

## **Trinity Term FAQ for Students**

Due to covid19, Trinity 2020 will not be a normal teaching term. We don't yet have all the answers but we have set out responses to some FAQs below. We are expecting an announcement of examination alternatives by the University w/c 30<sup>th</sup> March, possibly mid-week.

### **Which students will be able to return in Trinity?**

At this stage, no decision has been taken by either the Government or the University about Trinity Term being non-residential, and consequently we have to assume that it will be non-residential in all or part. Therefore, it is likely that you will be required to remain at home and access online teaching provision.

Some students have remained in residence and we will continue to provide accommodation and support to them during Trinity term, however, life in Brasenose will be far from normal. For as long as current measures remain in force, there will be limited catering, little or no social gatherings, and no face-to-face teaching. Libraries and other facilities will remain closed. OUCS and DAS will be online only. It is unlikely that more than a skeleton staff will be on site.

### **What form will Remote Teaching take?**

The College support the use of Microsoft Teams for delivery of online lectures and tutorials. E-book services can support remote study and at times when it is possible for staff to work on site, this can be supplemented by scanning of specific items. The Library will also consider requests for book purchase and for items to be mailed to students at their home address. Email and OneDrive can be used for submission of work.

We are aware that there are household asymmetries which mean that not all students have the same readiness to transition to remote learning. We are also aware that different subjects have differing online requirements. There is some time to work out how far these issues can be addressed and we will email students and staff shortly to identify those needing assistance. We are also consulting with the JCR and will work with them to address student concerns and respond to queries. We are consulting about subject needs as well.

### **What form will Remote Exams take?**

The University is consulting with the SU, taking into account student concerns, and consulting with Departments/Faculties. There are clearly tradeoffs: consultation vs the need to take a decision, flexibility vs capacity to support multiple approaches and the College welcomes the fact that the student voice is being heard. Given that the first exams take

place fairly soon, we expect a decision within a week and will work to implement the approaches agreed and to find solutions mitigating any downsides. We see the JCR as a key partner in helping us understand and mitigate issues such as household asymmetries as best we can.

Our current best available information is the following.

Remote Exams:

- a) will take into account concerns expressed by students;
- b) main mode will be replacing some exam papers in some Examination Schools with an alternative format whereby an exam is taken under non-invigilated conditions at home over a longer time period (4 to 5 hours perhaps);
- c) the University is aware the approach won't work equally well in all subjects and must look at mitigation strategies;
- d) the University is aware of some asymmetry in household circumstances and must again look at mitigation strategies.

We expect a major update from the University at the early part of the week beginning Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March. Ahead of this, there have been announcements at Faculty level (Modern Languages have cancelled oral examinations; Biology have deferred the Year 2 exams scheduled for the start of Trinity) and notices have been sent directly to affected students.

### **Why do Exams have to be remote?**

The solution has to be deliverable and take into account what is likely to happen. It is impossible in the time available to arrange and deliver a very wide range of options. There is no guarantee that exams can be rescheduled and taken late in Summer or at the start of Michaelmas Term since the covid19 situation then is unknowable. The University must also assume that Trinity will be non-residential and plan around this assumption. Across the World, Universities appear to be converging on this solution in some form.

### **Will Prelims be cancelled?**

It has not yet been announced that first year exams have been cancelled, however we think this option is under active consideration. Possibly the exams will be take-home and marked pass/fail but with no resits and 'fail' meaning at worst being placed on a level 1 caution.

### **What academic work should I be doing?**

The current situation and uncertainty about the likely format of University examinations during Trinity Term should not require you to make radical changes to the academic work that you undertake during the vacation. Unless your tutors advise otherwise, you should

continue with any vacation work that has been set for you, consolidate your lecture notes and continue with further reading and revision as you would normally.

### **Will I still have Collections at the start of Trinity Term?**

It will not be possible for students to sit Collections in college. Your tutors will be in contact to let you know the details of alternatives as soon as we have had time to digest the University's examination plans. No student will be subject to any academic disciplinary procedure linked to Collections performance.

### **How will Mitigating Circumstances be taken into account?**

Given that the impacts of coronavirus, and the resultant changes to teaching and assessment, will be felt by all students, it is clear that examiners will already be aware that all students' performance will be affected. As such, it is very unlikely that Mitigating Circumstances Notices to Examiners (MCEs) simply on the grounds of general impact will be beneficial. We also know that MCEs submitted on the grounds of general anxiety/stress in the past have not led to any adjustments. Of course, this does not preclude examiners from adjusting the degree classification boundaries and the Departmental and Faculty Exam Boards have wide discretionary powers which we would expect to be deployed, given prevailing circumstances. Students affected in more specific ways (for example those becoming ill or facing family illness or bereavement immediately before or during assessment) will still have the option of MCEs.

It should also be noted that the University's consultation on assessment does state that those in need of adjustments due to disabilities or medical conditions will be catered for. Similarly, the Proctors' Office have already instigated a self-certification process for coursework submissions. As such there are already provisions in place for adjustments prior to or during assessment. The general advice given to students before exams in a normal Trinity Term, that it is better to seek solutions to problems in advance, still holds true.

### **How will exams be graded and classified?**

We are awaiting details. At present, we do not believe that a shift to pass/fail is contemplated. Given the circumstances, some amendment of the classification boundaries may be made or other instructions given to examiners – but these are decisions for the PVC/Education Committee in consultation with the exam boards, noting that the latter already have wide discretionary powers. We believe Finalists may also have the option of taking an unclassified degree, possibly at any stage of the process.

### **How will different time zones and online failure be taken into account?**

A longer time period will be allowed for exams taken online but probably 5-6 hours for a 3 hour exam rather than a day or more. The length of the exam will help manage overlapping time zones. The University's IT Department is working on protocols to manage loss of connectivity and similar issues.

**Students not used to typing answers and/or students with disabilities?**

The duration of exams will be longer to reflect the fact of varying typing speeds. Students with particular needs may receive extra time and it is also probable that many disabled students already have adaptive software fitted to their devices.

**Students producing diagrams with their exam answers?**

The University's IT Department is looking at options. We suspect that there will be a variety of options ranging from the basic (taking photographs of diagrams and uploading them with exam answers) to the more sophisticated (use of MS Equation on assignments).

**How will cheating in exams be prevented?**

There is no guaranteed method to prevent use of unfair means. The University is likely to use software to detect anomalies and will investigate suspicious cases. Examiners have the option of using vivas or similar instruments where there is uncertainty..

**Trinity is my last Term: will I have an opportunity to say goodbye to my friends in person?**

At this point in time, the College is having to cancel all events and cannot, therefore, plan for the future. Nevertheless, we are acutely aware of how disorienting it is for a student's time in the College to end in this way. Once conditions improve and Government advice permits it, we will invite graduating students back to Brasenose and will consult with the JCR and Finalists as to what form this should take.