Sidney Sussex MCR
Freshers’ Guide
2017–18
Welcome to Sidney

Hello and welcome to the graduate community at Sidney Sussex College! We’re really looking forward to welcoming you all in October. Sidney prides itself on being one of the most friendly and welcoming colleges in Cambridge, and life as a graduate student here is sociable, inclusive, intellectually stimulating and fun to be part of. We’re sure that 2017–18 will be a year to remember, whether you’re here for one year or for the long haul! Alongside this guide, please take a look at the College and MCR websites as well as the Graduate Handbook.

The MCR

All graduate students at Sidney are automatically members of the MCR (Middle Combination Room). The term ‘MCR’ refers to both our common room, and the graduate community itself. Sidney is made up of the MCR, the JCR (Junior Combination Room; undergrads) and the SCR (Senior Combination Room; fellows).

For most grads, their department is the focus of their academic life. The College and MCR are therefore here to provide a sociable environment and a ‘home’ in Cambridge. We have a very diverse range of subjects, backgrounds and nationalities, which provides a lively and interesting community to belong to. Most live in College accommodation for at least a year, eat in the College dining hall, use the College gym and squash court, join a range of College
societies and sports teams, and attend social events organised on a regular basis by the MCR.

The Sidney MCR, completed in 2011 (and freshly redecorated this summer), is a large communal room with a widescreen TV, DVD library, PS3, Wii, board games, and varied magazines. There is a kitchen, stocked with teas, coffees, milk and various snacks to keep you all going, as well as the standard kettle, fridge and microwave. If there’s something you would like to see here, please do not hesitate to contact anyone on the committee either via our MCR emails or in person. Finally, there is separate room adjacent to the MCR that can be booked for meetings, seminars, teaching, or simply used as a quiet space to work, as well as a lovely outdoor patio area – all this is orchestrated through the Porters.
The MCR Committee 2017–18

The MCR Committee are a hardworking team of student volunteers, that are here to help make your time at Sidney a successful one, both academically and socially! They are responsible for the MCR events (formals, swaps, games – you name it) facilities, services and projects, and represent the graduate community in both the College and wider University arena. Elections take place at the end of Lent term for the President, Treasurer and Social Officers; the rest of the committee is then co-opted. During the first term, we will also elect a first-year representative and a film officer to ensure we have a new graduate student on the committee to represent the views of Sidney’s graduate freshers. If you might be interested in either of these roles – let Christof know!

Christof Gaunt
President

Melanie Jans–Singh
Treasurer
Elise Siouvé
Secretary

Jieyi Kang
Social Officer

Lay Ping
Social Officer

Nathan Jay
Social Officer

Jenifer Varzaly
Welfare Officer

Eléo Fox
Welfare Officer
Arjun Sharath
Gym Officer

Helen Beckwith
Green Officer

Simon Larmour
Gym Officer

Jack Fraser
External Officer

Tony Harris
Computer Officer
Hi everyone!

I’m Christof, the President of MCR, I would like to wish you the warmest of welcomes to Cambridge and arguably the best College within this bustling city!

The MCR is a vibrant, diverse and fun group of people. This starts with MCR Committee, together, we are a group grads whose are concerned with helping you enjoy your time here in Sidney. Be this in the form of social activities, welfare events or helping liaise with college regarding academic quandaries.

For most of you, your academic life will be centred around your department. However, being a part of a college provides a parallel community that you are a part of during your time here. College life is unique to Cambridge and part of what makes studying here so special, I would recommend diving in head first and embracing everything that is on offer.

Michaelmas term kicks off with Freshers’ Week, this is one of the best way to meet Sidneys – old and new – and will really help you settle in to life in Cambridge. There are events for everyone, ranging from a pub crawl, comedy and ghost tour to a river swim/paddle, allotment barbeque and Freshers’ bop. We are also running useful information and welfare sessions to get you sorted and settled as soon as possible.

Looking forward to a crazy (productive?) year ahead with you all!

Best wishes,

Christof
Sidney is a very social place, and I’d encourage everyone to engage with as many events as possible – colleges are more than just social hubs for formals, they act as a lifeline for those tough academic days (and the great ones).

As previously mentioned the year kicks off with Freshers’ Week, where you are strongly encouraged to attend as many events as possible. The week will be intense (in the best possible way) and a great taste of what’s instore for the year ahead.

The fun continues through Michaelmas, Lent and Easter term, with fortnightly formals – a ubiquitous part of Cambridge life where you dress up and go and eat a delicious formal dinner in our magnificent dining hall. These sell out quickly and are a Cambridge staple. MCR formals are often themed, such as St Patrick’s Day, Christmas, or Casino Night, and with post-dinner entertainment
such as a ceilidh (traditional Scots/Irish music and dancing), a casino, or Christmas Carols accompanied by a brass band.

Alongside these, College hosts formal dinner three nights a week, which you can sign up for anytime you want alongside members of the JCR and SCR.

We also offer formal swaps, so you can experience dining in other Cambridge colleges. Ever a place of learning, we also hold Graduate seminars where Sidney grads present their own research, which is followed by a formal dinner in the Old Library where we can meet friendly College Fellows.

The MCR Committee works hard to organise a variety of events, ranging from camping trips, whisky tastings, wine tastings, to chilled out film nights and welfare events – to get you involved in College Life.

The academic year ends with ‘May Week’, which rather confusingly takes place in June. This is the week after the end of the undergraduate (and most of the postgrad) exams, and a party atmosphere descends on the whole city.
May week includes the famous May Balls (above), huge garden parties, picnics and punt races on the river Cam. Being a smaller college, Sidney hosts a May Ball and an Arts Festival/June event on alternate years – both of which are hugely successful. The MCR holds its annual Garden Party (below) on the final weekend in the College’s stunning gardens. This has been a great success in recent years, with live music, sumo suits, delicious food, ice cream, fantastic drinks and garden games providing a fitting end to the academic year.
Accommodation

Almost every first-year graduate student at Sidney will live in college accommodation. Graduates either live on the main college site, or in one of the several houses (or ‘hostels’), located in various places around Cambridge. Cambridge is a compact city, and nothing is very far even if it looks like it on the map. All the houses are within 20 minutes walk, or 10 minutes cycle from Sidney. Furthermore, all the Sidney grad accommodation is ideal for quickly getting to know your fellow Sidney students.

The rooms do vary in size, but the rent charged is adjusted to take that into account. All rooms are located close to kitchen, bathroom and laundry facilities. College provides you with a duvet, pillow and mattress-cover (for single beds). You will need to provide your own bed linen and towels, but these can be easily and cheaply bought in Cambridge.

The various Sidney accommodation buildings are looked after by the Housekeeping team, and each has its own Housekeeping Assistant, or ‘Bedder’, who will keep the kitchens and bathrooms clean, and will tidy and hoover your room regularly, empty your bins, keep the houses stocked up with toilet roll, kitchen towels, kitchen sponges etc., have a cup of tea and a chat with/be a shoulder to cry on.

More info can be found in the Accommodation Guide at: http://www.sid.cam.ac.uk/current/postgrads/joining
Where Will I Be Living?
1. **35 Elizabeth Way** – A large house, containing a few en-suite rooms and a large kitchen. Close to Newmarket Road Tesco. Approx. 20 mins walk to College.

2. **Herne Lodge** – A large house with two kitchens, a sun room and giant garden (with the MCR allotment). Approx. 20 mins walk from College, convenient for Judge Business School, Engineering Dept, Downing and New Museums sites and train station.

3. **7 and 8 St Paul's Road** – A medium sized house with a good-size kitchen. Approx. 15 mins walk from College, good for the train station, the Mill Road area, New Museum, Downing and Alderbrook’s site.

4. **4, 6, 25, 26 and 27 Park Parade** – Medium-sized houses with large kitchens and back gardens. Approx 5 mins walk to College. Convenient for almost everywhere.

6. **College site:**

   - **Harrington House** – Rooms organised in small ‘apartments’ of 3 bedrooms with shared a kitchen and bathroom.

   - **Sussex House** – 9 rooms built in 2012, with a large shared kitchen.

The food served at Sidney is consistently rated as some of the best to be found in the University (the College chefs have won numerous awards, and win the inter-college competition on a regular basis). As well as the regular formal dinners, a self-service cafeteria is available during term-time: Breakfast (08.00–09.00 Mon – Fri), Lunch (12.30–13.30 Mon – Fri), Dinner (17.45–18.30 Mon – Sun), and Brunch from 11.30–13.30 on Saturdays. There is a reduced service during the Vacation period. Items are priced individually and you pay using your College card, which is then charged to the College Bill that you pay every term. You can get a two-course meal for approximately £5.00.
One of the aspects of the Cambridge system that can often seem confusing is the ‘Kitchen Fixed Charge’, a fee added to each term’s College bill. Basically, it is a fixed charge that subsidises the price of meals and provides the catering department with the fixed income it needs to operate. The amount you pay varies based on the distance you live from College.

All the graduate accommodation provides excellent communal kitchen facilities, which make for a really sociable experience. Group dinners are very common in Grad accommodation. You will need to provide your own pots/pan/crockery/cutlery, though this can all be bought cheaply in Cambridge. However, it is often worth waiting to see what the previous years’ grads have left behind – you could well get lucky! Left over kitchen equipment will be stored in the MCR and available on a first-come-first-served basis.
The College bar was refurbished in 2014 and is one of the cheapest in Cambridge, and is student-run. Whether you fancy a quiet drink and a game of darts / pool / table football, or the slightly livelier first stop after a formal dinner in Hall, it’s a friendly and functional place for some cheap drinks with friends.
Sports and Societies

Being part of a College means that it is very easy to get involved in a wide range of sports teams and societies. If you wish to try for the university teams, you can – however College teams offer a more social option. Sidney grads play a very significant part in Sidney’s sports teams. Make sure you go to the Sidney Freshers’ Fair and see what’s on offer, whether it’s continuing an old hobby, or trying out something new!

Music plays a large role in Sidney life. The Chapel Choir regularly tours internationally, and the Sidney orchestra gives regular concerts. The Chapel also runs a series of relaxed recitals to give all Sidney students an opportunity to perform informally. The Sidney choir also sing at Choral Evensong three times a week – well worth a watch as the music is beautiful.
Sports Facilities

The new Sidney Gym opened in 2011 and is one of the best College gyms in Cambridge. There is a cardio room and a weights room, along with showers and changing facilities, all on the College site. For a very cheap rate – £45/year or £15/term – you can have unlimited use. Inductions will take place during Freshers’ week and also regularly throughout the year. Just sign-up with Simon or Arjun, complete your induction and then sign a key out from the Porters’ Lodge. A word of warning, you will need to bring a pair of clean shoes to use in the gym – the Porters are militant about this!

The most recent MCR purchase includes two stand up paddle boards that are available for anyone to use (see above). We will be formulating an online booking form, that will be found on the MCR website in time. The College also has an onsite squash court which is free to use, as well as a table tennis room. Just sign out a key from the Porters – the clean shoes rule applies here too! We also have (free) access to the St John’s College tennis courts.
Want a good way to get free organic veggies, or just feel like poking around in the dirt? Sidney has an MCR allotment located about 20-minutes walk south of College, in the back garden of Herne Lodge, one of the graduate houses. Gardening outings are planned most weekends during term (and often out of term as well) to plant, weed, water, and harvest, as well as (from time to time) moving dirt and bricks to create new beds.

Please feel free to come along and give it a try – no experience necessary!
Practical Things...

**Bikes**
Cambridge is small and flat, which means that most people find a bike to be the most useful way of getting around. There are several shops around the city selling both new and second-hand bikes, or check out gumtree/ebay for online deals. You will need a good lock, as theft is unfortunately quite a common and infuriating occurrence. Also, lights are *essential*; a front (white) and back (red) light is a legal requirement, and the police give out on-the-spot fines if you don’t have them.

**Gowns**
You will need to get hold of a gown for the matriculation ceremony, dinner and photograph, as well as for your graduation. Most people find that it is worth buying one, especially because most of the formal dinners in College require them. They are available from the various academic dress shops in Cambridge (e.g. Ryder & Amies), the Graduate Union, or from Colin, the Head Porter at Sidney. If you don’t want to buy one, you can hire from the Grad Union for a cheap rate. For people new to Cambridge, you need a ‘BA Status’ gown if you do not have a master’s and are under 24, or a ‘MA status’ gown if you have a masters or are over 24. Don’t worry if this sounds confusing – just ask when buying and the sales assistant/porter will make sure you are purchasing the right one!
Post/Mail  Everybody has a pigeon-hole (a small mailbox) in the College Post Room, which is where the Porters put anything addressed to you that arrives at College. Regardless of where you are living, you should get all of your mail sent to College. If you are ordering parcels it’s particularly useful because there is someone to sign for it all day every day.

Welfare  Sidney's MCR offers various welfare facilities and events to graduate student. Free condoms and pregnancy tests can be requested from both of the MCR Welfare officers. Alternatively, free condoms are also available from various locations around Cambridge through the C-Card scheme. The committee can sign you up and give you your C-Card key–ring, which allows you to pick up free condoms from pharmacies and colleges around Cambridge. The MCR offers other free things on request, such as attack alarms and Chlamydia tests. If there is anything you need, don't hesitate to ask and the Welfare Officer will try to get it for you. The Welfare Officer is also there to help with problems, or to find a person suitable to help. To keep our grads happy, the Welfare Officer organises Sunday brunches in the MCR, or afternoon tea on another day of the week. Whether it's brunch or tea, there will be lots of good food and good company.

Internet  All rooms have internet access – either wireless (most of the houses off the College site), or via an Ethernet cable, which can be bought cheaply in Cambridge or from the College Computer Office. Information on how
to connect to the internet can be found on the College website in the Computing Section: http://www.sid.cam.ac.uk/life/comp/

# The Sidney A–Z

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Backs</strong></th>
<th>The big, grassy areas behind the colleges on the River (Queens’, King’s, Clare, Trinity Hall, Trinity and St John’s).</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bedder</strong></td>
<td>The Housekeeping Assistant who looks after your accommodation – see the Accommodation section above.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blades</strong></td>
<td>The prize given to rowing crews who manage to ‘bump’ every day during Lent or May Bumps. The opposite of Spoons.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blue</strong></td>
<td>The name of the award and of a person who represents the University at certain sports (a half-blue for the other sports).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Boaties</strong></td>
<td>People who row, like wearing lycra and get up early in the morning to do it...</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Boat Race</strong></td>
<td>The annual rowing race between Oxford and Cambridge on the River Thames in London – a great day out around Easter.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bop</strong></td>
<td>A college party in the bar, lots of dancing and usually with a theme and fancy dress [see below] if you are up for it...</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bumps</strong></td>
<td>Manic rowing races at the end of Lent and Easter terms. The idea is to catch and crash into the boat in front. A Great spectator event down on the river; demonstrate your college pride!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Buttery</strong></td>
<td>The little hatch outside the Hall where you buy the wine for dinner (Note – only College wine is allowed, unlike at some colleges, and the buttery closes religiously 15 minutes before dinner, so don’t be late and miss out!)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cheese</strong></td>
<td>Not only the foodstuff, but the old, classic dance music that recurs at every party if it gets late enough, and every bop.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cindies</strong></td>
<td>The name used for the nightclub Ballare (because years ago it used to be called that). Sweaty, rowdy, cheesy music. Can be fun, although ‘ending up in Cindies’ is often a bad thing...)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cuppers</strong></td>
<td>Competition between colleges in most sports.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fancy Dress</strong></td>
<td>Come in costume, not smart like this means in the US! Some of the Graduate Guest Nights will come with a theme, and bops are always fancy dress.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fellow</strong></td>
<td>An academic affiliated with a college and engaged in teaching and research.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Formal</strong></td>
<td>Either the name for a Guest Night or dinner in the Hall, or a dress code – lounge suit or equivalent. These occasions are pretty frequent</td>
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</table>
so you might want to bring a few different outfits!

**Freshers**
New students.

**Full Term**
The 8 weeks (Michaelmas: October–December; Lent: January – March; Easter: April – June), where everybody in the university is in residence.

**Grad Union (GU)**
The university-wide organisation that represents all graduate and mature students at the university; parallel to Cambridge University Students Union (CUSU). The GU is also a physical venue on between Silver Street and Mill Lane, which is a nice place to hang out with a cafe, rooms for meetings, the Student Advice Service, and a service point for all your copying/printing/binding needs.

**Hall**
The College dining hall, or to have the self-service dinner in College – ‘Are you going to hall tonight?’

**Hermes**
The University official email service – you’ll be given the address when you arrive (the @cam.ac.uk address).

**Knackered**
Colloquial term for ‘very tired’.

**Loo**
The toilet.

**Master**
The over-arching head of the College – currently Prof. Richard Penty.
Matriculation  The official ceremony where you formally become part of the University, followed by an awesome (and free) formal dinner in Hall during Freshers’ Week.

May Ball  One of the biggest parties you’ve ever seen – with an abundance of food, drink, live music, entertainments, spectacular attractions and much more.

May Week  Confusingly actually in late June, the last week of the official academic year (which doesn’t count for many grads), which is filled with May balls, garden parties, events and generally a whole lot of fun. Not to be missed.

Pidge  The short name for your ‘pigeon hole’ where all your mail is delivered. Can also be used as a verb – “I’m pidging it to you’.

Porter  They know everything there possibly is to know about College, and can help you with absolutely anything. There is someone in the Porters’ Lodge (just inside the main gate - and occasionally shortened to the ‘plodge’) all the time if you have any problems.

Punting  Classic Cambridge activity – the flat-bottomed boats you see on the Cam and propel with a long pole. Great way to spend a summer afternoon with a picnic while you try and master the skill of driving...
Smart/Casual  A dress code that generally means ‘on the smart side of casual’, i.e. definitely no ties/suits, but not shorts and T-shirt either...

Spoons  Either short for ‘Wetherspoons’ – the Regent St version of the large chain of pub/clubs which serve very cheap drinks and food, or the wooden spoons awarded to those who get bumped (overtaken) every day in the rowing ‘Bumps’ (see above).

The Felix  Sidney slang term for a toilet

The Union  A debating society which hosts prominent speakers, has a bar and a library. Not a Union in the usual sense of the word

UL  The University Library – holds a copy of every book ever published in Britain, and many more

Vac  Short for Vacation, i.e. any period between ‘Full terms’ (see above). The Long Vacation is the one in the summer. It doesn’t really mean a holiday for most grads, unfortunately

Varsity  A match between Oxford and Cambridge – some sports e.g. varsity rugby are massive spectator
events and a chance to get a cheaper than normal experience of some of Britain’s most famous sporting venues such as Twickenham and Lords’ Cricket Ground.