

Section 2 - Connect with your University



Reading List – Biology

If you are looking to do some reading/preparation ahead of starting University here are some suggested tasks which you might like to try:

Suggested reading/reading lists:

“Big Picture” is an excellent free magazine produced by the Wellcome Trust. It is written for post-16 Biology students and explores the innovations and implications of cutting-edge biomedical science. Visit their website to access previous issues as PDF copies:

<https://www.stem.org.uk/big-picture/resource-collection>

“New Scientist” is a weekly magazine which summarises current research and discoveries across the breath of science and technology disciplines: <http://www.newscientist.com>. You need to login using the following details: Username - kgreaves@ttsonline.net; Password - thomastelford

You may be able to access a reading list for your specific course via the University/faculty webpages. If you cannot find this, or a list has not yet been uploaded, try typing the name of your course plus “reading list” into Google for some suggestions. For example, I have taken this Biology recommended reading list from the webpage of Balliol College, University of Oxford:

- Carroll, S., *Endless Forms Most Beautiful* (an excellent introduction to the diversity of life and its genetic basis, from an eloquent writer on the subject).
- Leroi, A., *Mutants* (an excellent introduction to genetics and the formation of the phenotype, illustrated with the extraordinary range of human mutations: it links together genes, cells and organismal form).
- Darwin C., *On the Origin of Species* (needs no introduction! This is a long, dense read but of course a foundational text in life sciences)
- Holland, P., *The Animal Kingdom: A very short introduction*. (this one is relatively close to the diversity of life strand of the first year course, or at least the zoological part of it, and provides an insightful yet accessible introduction to the diversity of animal life).
- Dawkins, R. & Yang, W. *The Ancestor’s Tale: A Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Life* (no Balliol Biology reading list is complete without a Dawkins. This one is a beautifully written journey through evolutionary history, from our own perspective as a species).

SKILLS: Referencing:

One of the things I found trickiest when I first started university was referencing journal articles and books correctly in my essays and my dissertation. It would be a great idea for you to familiarise yourselves with referencing before you begin your course.

The system we commonly use in Biology is known as the Harvard system, which is where the name and date of the source being cited are given in parenthesis in the body of the text (e.g. Hogg, 2020) and then the full citation of the journal/book/conference etc is given at the end in the reference list, to allow readers to locate original sources themselves. If you have read any scientific articles you may have seen this system in use without knowing its name.

Generally, Harvard Reference List citations follow this format:

Last name, First Initial. (Year published). Title. City: Publisher, Page(s).

This webpage from the Open University explains the importance of referencing in university work: <https://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/referencing-and-plagiarism>

Many universities produce their own guides on referencing for their students; I have collated a few which you can access on the online curriculum [here](#). Two of these resources are short guides (2-4 pages) whilst two are much more in-depth handbooks.

SKILLS: Making notes during lectures:

In university lectures you will need to develop note-taking skills – in my first-year lectures there were around 250 students in my core classes so no opportunities to ask the lecturer to stop and repeat something you missed, or scroll back to a previous slide! Try choosing a podcast, TedTalk or similar production on a topic that interests you, and practice making notes (either using pen and paper, or on a laptop/iPad) whilst the lecturer talks, without hitting the pause button! If you are stuck for where to look, try this page:

<https://www.gresham.ac.uk/schools/science>