Welcome to Magdalene*

Cambridge University has over thirty colleges, each with its own distinctive style and character. Some are large and very grand, others more homely and intimate in style. Some very old, and others founded more recently.

Every undergraduate and postgraduate student must be a member of one of these colleges, as well as being attached to a University Department where lectures, laboratories and specialist libraries are available.

Choosing your college is an important decision, as this will be your home for the next three or four years. It is where you will live, eat and sleep, where you will make many of your friends, and where much of your personal studying will be done.

Magdalene is lucky to have one of the most beautiful riverside locations in Cambridge with formal and informal gardens and a wide range of architectural styles, offering a unique setting for study at the University.

The College is within a few minutes bicycle ride of most University facilities, and is a short walk from the shops, pubs and restaurants of the City centre. Its small size and friendly atmosphere make it one of the most welcoming Colleges in Cambridge and one where we hope you will soon feel at home.

“At Magdalene, we value the opportunities we have to get to know one another, irrespective of our subject and status.”  
Duncan Robinson, Master.

We hope that this prospectus will give you a flavour of what Magdalene has to offer, and what it’s like to be a member of the College.

* In many early documents Magdalene is clearly spelt as it is pronounced, “Maudleyn”. The transformation to the current spelling seems to have been completed in the late nineteenth century with the addition of the final ‘e’.
“Yes, this is the place for me.” It isn’t easy to explain this response, felt by so many people who visit the College for the first time, but it is a common reaction.

A welcoming community

Perhaps it’s the friendly welcome you receive when you visit Magdalene for an Open Day or interview.

Maybe it begins with a wander through the historic First and Second Courts with the splendour of the Pepys building and formal planting.

Maybe it is the tranquillity of the Fellows’ Garden that lies beyond them.

It could even be the informality of ‘the Village’ - a delightful collection of buildings spanning centuries of varied architectural styles which lie opposite First Court across the busy bustle of Magdalene Street.

Perhaps its our newest building, the spectacular Cripps Court, which blends older with more contemporary architectures, typical of the Magdalene style. However it’s not just the buildings of Magdalene, but the people who really make the College what it is. We think that our people – students, fellows and everyone else who works here, are our best advertisement.

Magdalene is well known across the University for its warm and friendly atmosphere, and our small annual intake of 105 undergraduates (plus about 65 graduate students) helps to foster a family atmosphere.

If you decide Magdalene is the place for you, and you are accepted, then you’ll not only have a Director of Studies and Tutor (see overleaf) but we’ll provide ‘academic parents’ (second year undergraduates) for all ‘freshers’ to offer informal advice and answer the mass of questions which are sure to arise in the first hectic weeks of term.

It won’t be long before you feel at home, and fully integrated into the life of the college, and the University, knowing a diversity of students from all years and across varied subjects.

For those who visit the college for an Open Day, it is the enthusiasm and friendliness of our students which make the biggest impression.
Academic life at Magdalene

“Supervisions are really good for clarifying difficult concepts raised in lectures and my supervisor is often able to place these within the context of ‘the bigger picture’.” [Hugh, second year Natural Scientist]

As at other Colleges, most of your personal study and individual teaching will happen in College. Your formal lectures, seminars, laboratory classes and specialised library facilities for later years (third and fourth year) are provided by the relevant University departments.

Before arrival, you will be assigned a Director of Studies, a specialist in your subject area, who will act as your academic guide and mentor. Your Director of Studies will organise small group, College-based teaching, called Supervisions, and will meet students on a regular basis through term-time to discuss progress and guide your on-going studies. They will also assist with exam entries, advise on future subject choices and write academic references.

Each student is also assigned a Tutor who will not typically be an expert in the student’s field of study, but will provide help with personal matters such as health or financial concerns. Students normally meet their tutors every term but can arrange additional appointments as the need arises. In addition, the College Chaplain is an important part of the support network for students, irrespective of faith (or lack of it), and works alongside the College Tutors in this pastoral role.

It is this focus on an individual’s needs, both academic and personal, which is one of the great strengths of the Collegiate system.

Graduate students will have a Course Director or Research Supervisor in their University department to assist with academic issues, and a Graduate Tutor in College for personal matters.

Study facilities

The College offers excellent study facilities for all students, including a number of libraries. The main College library, situated in the seventeenth century Pepys building, is typically open 24 hours a day and provides all the recommended texts for first and second year undergraduate courses. Our library, as well as all our student rooms, offers high-speed internet access to University catalogues to locate additional resources in the University and Departmental libraries. The University Library itself is just a few minutes bicycle-ride away.

Whilst our fellows are often already internationally leading and distinguished specialists in their own fields, we have delighted in the academic achievements of our own undergraduate and graduate students. In recent years our undergraduates have performed highly in University examinations and won University Prizes for academic excellence in both Arts and Science subjects.
Rooms
We offer all our undergraduates their own room in College for the full 3 or 4 years of their course. Most graduate students may have college accommodation for at least one or two years of study, especially if they are coming to Cambridge for the first time.

All first year undergraduates are allocated a room near the centre of the College with all its facilities close to hand. In subsequent years you can choose your own room according to personal preference and budget.

The rooms are varied in both size and style, reflecting the rich architectural variety of the College.

All rooms have a bed, working area, wash-basin, mini-fridge and internet access. Larger suites of rooms, or ‘sets’ may have a separate study and bedroom or en-suite facilities.

You only have to pay for your room when you are in residence, and rooms are banded for cost according to both size and facilities.

Facilities
All undergraduates automatically become members of the JCR (Junior Combination Room). This offers TV/DVD and daily newspapers, alongside rooms for pool and table-football. The College Bar is open in the evening and has a dart-board and hosts quizzes during term-time.

For a very ‘Cambridge’ form of relaxation during those lazy days after exams, the college punts are moored along the riverfront. For the more energetic, there is a multi-gym, squash and fives courts on site. The boat-house and sports fields are only a few minutes bike ride away.

The MCR (Middle Combination Room) for graduate students also offers TV, daily newspapers plus tea and coffee making facilities. Graduate students also have their own punt and access to all the other College sporting facilities.

There is also a launderette on site, and there are a limited number of guest rooms for visiting family and friends.

“The views are fabulous and the room is just across the bridge from the College”  Jay, second year Economist
At Magdalene we offer food to encompass a variety of tastes and lifestyles. Ramsay Hall offers cafeteria style breakfast, lunch and dinner during the week (including vegetarian and Halal dishes). It proves to be a popular meeting point and, at weekends, breakfast and lunch are replaced by a highly popular brunch.

Every evening during full term, Formal Hall offers a three course meal plus coffee in the beautiful candle-lit atmosphere of the College Hall, and an invitation to friends or visiting relatives to share this special and unique experience will ensure you are much in demand socially.

Some limited cooking facilities are also available in the small kitchens (gyp rooms) shared between student rooms.

Supplies can be sourced in the City centre which has a fine traditional market offering a good range of fresh local foods, and there are supermarkets and convenience stores nearby. In addition, the riverside area next to the College boasts a range of restaurants, bars and bistrots catering for a wide variety of international tastes. Cambridge also has multi-screen cinemas, theatres and live music venues, as well as coffee-shops, bars and clubs for evenings out.

“With the on-line booking system I can see what menus are coming up for Formal Hall in advance and see how many seats are left so I can invite some friends” Isabella, third year Arch & Anth
At Magdalene passions run high, whether they are on the stage, pitch or river… or helping with Admissions activities such as Open Days and Interviews!

Music is an important part of the lives of many students and the College offers Choral, Organ and Instrumental Scholarships for gifted individuals. Our Choir sing twice-weekly in Chapel and go on tour in the UK, Europe or further afield every summer. The Chapel acts as a focus for the Choir and other musical performances in the College, as well as maintaining its traditional religious role. The new Chapel organ was installed in 2000 and has been acclaimed as one of the best neo-baroque organs in Cambridge. We also have a range of grand and upright pianos, a harpsichord, virginals and a chamber organ as well as two music practice rooms. The College Music Society performs regular chamber concerts in College throughout the year.

Our new Cripps Court complex offers a state-of-the-art auditorium which is used extensively for lectures, drama and music, as well as highly popular film evenings. One of the highlights of the Magdalenian year is the College Musical.

Many of our students take part, with the emphasis on fun rather than musical perfection. These performances are often given a Magdalen ‘twist’ to add to the occasion.

Sport has always been an integral part of college life. Some Magdalenian students achieve at the highest levels, representing the University and even the country at their chosen sport. For others, sport provides a chance to keep fit, to socialise and have fun, or just to try a new activity. We field teams in all the major sports (as well as many fairly obscure ones!) for both men and women. The sports fields (shared with St John’s College) are a few minutes bike ride away whilst the College boathouse is also just a few minutes away, down-river.

“We had great fun showing how to make ice-cream with liquid nitrogen at the Open Day. The ice-creams were great too!”

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While we are always delighted with the success of our College teams, we are equally entertained by their failures – sometimes of heroic proportions!
Finance and Support

The costs of undergraduate study in Cambridge vary depending on Fee Status (Home/EU/Islands/Overseas). Current estimated study costs at Cambridge can be found on the University website but are not significantly more and often less than studying at many other Universities in the UK. In addition the University and Colleges offer an extensive range of bursaries, awards and scholarships to help support students in financial need.

Living Costs
At Magdalene, costs of food and accommodation are subsidised by the College and are similar to other Cambridge Colleges. Room rents compare favourably with other Universities in the UK and students only pay for their rooms whilst they are in residence.

Awards
Cambridge has an extensive set of means-tested bursary schemes which are available to help support Home, EU and Overseas undergraduates. For graduate students, there are a number of academic awards available including two College Bye-Fellowships which are awarded every year to final year Ph.D. students, usually one in the Arts and one in the Sciences. These Bye-Fellowships offer free accommodation plus dining rights with the Fellows.

Our undergraduates who achieve top grades in University exams are rewarded with a College Scholarship which includes a “Scholar’s Room” as well as a cash prize and book tokens.

Both graduate and undergraduate students in residence who have severe financial difficulties may also be eligible for hardship funds, whilst Travel Awards are available to support field work, or other activities which offer the potential for significant personal development.

In addition Magdalene has a number of fully and part-funded awards for both undergraduate and postgraduate study.

What to do next
If you’d like to find out more about us and what we have to offer, the best way is to come for a visit. Check the College web-site to find dates for upcoming Open Days. If you are unable to attend one of these, please contact the Admissions staff who may be able to arrange an informal visit to the College.

Undergraduates
We admit around 105 undergraduates each year, and consider applications for all the courses offered by the University. If you have already shown strong academic ability, and like what you have seen, the next step is to send us an application. Applications deadlines vary, but normally fall between early September and mid-October for entry the following year.

Assessment
Much of our undergraduate assessment is carried out prior to interview. We take into account previous results and predicted grades within the context of your own personal circumstances. We also consider personal statements and academic references as well as any supplementary work or written tests we may have requested. In most cases these are supplemented by an academic interview. Decisions on all undergraduate places are given early in January.

Graduates
We welcome applications from men and women for all types of postgraduate courses and in all fields of study. Each year we admit around 25 students reading towards the PhD degree and a further 30-40 following a one year course.

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The formal and the informal, the traditional and the modern.