University. For many centuries, matriculation was conditional on the taking of oaths, or making of declarations of allegiance to the crown and of assent to the established religion. Until 1962, matriculation was performed publicly, but now it only involves the signing of a form.

Mathmo: Nickname for a maths student.

May Week: A week in June (yes, June) after undergraduate exams finish when May Balls (expensive black-tie balls in Cambridge Colleges) take place.

Oxbridge: Oxford and Cambridge.

Pidge: Pigeonhole, your mailbox in College (or in Swirles Court).

Plodge: Porters' Lodge.

Punting: You will see a bunch of boats on the River Cam, with people pushing them forward with a big stick. The boats are called 'punts' and the activity is called 'punting'. It is a traditional Oxbridge activity. You will get to experience it as a part of Freshers' Week.

Schlub: The Social Hub, the Girton College café.

Sidge: Sidgwick Site, where most humanities faculties are.

SU: The Students' Union.

Supervision: A type of undergraduate teaching specific to Oxford and Cambridge, delivered by hired academic staff and postgraduate students.

Supervisor: For undergraduates, a person appointed by the College to teach students. For postgraduates, the Faculty member in charge of supervising your academic work.

Swap: Formal Hall swap, where a group of another College's postgraduates come to your College for a Formal and vice versa. Swaps are organised by the MCR Committee.

Tripes: This is a term related to undergraduate courses. All Cambridge undergraduate courses are assessed through examinations in broad subject areas called Triposes. Each Tripos is divided into one or more Parts which need to be completed for the B.A. degree.

UL: University Library.

Varsity: Student newspaper at Cambridge.

Week five: The ‘middle’ week of the term, when energy levels are low and students tend to get the ‘week five blues’. This is a term mostly relevant to undergraduates.

Wobble Week: A Girton wellbeing initiative aimed at combatting the week five blues. For approximately a week in Michaelmas and Easter a variety of welfare activities are organised by the College. Past activities have included 20-minute massages, cooking and baking classes, pilates, sip & paint, a petting zoo, and tasty treats.

23. Useful links

College induction events, to-do list, practicalities of arrival, College map:

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/postgraduates/incoming-postgraduates/your-induction

Explainer of the University and College (incl. dining and Formal Halls, the MCR):

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/postgraduates/incoming-postgraduates/about-university-and-college

Accommodation (incl. what is included in the rooms, maintenance requests, cleaning):

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/accommodation

Accommodation handbook:

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/college-members/student-information/accommodation-handbook

Information for international postgraduates:

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/postgraduates/incoming-postgraduates/international-postgraduates

Postgraduate fees (incl. what your bill consists of):

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/life-girton/college-fees-and-charges/postgraduates

Financial support for postgraduates:

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/postgraduates/financial-support

College library (incl. opening hours):

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/library-archive

Key contacts and site addresses:

www.girton.cam.ac.uk/contact