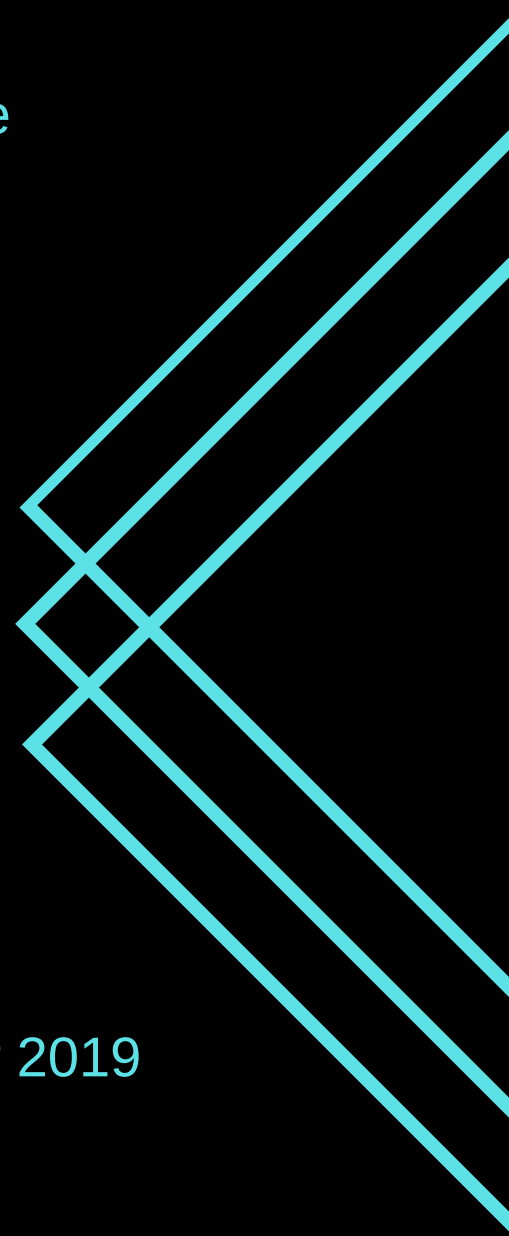





Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge

A guide for future and prospective
students with chronic (mental)
illness and disabilities



Written by Rensa Gaunt, summer 2019

About this booklet

This booklet was written over summer 2019 by Rensa Gaunt, a 5th year undergrad at Fitz. It is designed to give future and prospective students information about how college deals with illness and disability, so that they can make informed decisions about where to apply and what to ask for when they arrive!

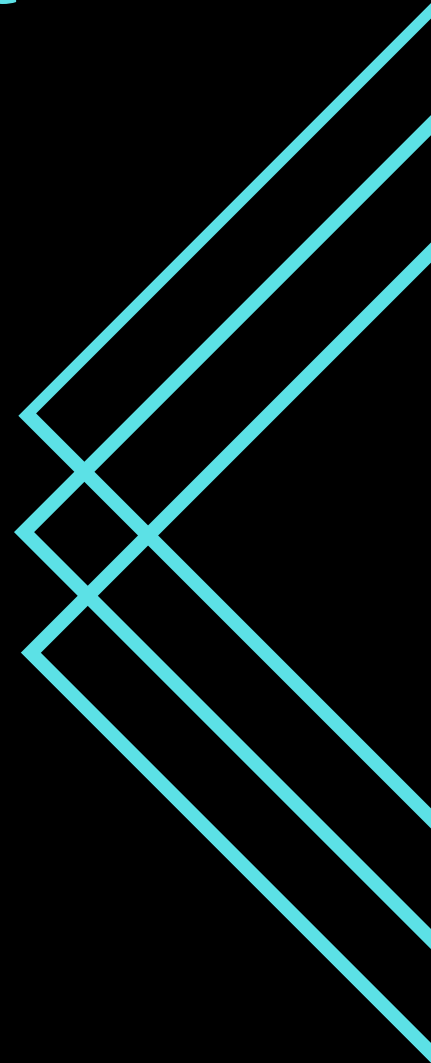
There is information on each page about what is available at all colleges or through the university, and what is specific to Fitz.

This isn't a recruitment document for college; we hope you will think of applying here, but only because you think it is the right place for you!

See 'Contact' page to request alternative formats of this booklet.

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Mood of the college

Our college is relatively new, having been established in 1966. This means that it has a more relaxed feel than some of the medieval colleges. Enjoy the benefits of modern accommodation at home: the whole site is kitted out with essentials such as fast unlimited internet, plenty of plug sockets and very good heating. These are not guaranteed at older colleges unless you are in their more modern buildings.

We still have some of the traditions, such as formal hall with gowns, but these are not in any way obligatory. You can always visit friends at the older colleges to get the full Harry Potter experience, without having to live in outdated buildings.

The college is medium-large sized at 850 students: the other 30 colleges vary between 155 and 1110 students, with most between 600 and 700. The grounds are calm and not as hectic or busy as many of the central colleges can be. There are lots of trees and plants, including grass you can walk on, and many squirrels and birds.

Some colleges restrict access, to ensure that tourists and unregistered guests don't get into college. Fitz is a lot more relaxed because it is less popular with tourists, so you can come and go as you please without having to show your university card or explain why you're back so late!

4 Location of colleges

If you have anxiety or prefer to live out of the hectic city centre, then quieter colleges might suit you better. Depending on your mobility, you might prioritise college being close to your faculty. To see where your faculty buildings are, check here: <https://www.applytocambridge.com/locations-map>

While it looks like Fitz is far out of town, it's only a 15 minute walk to the city centre (5 minute bike, 10 minute bus). It is however, up Castle Hill, along with 5 other colleges. The rest of Cambridge is mainly flat and there are lots of cycle paths.

Image: location of Cambridge colleges as shown on Google Maps. Fitz is in the top left corner of the map, with other colleges nearby. Around half of the colleges are directly in the city centre. Both Girton (north west) and Homerton (south east) are missing from the map as they are not in central Cambridge.

Fitz is here



Tutorial system

Fitz, like other colleges, has a system of 'tutors' who are responsible for pastoral care, i.e. making sure that you are doing OK emotionally.

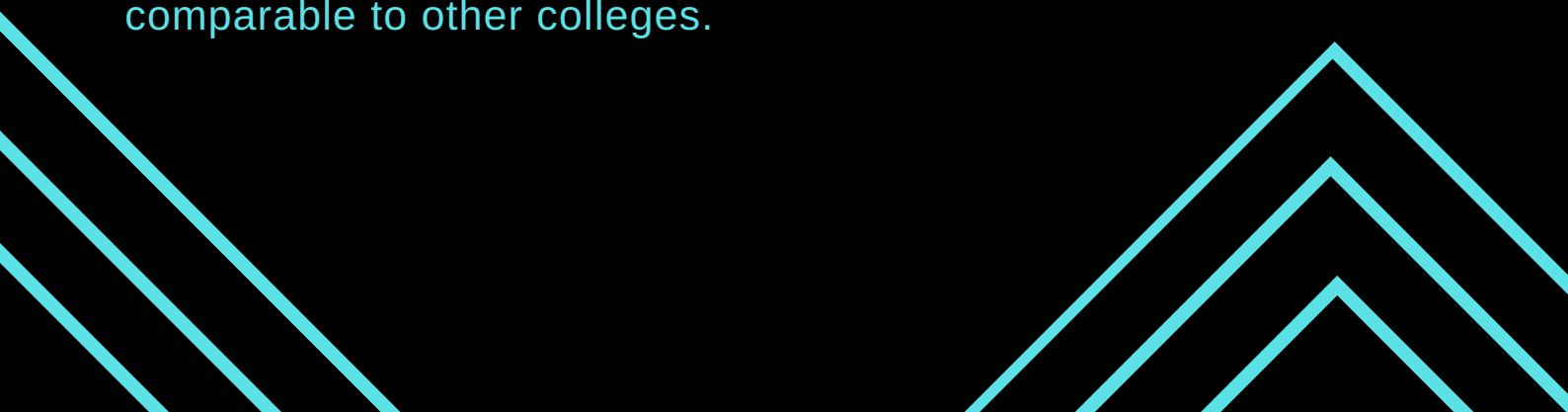
At Fitz, you are allocated a tutor who will see you through your degree for meetings at the beginning and end of every term. You can see them more often than that if you like, and they are a good port of call for any questions or issues you have, whether via email or in person. You can switch tutors or speak to other tutors or the Senior Tutor instead at any time.

More info here: <https://www.fitz.cam.ac.uk/college-life/welfare/tutors>

It is really important to keep your tutor up to date with your health, so they can anticipate what you might need, like special exam arrangements, hardship funding, counselling, help with transport costs. You may need a letter from your GP explaining your medical situation so the university knows how to help.

At other colleges tutorial provision varies: some students have reported that they have never met their tutor, or that they have no right to switch tutor. Some colleges, like ours, have a more flexible system. You may wish to contact JCRs (undergraduate student committees) to ask about their colleges' provision.

As well as a tutor, all students have a Director of Studies, who looks after their academic progress. The system at Fitz is broadly comparable to other colleges.



Counselling

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There are many ways to access free counselling in Cambridge. You can access counselling from the college and university counsellors at the same time. Not all colleges have their own counsellors, but all students have access to UCS. If you need therapy or other help not covered below, you can apply for funding to cover this through college and the Crane's Fund.

1. College counsellor

Refer yourself by emailing the counsellor to arrange a meeting. You will get an appointment within about a week.

Info: <https://www.fitz.cam.ac.uk/college-life/welfare/health>

2. University Counselling Service (UCS)

a. Individual

Refer yourself via 'Student Pre-Counselling Form' here:

<https://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/studentcouns>

The waiting time can be up to a few weeks.

b. Group

There are one-off workshops, plus mid- and longer-term counselling groups. Information and sign up here:

<https://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/studentcouns/studentgroups>

c. Sexual assault and harassment advisor

Confidential and non-judgemental support:

<https://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/sexual-assault-and-harassment-advisor>

8 Physical access

Almost all of the public areas on the college site have level access. This is unparalleled in other colleges, where there is often limited access to basic facilities such as the canteen or common room.

Most of the Fitz ground floor accommodation has level access, and most of the 1st and 2nd floor accommodation does not have level access. You can have your own small fridge/ freezer in your bedroom with permission from your tutor. There are ensuite rooms specially designed for students with physical impairments, as well as almost a dozen accessible toilets on site. Detailed info here: <https://www.fitz.cam.ac.uk/college-life/welfare/disability>

There is a map of the college with lifts and disabled toilets marked: <https://www.fitz.cam.ac.uk/about/visiting-fitzwilliam>

There is a mobility scooter at the Porters' Lodge (main reception) which can be borrowed with permission from your tutor. If you need taxis or a bus pass for medical reasons, college can also pay for this. Your tutor can advise on other funds or support.

Fitz accommodation is available year-round, and unlike at many other colleges, you do not need to give a reason for preferring to stay in college through the Christmas, Easter or Summer vacations.

The college's public rooms are featured on 'Access Cambridge Wiki', which provides 'access statements' for students running events in college buildings. This is so that disabled students know in advance whether or not the event is suitable for them. <https://access-cambridge.fandom.com/wiki/Category:Fitzwilliam>

The wiki is run by CUSU DSC:
CUSU = Cambridge University Student Union
DSC = Disabled Students' Campaign

Library

Fitz Library is open 24/7 and is staffed 9am-5pm Monday-Friday.

There is level access to all 4 floors via a lift. There are a number of small adaptive items available to borrow, such as book stands, Easydesks and beanbags.

Detailed accessibility information is available here:
<https://www.fitz.cam.ac.uk/college-life/facilities/olisa-library/accessibility>

At the start of each year, all freshers are given an induction into the library, which is a great time to ask any questions.

Our librarian is very helpful and will assist you in finding accessible versions of the resources you need - for example digital, screen-readable versions. If you have other needs that the library could help with (whether or not they are on your Student Support Document), contact the librarian to discuss.



'Reasonable adjustments'

Like all education providers, the colleges and the university are legally obliged to anticipate the needs of disabled and chronically ill students. This means that reasonable adjustments, such as level access, needing help to do laundry or needing longer deadlines on your work, are not your responsibility to pay for or organise. Who you can get support from depends who is responsible for that area:

University - Disability Resource Centre (DRC)

- makes recommendations to your faculty and staff as to what support you need for studying + exams, and who should provide it

Your college

- provides you with an accessible room at no extra charge (you may need to insist that this is your right as per Equality Act 2010)
- your tutor can help you contact the DRC, sign up for counselling, apply for hardship funding, apply for the exam arrangements you need

Student Finance - Disabled Students' Allowance

- provides adaptive furniture for your room; software

Benefits - PIP (Personal Independence Payment)

- pays for help with daily activities or mobility



Short-term illness

If you have a short-term flare up and cannot keep up with your course, it is possible to 'intermit'. This means that you take time out from your course, normally 1 year, to give you time to recover and come back once the episode is over. While many colleges will insist that you move out and not return for the year, Fitz has allowed several intermitting students to stay in college where this was more appropriate for them, e.g. because they were seeking medical treatment in Cambridge, or because they could not stay with family. At Fitz a handful of students intermit each year.

Long-term illness

If a long-term illness or disability makes it impossible for you to study at full pace, it is possible to apply to study at a reduced pace. This isn't the same as 'part-time' study where you might also have a job. Fitz has several students studying at a reduced pace ('double time').

You can find more information here:

<https://www.disabled.cusu.cam.ac.uk/double-time/>

Websites

Fitzwilliam JCR (undergraduate students)

- <https://fitzjcr.com>

Fitzwilliam MCR (graduate students)

- <https://mcr.fitz.cam.ac.uk/>

Fitzwilliam College website

- <https://www.fitz.cam.ac.uk/>

CUSU Disabled Students' Campaign

- <https://disabled.cusu.cam.ac.uk>

CUSU Disabled Students' Campaign group

- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/286817838816877/>

Disability Resource Centre

- <https://www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk>

Cambridge Alternative Prospectus

- <https://www.applytocambridge.com/>

Contact

For undergraduate and graduate admissions

- <https://www.fitz.cam.ac.uk/staff-contacts>

Contact JCR (undergraduate student committee)

- <https://fitzjcr.com/contact>

---> contact Disabled Students' Officer for alternative formats

Contact MCR (graduate student committee)

- <http://mcr.fitz.cam.ac.uk/about-the-mcr/meet-the-committee/>

Contact Disabled Students' Campaign

- <https://www.disabled.cusu.cam.ac.uk/exec/>