

Dress code guide

Balls

Let's start off with the ultimate in opulence and extravagance - what to wear to a ball. There will be a college ball for Oriel this year and you might find you get invited to others throughout the year too. Let's face it, you can't get dressier than a ball! This is the chance to break out the full skirts and corsets if that's your thing, you absolutely cannot over do it here! Cultural dress and white tie is usually actively encouraged, although black tie is usually acceptable. There's often a theme of some sort, although no hard and fast rule that you have to stick to that. But if there is, keep it elegant, it's not a cosplay event.

Grand formal.

We try to host these once a term, and when we do, wow we pull out all the stops! Again, elegance is key. If you're frocking up, think full length evening gown, this isn't the time for mini skirts. If you're going for a suit, white tie is often encouraged, but black tie or cultural dress fully welcomed. You can add some sparkle to a formal suit with a silk scarf or pocket square.

Formal hall

We hold formal hall 6 nights a week, and dress codes for these do vary a little. For folks wearing a dress or skirt, you can't go wrong with a cocktail dress, but full length or a-line is also fine. In Trinity Term you'll see some beautiful, elegant summer dresses on display. Some folks go for shorter skirts in summer, but do remember you'll need to shimmy over benches to squeeze into your seat, which isn't always the most elegant of clambers! For guest night dinners (Wednesdays, Fridays, & Sundays) suits should be black tie or dark suits (black, navy, or grey usually) with a tie. For Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays the dress code is more relaxed, but a suit or jacket with a tie still expected. Cultural dress is always welcomed. Jeans, trainers, t-shirts, and jumpers/sweaters are not acceptable at formal hall at all. Trousers must be smart and paired with an appropriate top.

On top of all of that, you must wear your academic robes (not hood or mortar board), unless advised otherwise. During Trinity Term if it gets particularly hot we may get an email to say jackets can be removed during dinner, but academic robes will always be worn. Guests, even if from other colleges, don't wear robes, but you as their host have to.

A note of warning: You will be turned away from formal hall by hall staff if you're not dressed for the occasion, and this includes your guests as well, which can be embarrassing (and expensive as you'll still be billed for the cost of your and your guests meals).

Fortunately there's many places where you can find formal wear, Oxford is full of the usual high street shops, but make sure you check out the Ballroom Emporium on The Plains for anything from vintage and second hand pieces, to elegant evening wear. There are also formalwear swaps both across uni and on social media to keep an eye on, and charity shops in Oxford can often produce some excellent hauls.

Informal hall, lunch, brunch & breakfast

There is no dress code for any of these sittings, so come as you are! Service is canteen-style (all formal halls are waiter service), so book in, come along, and grab a seat!

MCR Common Room

There is no dress code for the common room (although for bar nights after formals everyone will still be very dressy!), all are welcome, whether you're the sort of person who wears a suit daily, more casual, or quite eccentric in your personal sartorial style.