

Life in the Tutorial Office

August

The buzz of A-level results day actually happens a few days after we have received the results. All the final decisions have been made as to who has made their offer and so will be coming to the College in about 6 weeks' later so we are ready when the candidates get their results. They all will receive a letter in the post but by that time most will know already as they can track the decision on the UCAS website and then we get busy preparing a mailing which will go out to them at the end of August and includes student guides, final reading lists, and lots of other information to help them with the final preparations for their arrival in Selwyn. Meanwhile the middle of month sees the Graduate Secretary getting very busy as she begins to get the final confirmations through from the Student Registry (part of the University). Now that they have met academic and financial criteria, they will also have to get a visa to study here and all overseas students – i.e. from outside the EU – all have to be monitored in the Tutorial Office at the beginning of every term. The new freshers are “rolled over” from the Admissions side of CamSIS – student information system – and then their record must be checked, Tutors and Directors' of Studies added and that then enables the matriculation processes to be prepared in September.

September

Work really starts in earnest – updating the student database so we can produce lists for other members during September so the porters can prepare labels for pigeonholes, the Fellow for Rooms can allocate the new students to suitable rooms and we ensure that the name boards at the bottom of staircase are ready too. There is a lot of checking to do at this stage to ensure the records is correct. Meanwhile the Graduate Tutors' Secretary continues to be very busy with the final confirmations of the incoming graduates The Graduate Tutors' Secretary does a great job in reassuring the incoming students – many coming to the UK for the first time - that we are expecting them and what they can expect when they get here. She is a great source of information for them in those first confusing weeks before and after arrival. During September there is a later open day on a Saturday run by the Admissions Office.

October

Some freshers will come up early for the instrumental award trials or perhaps because they have a disability and need a few days to get to know the place before everyone else arrives. More packs of information are provided for the freshers to collect on arrival over the first weekend in October. Matriculation takes place for the new graduates just before the beginning of term and the undergraduates on the first Monday in October. They will be bombarded with information about their studies as well as where to find things over those first few days. They will meet their Tutor who is their personal adviser and is usually the same person throughout their undergraduate studies. The Tutor is a Fellow of the College and their subject will not be the same as that of the student. They will also meet their Director of Studies who is often a member of the Fellowship but not always. The role of the Director of Studies is to advise the student about their studies and to find supervisors for them as well as ensuring that they are entered for the correct examinations. The Chaplain also sees all the freshers in those first few days of term.

During those frantic first few days, all students have to complete their online registration in CamSIS and this helps to ensure that their contact details are correct for example, home addresses, emergency contact numbers. Another important process happens for the undergraduates in that we have to submit a return to the Student Loans Company confirming the attendance of all UK funded students and this then releases their student loan. The process is much easier now with the use of electronic systems but there is still an important element of checking to ensure all are present.

For all overseas students, the College is under an obligation to assist the University in the collection of data and monitoring them all at the beginning of each term within a strict timeframe. If a student is missing for any reason, the University is under an obligation to report this fact to the Home Office.

Just as we really flagging, after the graduate matriculation on that first Friday, there is a Graduate Entertainment in the evening and is great opportunity for all the graduates to make new acquaintances and to meet the Fellows of the College.

It can be bewildering and the Tutors, Directors of Studies, Chaplain, Porters, Catering and other staff as well as the JCR work hard to ensure that everyone is made welcome.

There are two Matriculation Dinners – one for the Undergraduates and one for the Graduates and these are organised by the Praelector's Secretary. Great care is taken over seating plans so people studying similar subjects are sitting together.

The deadline for undergraduate applications for the next year comes in the middle of October and the Admissions Office is then very busy preparing interview timetables and ensuring that if there are any candidates with special needs that suitable arrangements are in place for them when they come for interview.

November/December

Exam entries have to be completed by early November and these are checked and approved by Directors' of Studies to ensure they are correct. Undergraduates eligible for a Cambridge Bursary, will be making their application in the first half of the Michaelmas Term. These bursaries are generous and can amount to around £3,500 and, again, there is background checking to be done to ensure their eligibility and again this is done online which is quick and easy for the students. Student questionnaires have to be completed and then we are getting ready for the end of term – dates for going down, meetings with Tutors and Directors of Studies, etc. Meanwhile the Admissions Office is very busy getting ready for the interviews which take place at the end of November and early December. Much of this is now done online which has streamlined the process considerably. Everyone ends up helping in some way to make sure that the process happens smoothly at what can be a stressful time for the candidates. In the run up to Christmas, the Admissions Office is frantically busy with the decision process and as much as possible is finished before the College closes.

January

Early January sees more Admissions interviews for candidates placed in the inter-collegiate pool and the decision letters are posted in the first week in January. At the same time the CamSIS record must be updated and also UCAS informed of the decisions. These days, most of the applicants review the process of their application online from the UCAS website. During the Lent Term, things are a little quieter – as students will be settled into their studies. Many will have progress tests and the Tutorial Office assists with stationery and other arrangements for these. Also, the arrangements for those taking exams with special conditions – extra time, special chairs, etc. all have to be booked during the Lent Term. Sometimes this involves liaising with Disability Resource Centre but all requests have to be submitted to the University for permission. Invitations are sent out in early January to the Supervisors' Dinner which takes place in February. This is the College's way of thanking some of the many people from across the University who supervise our undergraduates through the year. The Admissions Office works on sending feedback to the schools who sent candidates for interview – this takes a considerable time to complete but it is much valued by the schools.

February

At the division of term, most students will be asked to check their exam entries and there are always a few changes to be made and again, we will be setting up the end of term processes – going down dates, meetings with Tutors and Directors of Studies, student questionnaires. Then there is the

Rooms Ballot which is run by the JCR in conjunction with the Fellow for Rooms. There is another Graduate Entertainment this month and although the days are short is a good opportunity to get together. The incoming offer holders for medics and vets have to submit a disclosure and barring application which is a condition of their offer and these are processed through the Tutorial Office. This is the time when offer holders with particular requirements, i.e. those with physical disabilities, are contacted by both the College and the Disability Resource Centre so that arrangements can be made to ensure that their transfer from school to university is as smooth as possible. In some cases this can require a huge amount of background work with adaptations or simply alerting departments and faculties to their needs.

March

Sees the final preparations for the MA Day when students who graduated three years ago come back to take their MA. The Graduate Tutors' Secretary assists the Graduate Tutors in the preparations from the Research Supervisors' Dinner which takes place at the end of April. In the Admissions Office the recruitment season begins again – the Admissions Tutors will be attending the Oxbridge Conferences which are held all over the country and other events and visits. Meanwhile the Schools Liaison Officer will be visiting schools particularly in our link areas which are Scotland and Yorkshire.

April

The Easter Term is upon us and there are University exams taking place for nearly the whole of Full Term and this is a particularly busy time for Tutorial Office as we are tasked with ensuring that candidates turn up for their exams... most do but there are always a few who oversleep or are struck down by some virulent bug or other! The arrangements for exams in College all begin at this time – communicating the arrangements to all those involved, Tutors, Fellows and most importantly, reassuring the candidates that all is in place for them.

May

Everyone is busy with exams but arrangements are already beginning to be made for the end of term, with dates for going down, arrangements beginning in earnest for graduation.

June

By mid-June, the exams may be over but there is much to be done with the processing of results. Many of the Fellows are involved in marking exam papers and attending examiners meetings both in Cambridge and as external examiners in other universities. When the results come through, the Senior Tutor and the Master write to everyone who gets a First and the results are communicated to the Directors of Studies. They are drawn together in a paper submitted to College Council in July along with the nominations for College Prizes. As May Week approaches, there are garden parties taking place at all times of the day, many organised by Tutors and Directors of Studies and the Tutorial Office staff frequently help in preparing for these.

At the end of June the Praelector's Secretary works tirelessly to make graduation a very memorable few days for our graduands – the dinner, photos, the ceremony at the Senate House, drinks and buffet after the event shared with their proud families. There is a very strict dress code for the Senate House and it is always fun trying to spot any graduand in the last few weeks who has dyed his or her hair a particularly lurid colour or something else which might attract the attentions of the Proctors who are liable to fine the Praelector for any violations.

July

The Results Council takes place early in July and one enjoyable job is the sending out of the lists and letters to prizewinners and the Tutorial Office help to prepare these for the Tutors. Most prizes are book tokens but those who win scholarships – for getting a First – will get a deduction on their College bill the following year. It is also at this Council meeting that those who have failed their

exams, are called to account and Council must decide if they are to continue with their studies here or perhaps go elsewhere. Early in the month we wait for the arrival of the Baxter Tables which gives the rank of college by results in the recent exams. Much holding of bated breathe

At the beginning of July there are two big open days run between the University and all the colleges and this is an opportunity for the potential applicants for the next round to see where they might be studying and to find more about how Cambridge works. Cambridge will seem to be full of potential applicants coming to look round the colleges and departments and these are two very busy days for everyone involved in admissions. Many others are involved in making those days successful and giving the visitors good memories, and first impressions, of what Selwyn is like and enabling them to make informed choices about whether it is the right place for them to apply to and study.

The Admissions Secretary is not idle after the flurry of the interviews in December and January – she will be spending much of the rest of the year assisting the Schools Liaison Officer (we share this post with Homerton College) to arrange school and individual visits both to Selwyn and visits to schools by the Admissions Tutors and other teaching staff. There is much patiently answering endless questions about courses and a whole host of other concerns.

July also sees the process of moving the files of the graduands into storage, updating records, informing the Student Loans Company of changes of circumstances – subject, going out of residence to study abroad, or for other reasons. There is also much liaising with the Student Registry about any students who for one reason or another have not performed as well as they might and such cases are decided by the Applications Committee of the University.

Throughout the year, the Praelector, with the assistance of the Tutorial Office is presenting people for degrees at the Senate House once they have completed their degrees. Much is done to make those ceremonies memorable days for them and for their families.