From Nancy Braithwaite, Academic Director

As Parents or Guardians of new students, you are an important part of Pembroke College and Oxford University’s community – welcome! We’re absolutely delighted to have them here and are looking forward to seeing their progress and celebrating their achievements in the coming years.

As Pembroke’s Academic Director I’d like to let you know a bit about Pembroke’s academic life and your important role in it. While our main relationship will be with your son or daughter, you have a vital role to play in supporting them to make the most of their time here.

Our 2020 starters have had a uniquely difficult six months before starting with us, and I’m sure they and you will have concerns about getting back into education, and what it will be like to study in Oxford. While things will be different, as we evolve to accommodate new ways of working safely around coronavirus, we are working very hard to make your son or daughter’s experience and education as outstanding as you will all expect from us.

Your son or daughter joins an ambitious and supportive academic community here at Pembroke. This means they will be expected to work hard and to fulfil their potential academically. To achieve this, they will have a lot of support from their tutors who will be guiding their learning, access to excellent resources and opportunities in the college – and, if they need it, from a very extensive welfare network in the college and university.

Pembroke is at the centre of their Oxford experience, but they also have access to all the great libraries, lectures and resources that a world leading university can provide, alongside the support network of being part of a small community. All of these critical elements of our education will be in place next year, either face to face where it is safe to do so, or virtually.

This coming term will be a big change for all of us, not least for those who are joining us from school. There is a very different style of learning here our students are expected to work independently and to get used to a new style of teaching and feedback. The volume and level of work required can be challenging and at times feel overwhelming. It’s very natural for students to find this difficult to start with, and often the students who appear most confident are experiencing just the same anxieties. If your son or daughter is anxious about their work, please do reassure them about this - and encourage them to raise any concerns they have with their tutors or the student ‘subject rep’ for their subject. There are lots
of resources in place to help, including our dedicated study skills tutors who work with our students individually and in groups!

The terms in Oxford are very short and intense. This means that students need to continue their study in vacations – consolidating their learning or preparing for the next term, so when they return home you can help by providing a supportive work environment. We do strongly encourage all students to take a proper break from their learning as well!

We treat our undergraduates as adults – expecting them to make their own decisions and to be responsible for themselves. This means that we will only talk directly to you, as parents, about your children, in very exceptional circumstances and with their consent.

As you might be aware, students have been asked by the College to provide consent to contact next of kin in the event of concern for their welfare. Full details of our Emergency Contact Policy and our Information for Parents document can be found here.

Mental health support is very important to us here at Pembroke and we have an extensive and approachable welfare support team here in College. Referrals to specialist University services or trained NHS support will be made where appropriate.

Please do browse the information on measures we have put in place for the coming terms. If you or your son or daughter have concerns about any of this, please encourage them to get in touch with my team in the Academic Office (academic.office@pmb.ox.ac.uk) in the first instance and we will do our best to help.

There is an opportunity for you to become a “Friend” of Pembroke by registering with our Development Office team. As I mentioned, we will not discuss your son or daughter’s progress with you, but being a Friend means you will receive news from Pembroke and invitations to some College events when we are able to hold these again.

We look forward to meeting you all in the future.

With best wishes,

Nancy