

Accessing Freshers' Fair as a disabled or neurodivergent student

Dear 2024 Freshers,

Here you will find all the information you might need about accessing Freshers' Fair as a disabled or neurodivergent student (or indeed, any student who struggles with crowds), including information about the Fair's Quiet Hour. Freshers' Fair can be exciting, inspiring, and set you off on an incredible student journey – but it can all be very noisy, full of crowds, and some of Oxford's beautiful, historic, old buildings aren't always the most accessible! So, we're here to help you make the most out of your trip to Freshers' Fair next week.

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1. Accessibility Map

[Linked here](#) is an Accessibility Map of the fair. The fair takes place in the Exam Schools and follows a one-way system from the entrance on Merton Street, through a marquee, into and along the U-shaped ground floor of Exam Schools, and then along the U-shaped first floor, before you exit onto the High Street. There is level access throughout the whole fair, which is indicated in orange on the map. The map also includes the locations of the [Welfare Zone](#) and [Refuge Spots](#), where you can take some time out if you need some space, as well as locations of [water fountains](#), [hearing loops](#),

accessible toilets, lifts and ramps. There will be a small supply of paper printouts of the Fair which you can pick up at the Merton Street entrance, including some large-print maps. But we'd also recommend you download the pdf map for electronic use if these are in short supply, as the Exam Schools can have unreliable Wi-Fi.

2. Quiet Hour

At peak times, Freshers' Fair will be full of hundreds of students, which can be quite noisy and overwhelming, as well as more difficult to move around in. Therefore, we recommend that disabled students attend the official Quiet Hour slot. Each college is allocated an official 'time slot' on Wednesday or Thursday to bring their whole cohort to attend the fair together, but during Quiet Hour there are no scheduled colleges visits, making it a lot quieter and easier to maneuver around. Quiet Hour will take place on Wednesday at 9am-10am, and anyone can attend who feels they might benefit.

[TIP: If your college has scheduled something else for you to do during this time, we recommend you email your college in advance to request excusal to attend Quiet Hour as a reasonable adjustment for disability to allow you to access Freshers' Fair. If you can't make the Quiet Hour, there are 'Quiet-er hours' on Thursday 9-10 am and 3-4 pm]

3. DisCam 'Travel Buddies' Scheme for Quiet Hour

Want to attend Quiet Hour but not sure you'll be able to navigate your way from your college to Exam Schools on your own? Don't worry! The SU Disabilities Campaign have set up a Travel Buddies scheme to help escort you from your college to Quiet Hour, as we know how hard it can be navigating a new and complicated city on your own for the first time. If you are interested in being matched up with a fellow student to accompany you to Quiet Hour, please visit [@oxfordsu_disabilities](#)

4. What to Expect, and Sensory Processing Tips

At peak times, there will be many students all wandering round the single one-way flow of the fair, which has stalls on either side. This can be quite an overwhelming environment even if you don't have a disability! Because of this, we have scheduled in regular refuge spots which you can use along the fair trail. There will be a Welfare Zone on the ground floor of Exam Schools, where you can sit down and take some time out. On the first floor (which is the most intense stretch of the Fair trail) there will be two additional Welfare Refuges near the staircases where you can step out of the trail and access a water fountain. It might help you to look at the map in advance so you can pace yourself and check where the next breakout is if you are feeling overwhelmed. If at any point you are struggling or feel unwell, you can let a friendly Steward know and they can help you step out of the Fair trail.

[TIP: Be prepared – if you have ear-defenders or earplugs to help you deal with loud noise, bring them along, as well as a sunflower lanyard if you use one. Pack a water bottle and download the accessibility map so you can pace your journey between the welfare breakouts]

5. Wheelchair/level access

Every part of the fair can be accessed in a wheelchair, and there are accessible toilets. There are ramps on entering/exiting the Exam Schools building, and a lift between the ground and first floor, but you will not need to open any doors. However, even though there is level access, the Disabilities Campaign strongly advises wheelchair or crutch users to attend during Quiet Hour if at all possible. If you do decide to come outside of the quiet hour, please be aware that, unfortunately, the lift brings you out to a busier middle section of Fair. In this instance, there will be a member of staff at both sides of the lift to assist people with making their way to the beginning of the upper floor Fair. If you cannot attend the Quiet Hour, or either of the 'Quieter' hours, a steward will be on-hand to help you clear a path through the crowd to the start of the first-floor trail.

6. Hearing impaired students

Freshers' Fair can get very noisy outside the Quiet Hour. To assist with this, there will be an Infra-Red portable hearing receiver positioned in the South Schools section of the Fair trail, and a Hearing Loop installed in Room 14 section of the Fair trail (where the Student Welfare and Support Services stalls are). Let a Steward know if you are struggling access the hearing support systems.

7. Visually impaired students

There will also be physical printouts of the Accessibility Map in large font which you can collect on entry at Merton Street. Let the Stewards know if you have any issues.

8. Stewards and assistance

Throughout the Fair there will be lots of trained, professional stewards will be easily recognisable. Let them know if you are having any issues or feel like you might need medical support. If you are having an accessibility issue at the Fair, you can also email disabilities@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk, which will be monitored all day, or come and visit us at our DisCam stall on the ground floor.

9. DisCam SU Instagram Takeover (day before Fair)!

On Tuesday at 1pm the Disabilities Campaign will be doing a live takeover of the SU Instagram @oxfordstudents to do an accessibility tour of the Fair, tell you what to expect, and answer any live questions on chat about the Fair and Quiet Hour.