The Exeter College Online Tutorial Programme

Exeter College in the University of Oxford

Programme Description

At the heart of the Exeter College Online Tutorial Programme (ECOTP) is the one-to-one, discussion-based learning that is central to student life at the University of Oxford. This individual attention and the exchange of ideas that take place in conversations between tutor and student are defining features of ECOTP. The Programme has been designed to give students an opportunity to really challenge themselves intellectually and to find inspiration from working 1-to-1 with an expert in their chosen subject.

The University of Oxford's core teaching is based around conversations, usually in groups of 2 or 3 students and their tutor, known in Oxford as 'tutorials'. Tutorials are rigorous but extremely rewarding. On ECOTP, students will work 1-to-1 with their tutor, offering a rare level of personalised attention from academic experts.

The emphasis is on *depth of knowledge* and *critical thinking*. Over a minimum of six weeks, students immerse themselves in their research project, develop the skills and confidence to present and defend their opinions and, with expert guidance, produce a body of high-quality evidence-based research work. The abilities to respond, discuss and argue rationally are skills that will benefit students not just in Oxford but at their home university and in life in the future.

Two tutorial options are offered:

(1) The Oxford Tutorial

This most closely resembles undergraduate teaching and learning at Oxford. For the Oxford Tutorial, you will choose a research project from a list of subjects ranging across disciplines. There will be a set of eight tutorials that follow a prescribed course and reading list. Each course will require submission of written work (an essay or problem set, for example) for each tutorial meeting, and this work will form the basis of your assessment. As with all Oxford tutorials, the course may be adaptable to your particular interests within the subject.

(2) The Independent Research Tutorial

This is the most specialised of our tutorial offerings. For the Independent Research Tutorial, *you propose* a specific topic that they would like to research. You will receive a series of six supervised tutorials that will guide you in the preparation of a single sustained piece of written work or project (3,000-5,000 words as agreed with your tutorial supervisor). To be accepted, you must submit a research proposal.

The Oxford is modelled on the 8-week Oxford term, with tutorials taking place usually once, occasionally twice, a week, whereas the Independent Research Tutorial prepares students for extended research on a tightly framed topic. The eight sessions included in the Oxford and the Tutorial provides more structure and guidance through more regular meetings with your tutor, whereas the expectation of the Independent Research Tutorial is that students will use the additional time outside your weekly tutorials to undertake research.

Tutorials last an hour, during which time the tutor gives feedback on work prepared on a particular topic. At the end of the tutorial, the tutor sets a new piece of work together with suggested readings in preparation for the next meeting. In between tutorials, students are expected to prepare for the next tutorial by working independently.

While students can propose research topics in almost any academic area taught in Oxford, please keep in mind we do not offer laboratory-based tutorials, and *all proposals are subject to our approval.*

Prerequisites:
Students must have a minimum GPA of 3.6/4.0 or equivalent. In addition, students are expected to demonstrate prior knowledge of their chosen field of research, a high degree of self-motivation and engagement with the subject and the ability to work independently.

Learning Experience and Assessment
Before beginning the tutorial, students receive guidance on how to prepare for their research project and practical information about their course of study. We will also run an information session before the first tutorial to complete preparations and answer any questions. You will receive on-going support and guidance throughout the tutorial project. In addition, regular meetings with the tutor allow progress to be very closely monitored and, if necessary, for additional support to be put in place.

Students can expect to undertake 10-20 hours per week of independent study for each tutorial.

The tutorial system is academically challenging and rewarding. Students are expected to undertake self-directed preparatory work before each session and then to take an active part in their tutorials. Different disciplines work in different ways, but all tutors set work to be done in advance of every tutorial. In the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, students are likely be asked to produce short essays and, for example, write literary reviews or legal commentaries; in Science and Engineering they may well be given problem sets. Tutors guide research by providing suggested readings and offering an array of special topics to pursue, all to support and direct research work. In addition, tutors give direct, individual help on how to organise ideas into a persuasive argument. Due to the personalised nature of tutorials, students must be well-prepared and willing to engage with the tutor in discussion.

Resources
Tutors provide readings and direct students to freely available e-resources. In addition, it is expected students have access resources through their home institution's libraries.

Only fully matriculated students are permitted remote access to the Bodleian or Exeter College libraries, so this is not something we can arrange.

Assessment and Credit:

The Oxford Tutorial
Students are assessed on the pieces of work produced for each tutorial. The tutor gives a grade (and feedback) for each piece of work with the final grade being the accumulated average of all marks.

The Independent Research Tutorial
Students are assessed on the final research essay or paper.

On successful completion of the tutorial, students receive a transcript showing a grade expressed as a grade-% and a letter equivalent, together with grading guidance notes.

While tutorials have been designed to be credit-bearing and Exeter College will assist students to transfer credit home, the University of Oxford -- and therefore Exeter College -- does not operate a credit system and ultimately the calculation of credit is decided by the home university. As a guide, our tutorials usually receive 3-4 US credits or 7.5 ECTS credits.

Learning Outcomes:
By participating in a research tutorial, students will:

- gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter
- improve the ability to think critically and work independently
- develop the skills to assess and make use of source materials
- hone oral and written communication skills
- learn to formulate and justify a thesis, and to anticipate and respond to counter arguments
- develop individual academic interests within the context of their chosen subject
- have the opportunity to begin work on a senior thesis or other area of special academic interest
- benefit from close intellectual engagement with their tutorial

Regular and rigorous academic discussion facilitates learning and opens up a depth and detail of understanding that simply isn't possible through lectures alone. Tutorials are an ideal way to explore ideas, cast light on new perspectives and develop the ability to think both critically and independently.