

College Collections
A note for Undergraduates and Tutors
updated for Hilary term 2022 (s.2)

1. Introduction - Collections' Role

Collections should be seen in a positive light and primarily as learning opportunities. Whatever their outcome, they should be seen as having a helpful role in improving a student's performance in subsequent public exams. They need to be treated seriously. The starting point for considering collections should be what the equivalent would be for University public exams. Collections thus need to be prepared for as much as any other exam but they are not public exams contributing to a student's degree result and in most cases if they do not go well there should be the feedback and time to help make any improvements necessary.

2. Timing

College collections (Examinations) are held at the beginning of every term on Thursday and Friday of 0th Week. In a normal term, students are therefore required (*Student Regulations R.7.*) to be back in residence no later than 5.00pm on Wednesday of 0th Week each term.

Students are obliged to sit College collections at the times set by the College Office and their tutors. Where a student will be or has been prevented by illness or other urgent cause from doing so, they should inform their tutor (and not just the College Office) in advance or failing that as soon as it is practical to do so.

***For Hilary term 2022**, collections will be delivered both online open-book and in-person closed-book modes. The decision about the mode of delivery will be made by tutors, usually mirroring the mode in which students will be examined at the end of the year (or at the end of their course for those without University examinations this year). If changes in the covid situation mean it is not possible to hold in-person collections safely, papers will be released online but students will be still expected to treat them as closed-book papers (and to handwrite rather than type their responses).*

3. Frequency

Students should expect to sit a formally invigilated collection at the beginning of each term for each subject that they studied the preceding term unless they took a public exam (e.g. Prelims/ Mods/ Finals) the preceding term or they have been informed otherwise by their tutors.

4. Timetabling

Timetables giving details of the collections set for each student will be made available by the College Office at least one week prior to the collections.

5. Invigilation

Collections are intended to be an integral and serious part of the College's academic life. Students are expected to meet the same academic standards and standards of general behavior as are expected during public university examinations under the University's Examination Regulations. Failure to meet such standards is a breach of both the College's *Student Regulations* (s.14i) and the *Academic Expectations and Disciplinary Procedures* (s.2.1c).

In normal circumstances in-person collections will be formally invigilated and if so Gowns, (but not sub fusc), should be worn during collections (*Student Regulations R.18.*). No mobile phones, tablets, notes, books or the like should be taken into formally invigilated collections.

6. Format and Setting

The form of collection papers is for the tutor setting them to decide. Collection papers may be specially written by the tutor setting them or a past public exam paper may be used. Students

should expect to be set questions which diligent study the previous term combined with an appropriate level of vacation work should enable them to answer and which will help prepare them for their next public examinations on the work concerned.

7. Standards

Collections are a preparation for public examinations and consequently the standards of performance that students are expected to achieve (at least a 1st or 2i) or obliged to achieve by the College's academic disciplinary procedure (at least a 2ii), are the same as the College expects for those public examinations. If a Tutor decides to apply a different standard of performance it must be communicated to students in advance of the collection.

8. Marking

Unless otherwise specified by the College's academic disciplinary procedure, collection papers will normally be single marked by the college tutor setting them.

Tutors are expected to:

- a. return marked collection papers to students at least by the end of 4th week and preferably by the end of 3rd week of the term in which the collections are taken.
- b. provide a reasonable and sufficient level of feedback to enable students to understand the level of their achievement and how it might be improved.

The Standing Committee of the Senior Tutors Committee of the Conference of Colleges has reminded colleges of the particular importance of the provision to students of timely and helpful feedback on their collections. It points out that Hilary Term collections come at a key stage for first-year undergraduates, both enabling an assessment to be made of their initial progress, and providing them with their first experience of Oxford examinations. In this context, the Committee has encouraged colleges to ensure that those involved in marking collections fully understand the role of collections and are aware of the importance of providing prompt and helpful feedback.

9. Improving Exam Performance

College collections are primarily intended to help students target their work (especially vacation work) and to help them and their tutors assess and thus improve their progress under exam conditions such as they will eventually meet in University public exams.

- a) It is appreciated that in most cases students are likely to perform less well in collections than they are capable of in finals and the experience of and feedback on collections is intended to help improve their final results.
- b) Failure to meet college expectations (1st/2i level) or obligations (at least 2ii level) in collections whether at the default levels specified by the AEDP or as specified by their tutors in the first instance is always simply a matter for informal discussion between tutor and student (see AEDP S.3.1 Informal Resolution).
- c) Informal discussion between Tutor and Student to resolve a poor collection mark in the first instance should attempt to resolve the reason for the underperformance and identify what the student should do to improve their performance. A tutor may in the course of this suggest that the student resits the collection paper or an equivalent at a later date.

The above comments and the manner in which collections are conducted by students and tutors should reflect the fact that termly collections are a serious element in the academic life of the College but with the common aim of assessment and improvement rather than final judgment.

10. Links with the College's Academic Expectations and Disciplinary Procedure (AEDP)

- a) One would not normally expect the academic disciplinary procedure to be commenced via a first formal warning in the case of a poor collection mark where the reason for the underperformance and how to remedy it was known and understood by both student and tutor and the underperformance was either a first instance or not part of a pattern or developing pattern of underperformance which required dealing with through the AEDP.
- b) However, as mentioned above, following a poor collection mark and the required discussion a

tutor may ask the student to resit a collection paper at a later date. Furthermore, whilst bearing in mind a) above, in the case of failure to meet the academic obligation of at least 2ii marks (or other specified obligation) the tutor may also issue a first formal warning (AEDP S.3.2(c)).

- c) The *AEDP* makes provision for Special (S.4.4) and Final Collections (S.5.3). Special conditions in the *AEDP* regarding double marking and markers pertain to Final Collections.
- d) The *AEDP* also mentions collections or written work which may be set prior to return following intermission on medical, welfare or academic grounds (S.2.2(b)). These and any other non-standard college collections, for example resit collections set by Tutors, or even Special or Final Collections, may be set at times and under conditions other than those specified in this note and may have different acceptable standards to those of standard 0th week collections. Students set such collections would of course be informed of the conditions involved in good time, usually at the time they are set.

11. Collection Prizes

- a) The scheme will apply to 1st, 2nd and 3rd year undergraduates, and also 4th year students in Modern Languages and Law/LSE.
- b) A prize of £30 will be awarded for the equivalent of first-class performance in at least one collection paper and at least upper-second standard in any other papers.
- c) Tutors have discretion to decide what constitutes an appropriate standard in any given subject. The scheme may also be used to reward and encourage outstanding performance in other types of academic assessment (that are not part of the University examination system) such as formal presentations. (Only one prize per student in each term in any circumstances.).
- d) Recommendations for prizes should be sent to the College Office by the week 4 deadline, liaising with external tutors as necessary and with the expectation that all collection papers will have been marked before then.