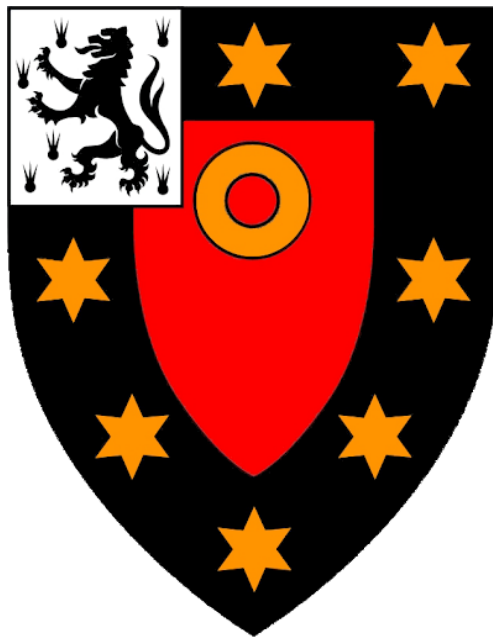


SJC MCR Flat and Room Ballot Rules

2025-2026



Accurate as of 29/1/25

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SECTION 1- Definitions, eligibility, and specific circumstances

1.1 Definitions and suggested timings

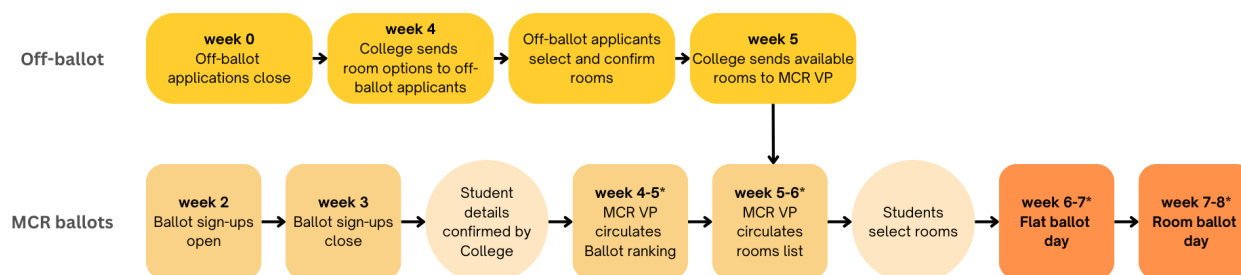
Throughout this document, **single room ballot** refers to the allocation of single rooms by way of an MCR ballot; **off-ballot** refers to the allocation of rooms or flats by College, not the MCR, on disability/religious grounds; and **flat ballot** refers to the allocation of flats for couples by way of an MCR ballot. Collectively, **any ballot/all ballots** makes reference to all three of these. **College** shall always refer to St John's College, Oxford.

All ballots are expected to be resolved in Hilary term. The **ballot year** refers to the academic year in which a ballot takes place, and the **accommodation year** refers to the academic year during which rooms allocated during a ballot shall be inhabited. The following timings are suggested for ballots, with **strict** deadlines referring to College mandated deadlines; so long as these deadlines are advertised with sufficient time by College, late submissions shall not be accepted.

| Date (all weeks refer to Hilary Term) | Applies to? | Description |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--|
| Sunday of Week 0 Strict | Flat ballot | Deadline for family needs applications |
| Friday of Week 0 Strict | Off-ballot | Deadline to apply for off-ballot |
| Friday of Week 0 Strict | Single room | Deadline for religious needs |
| Friday of Week 4 Strict | Off-ballot | Deadline for College off-ballot response |
| Saturday of Week 3 Suggested | Flat ballot | MCR opens flat ballot sign up |
| Saturday of Week 3 Suggested | Single room | MCR opens single room ballot sign up |
| Saturday of Week 6 Suggested | Flat ballot | Flat ballot takes place |
| Friday of Week 7 Strict | Off-ballot | Final deadline for appeals resolution |
| Saturday of Week 7 Suggested | Single room | Single room ballot takes place |
| Saturday of Week 10 Suggested | Single room | Reserve single room ballot takes place |

The suggested timings are based on the Accommodation Office providing the list of rooms and flats available by the end of 4th week of Hilary Term, and the JCR completing their ballot by the end of Hilary term. **A student may enter both the flat ballot and the single room ballot in the same year**, but if they accept a flat in the flat ballot (including acceptance as the partner of someone who has obtained a flat) they shall be immediately removed from the upcoming single room ballot.

The ballot procedure timeline can be visualised as follows:



Dates marked with * are provisional and contingent on responses / decisions by College

1.2 Eligibility

To enter any ballot, a person must be a current full MCR member who will be continuing their graduate course during the accommodation year, as a full-time student. Any person beginning a new course during the accommodation year must apply for accommodation as a Fresher by responding to emails from the Academic and Accommodation Offices. The person entering any ballot must also be within **standard duration** (also called **Expected completion time**) of their degree (in their second year for a two-year Master's, or their fourth year or below for a DPhil) for the accommodation year; the exceptions are listed at the end of this section.

Note that students are required to give information about the standard duration (or Expected completion time) **and** the standard fee liability of their course, which may differ. You can confirm the standard duration and fee liability (respectively) [here](#) before signing up to the ballots.

An additional requirement for the flat ballot is that any applicant for the ballot must be a full MCR member who will be living full-time with their partner (the partner does not have to be an MCR member nor a student), and the flat should be the sole residence of both occupants. In couples where both partners are MCR full members, both partners may enter the flat ballot, and the highest ranked partner will be used to determine the rank of the couple. It is therefore in the interest of any couple where both partners are MCR full members for both partners to enter the flat ballot.

Any MCR member wishing to enter the flat ballot or the room ballot must complete and submit all necessary forms to the MCR Vice President when called upon to do so. If inaccurate information is provided or information is provided late, the Vice President may demote or remove the applicant from the ranking list. All information over fee liability and standard duration will be checked with the Academic Office before the flat and room ballot draws.

Should a student wish to enter any ballot despite being outside of standard duration for the accommodation year, the restriction may be waived by College under exceptional circumstances that prolong a degree. The student should contact the Domestic Bursar before Friday of Week 0 to outline the circumstances and evidence. In both cases, the student must still complete the ballot they entered in the normal manner, and their application/rank will be treated as outlined elsewhere under these rules, conditional on eligibility being accepted.

1.3 Delayed degree starts, suspensions, and fieldwork

In a small number of cases, due to a delayed DPhil start (for someone who starts in Hilary or Trinity term), or a suspension for a number of terms that is not divisible by three, a student's course progress may no longer overlap perfectly with an academic year. In these cases, a student shall be considered to be within fee liability/within standard duration of their degree for the accommodation year should they still be within fee liability/within standard duration (respectively) for the Michaelmas of the accommodation year. If the final year of fee liability is spread over more than one academic year, they may choose which to designate as their finalist year on the ballot, but may not use this more than once.

If a student either suspends status or is faced with travel restrictions preventing their arrival in the United Kingdom, such that they do not spend more than 50% of an academic year living in College accommodation, their ballot entry used to obtain that room will be voided and the score from that room will not be counted. For the purposes of the ballot, Trinity term is 6 months long (50% of the year), and both Michaelmas and Hilary terms are 3 months long (25% of the year). For example, if a student suspends status for Trinity term and leaves their room, then the ballot entry used to get that room may be re-used at a later date. It is the responsibility of the student to be able to prove that either they suspended their status, or were faced with travel restrictions, to the MCR Vice President.

There are DPhil degrees with a three year fee liability where a student spends the third year on fieldwork. Where a student has spent 50% or more of their third year on fieldwork, with 50% defined in the same manner as the paragraph above, they shall be eligible to enter Ballot 1 as a finalist for their fourth year, conditional on not having entered Ballot 1 previously.

1.4 Family needs, religious needs, and medical needs

Family needs refers to any applicant to the flat ballot who has or is expecting children and who therefore requires a particular type of flat (for instance a two-bedroom one). Religious needs refers to any applicant to the single room ballot who requires a particular type of room on religious grounds. Medical needs refers to any applicant to the room ballot who requires a particular type of room on medical grounds. (Room allocations for students with medical needs used to be arranged by College, but has now been moved to the MCR ballot

and will occur in the same way as religious needs allocations). The procedure in these cases is:

- The student must contact the **Domestic Bursar** by the Friday 0th Week of Hilary term, with information about the specific accommodation needs that arise from their family situation, religion, or medical condition
- The information will be reviewed by the relevant College authorities. In the event of a successful application the MCR Vice President shall be informed of the name of the person, and the type of room that they must be guaranteed (for religious needs and medical needs)
- For family needs and disability only: On a successful application, the student will be provided with suitable accommodation (subject to availability), and does **not** need to formally enter the flat ballot
- For religious needs and medical needs only: The student must sign up to the single room ballot in the normal manner, following the normal MCR deadlines. If the student is ranked highly enough in the room ballot to receive a room,¹ the MCR Vice President shall ensure that at least one room meeting the student's requirement is left available for the student²

Applications for family needs accommodation due to changes in circumstances at other points in the year may be made to the Domestic Bursar, but will be reviewed on a case to case basis and subject to availability of flats at that point in time. For family needs, religious needs, and medical needs, a student must reapply annually.

If the number of successful applications for either religious needs or medical needs is greater than 5, the MCR Vice President will share this number with the MCR, so that students can take this into account when considering their room options.

SECTION 2- The off-ballot procedure

2.1 Off-ballot procedure

This is handled entirely by the relevant College authorities, and the MCR does not play any role in deciding individual cases, nor is any personal data shared with students. College is required to advertise applications by the end of Week 6 of Michaelmas, and the deadline to apply is Friday Week 0 of Hilary. Note that all applications will require medical evidence unless it is a repeat application for a permanent condition. Further details, including the appeals procedure, can be obtained from the College **Disability Coordinator**. No room

¹ For instance if there are 75 rooms and they are ranked 75th or better

² For instance, in the cases where a student requires an ensuite room, is ranked 45th in the ballot, and there are 35 ensuite rooms plus a number of non-ensuite rooms on the ballot: the ballot will proceed as normal until only one of the ensuite rooms is free, at which point the last ensuite room will be reserved for the student. The generalisation of this procedure to n greater than 1 is trivial and left as an exercise to the reader

allocated by the off-ballot procedure shall be charged at a rent greater than B-grade, regardless of the room's actual rent grade.

SECTION 3- The Flat Ballot

3.1 General

The tenancy period for flats is decided by the Accommodation Office (ordinarily from 1 September to 30 August) and will be advertised before the ballot. As the tenancies last for one year, a student applicant must expect to be a full member for the entire following academic year, and may be required to vacate their flat if leave to supplicate is granted during the year.

At least one partner in each couple must enter the flat ballot. As noted previously, in couples where both partners are MCR full members, both individuals may enter the ballot and the couple will be ranked according to the highest ranked partner.

The MCR Vice President shall first hold a random draw to rank all individual entrants who are not placed in the reserve flat ballot, from highest ranked (first draw) to lowest (last). The Vice President shall then do the same for the reserve flat ballot. Every applicant shall be ranked, not just those who are high enough to receive a flat, to also generate a ranked waiting list. All draws shall be held in public. An individual shall be placed in the reserve flat ballot should they meet at least one of the following criteria:

- They have lived at least three academic years in a College flat, not including the accommodation year they are applying for but including the current ballot year; living in a College flat during any part of an academic year, regardless of the length of stay and regardless of whether the person had balloted personally for the flat, counts as having lived in a College flat for that year
- They are outside of fee liability for the accommodation year they are applying for

Once individual ranks are known, couples' ranks can be worked out by using the highest ranked individual in each couple to determine ordering. Couples may express a preference for the type of flat, and/or location, and where possible couples will be reassigned the same flat that they have been living in if reapplying, but any decisions on specific flat allocation are up to the Accommodation Office. Any expressed preferences will be forward to the Accommodation Office alongside the ballot rankings.

In the event that further flats are released by the Accommodation Office subsequent to the conduct of the ballot, such accommodation will be allocated in order of the ranked waiting list (and the tenancy period shall remain as previously advertised). In the event that all couples on the waiting list have been allocated a flat, or have been offered one and have

declined the offer, any flats remaining or subsequently becoming available will be allocated by the MCR Vice President after informing all MCR members of the availability of the accommodation and ranking respondents randomly.

SECTION 4- The single room ballot

4.1 Ballot order

The single room ballot consists of Ballots 1, 2, 3, and the Reserve Ballot. No student may enter any of Ballots 1, 2, and 3 more than once, but a student may enter the Reserve Ballot more than once. Please note that to 'enter' a ballot means to obtain a room in the ballot, regardless of whether the student actually goes on to live in the room. Finalists get priority on Ballot 1 over non-finalists, so it is typical for students to save their Ballot 1 entry for the final year of their course, though it is possible to use it at any time.³

Students that will be past the full fee-paying duration (fee liability) of their course during the accommodation year will be automatically placed on the reserve ballot. The standard fee liabilities of all courses can be found here:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding/fees/liability?wssl=1>. As an example, since the fee liability of a standard DPhil student (i.e. not CDT or DTP) is nine terms, a standard DPhil student entering their fourth year of studies in Michaelmas 2023 will automatically be placed on the reserve ballot during the 2023 ballot. This is a College policy that will be strictly adhered to.

Ballot 1 takes place first, so entrants have the first choice of available rooms. It is followed by Ballots 2, 3, and the Reserve Ballot, in that order. Due to the timing of the JCR Ballot, the Reserve Ballot may take place at a later date than Ballots 1, 2 and 3.

4.2 Rankings

For Ballot 1, entrants are ranked as follows:

1. Students entering the final year of any course (a 'Finalist') are ranked above those who are not entering the final year of any course. The final year is defined in terms of fee liability, not in terms of standard duration
2. Entrants are ranked according to the average of their room scores, from lowest to highest. Information about this calculation is provided below.

³ Ballots reset per new degree, where the new degree is entirely separate from the previous one (e.g. it does **not** reset for an integrated 2+2 MPhil and DPhil path). Where a student has interrupted a degree to pursue another degree, for instance a medical student interrupting to do a Master's, once they resume the first degree they continue counting what Ballots they have used during the first degree, but do not count ballots used during the other degree. However, to prevent a person being eligible for the very best rooms more than once, each person can only ever be counted as a Finalist once regardless of the number of degrees. Furthermore, the average room score will use the score from any room ever held.

3. In the event of a tie, students starting the final year of a doctorate are ranked above those starting the final year of a master's degree

For ballots 2-3, entrants are ranked as follows:

1. Entrants are ranked according to the average of their room scores, from lowest to highest. Information about this calculation is provided below
2. In the event of a tie, students starting a relatively higher year-in-course are ranked higher

For the Reserve Ballot, entrants are ranked as follows:

1. Entrants who will be within the standard duration of their course in the accommodation year (e.g. in the 4th year of any DPhil) are ranked above those who will have exceeded the standard duration of their course
2. Entrants who will have exceeded the standard duration of their course by the longest time will be ranked lowest
3. Entrants with equal rank after steps 1 to 3 are ranked according to the average of their room scores, from lowest to highest

In the event of any tie in ranking after the administration of the above rules, the Vice President will randomly order such entrants.

4.3 Subsequent rooms

Once the single room ballot has been completed, any subsequent rooms that become available will be allocated through the following process: As soon as rooms become available (and the Accommodation Office tells the MCR Vice President) they will be allocated to the waiting list in ranking order. If more than one room becomes available at a time, they will all be offered to the first person on the waiting list, then the next one, and subsequently, until all new available rooms have been allocated.

4.4 Room and ballot scores

Rooms are given a score out of 200 based on a number of different objective criteria, considering room size (a score out of 100), ensuite facilities (a score out of 50), storage (a score out of 25), and kitchen quality (a score out of 25). In addition, changes to a room score may have been made due to specific advantages or disadvantages such as having an individual kitchen or very poor lighting. A list of these room scores will be distributed by the Vice President prior to the ballot.

An entrant's ballot score, used to determine ballot ranking, is calculated using the following system:

1. The average of the room scores of previous College rooms (including the current one) is calculated

2. In the event that a student has occupied more than one room in a single year, the highest room score will be used as that year's value. The exception to this rule is if the move in rooms was necessitated (e.g. on grounds of refurbishment, medical reasons)
3. Couples' accommodation has a score of 200 (the maximum)
4. Any full year spent out of College during an entrant's current course will contribute a score of 0 for that year in the calculation of the entrant's average room score.
5. If inaccurate information is provided in the registration form in an attempt to attain a better ballot position, the MCR Vice President reserves the right to move the entrant to a lower ballot

4.5 Day of the Ballot

Once rankings are known, every person on the ballot will be allocated a 3-minute window on Ballot Day. The date and timings will be circulated in advance, along with a Google Spreadsheet. This will include a list of all the rooms available during the next academic year.

On the day of the ballot, each person will choose a room based on those available during their allocated time window. For example, let's say *MCR member 1* was assigned the slot of 9:00-9:03. That person has until 9:03 to pick a room and let the Vice President know. Once they have chosen, that room will be removed from the Google Sheet so it is clear that room is no longer available. Then *MCR Member 2*, whose slot is from 9:03-9:06 will pick a room. The ballot will proceed in this manner until all rooms are accounted for.

It is possible to pick your room online or via email, and you do not need to be in Oxford during the ballot day. If an individual does not select a room by the end of their time deadline, they will miss their window of choice, as the ballot carries on regardless. If you find that you are not available during your allotted time window, some options include:

1. Email the Vice President a list of room preferences beforehand. The VP will then select a room from your list of preferences during your allotted window, if one of the rooms is available.
2. Nominate a proxy who will choose a room in your place. Please ensure you discuss your preferences in detail with your proxy, as whatever they choose for you will be final.

SECTION 5- Miscellaneous

5.1 Interpretation

In the case of any ambiguity in this document, interpretations of the rules will be made by the Vice President under consultation with The President. For any questions or concerns regarding this document, please contact the Vice President.

5.2 Publicity

For *both* the flat ballot, and the room ballot, the MCR Vice President should ensure:

1. The sign up form is open for no fewer than ten days
2. That the opening of the sign up form is advertised by the MCR mailing list, and that an email is also sent on the wider College postgraduate mailing list
3. That at least one reminder email is sent to the MCR mailing list and the postgraduate mailing list before the close of the sign up.

5.3 Presidential and Vice-Presidential priority (flat ballot and single room ballot)

The *incoming* President and Vice-President shall *each* be able to receive priority in *either* the single room ballot or the flat ballot. In any ballot where the President has entered, they shall be ranked first, superseding any usual rankings. In any ballot where the Vice President has entered, they shall be ranked second if the President has also entered that ballot, and first otherwise. If the election results are not yet known the ballot may have to be delayed. The scores from rooms obtained under a priority ballot do not count in future room ballot score calculations.