

Registered Visiting Students and Associate Members on SCIO Semester Programmes

Understanding the Difference between RVS and AM Statuses

As a semester-long student on the SCIO programme, students may choose one of two statuses*: Registered Visiting Student (RVSs) or Associate Member (AM, with Bodleian Library card).

SCIO pays Wycliffe Hall and either the University of Oxford or its Bodleian Library fees on the student's behalf to give them access to resources. You will see from the table below that that RVS status gives students more privileges and is correspondingly more expensive.

The total cost students pay also covers all their SCIO costs, that is: accommodation, some meals, tuition costs (for tutorials, discussion classes, seminars, field trips etc), pastoral support, and some social activities, regardless of their status.

Student's access to particular tutorial tutors does not depend on their status (i.e. they do not get better tutors if they pay more).

Some of the information below may seem rather technical but it is important that we set out exactly what the status will give so that students can make an informed choice about their time in Oxford.

On the whole, the difference in status makes more difference to STEM than to humanities or social science students because of differential access to teaching materials.

*Students who are not citizens of the US or Canada may need a student visa to attend the SCIO programme. Any students requiring a student visa are required to come with the RVS status due to visa regulations.

University of Oxford	Registered Visiting Student	Associate Member with Bodleian Library Card
University of Oxford lectures	Full access to University online and in person lectures	Access to University online and in person lectures which are open to the general public
University of Oxford teaching materials	Access to online lecture notes, problem sheets, reading lists, course handbooks related to University	Some limited access is possible in some faculties/departments which make this material openly accessible
Access to the physical buildings of the Bodleian Library	Access to all physical buildings of the Bodleian Library normally open to undergraduates	Access to all physical buildings of the Bodleian Library normally open to undergraduates
Access to licensed material for which the Bodleian Library is a subscriber (electronic data including journals, e-books, reference databases, etc.)	From any location for most material (e.g. other University buildings, student accommodation, cafés, etc.). A small amount of material can be accessed only from computer terminals within Bodleian library buildings because of restrictions imposed by licensors.	All material can be accessed only from computer terminals within Bodleian Library buildings. Material cannot be accessed from other University buildings, student accommodation, cafés, etc.

Borrowing privileges from the Bodleian Library	No. Bodleian books are reference only.	No. Bodleian books are reference only.
Access to Bodleian manuscript collections	Only with special permission granted on the basis of particular need.	Only with special permission granted on the basis of particular need.
Access to Faculty, Departmental, and Divisional Libraries	Access to all Faculty and Divisional Libraries normally open to undergraduates	Access to all Faculty and Divisional Libraries normally open to undergraduates
Borrowing privileges from Faculty, Departmental, and Divisional Libraries	Yes, on the same terms as matriculated undergraduates	No
Ability to be considered for University sports teams	Yes	No
Access to University Counselling Service	Yes	No
Access to University Language Centre	Yes	No
Access to University IT support	Yes	No
Access to personal Oxford email address (via Wycliffe Hall)	Yes	No
Access to University Careers Service	Yes	No
Access to student-led University clubs	Yes	Often
Free access to University museums, gardens, arboretum, etc	Yes, including to special exhibitions	Yes, but a charge may be levied for special exhibitions
Wycliffe Hall	Registered Visiting Student	Associate Member with Bodleian Library Card
Access to Wycliffe library	Yes	Yes
Borrowing privileges from Wycliffe library	Yes, except for reference books.	Yes, except for reference books.
Access to Wycliffe Hall common room, dining room, chapel, gardens etc	Yes	Yes
Wycliffe Hall status	Student Member	Associate Member
End of semester certification	Transcript and prose report from Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford; credits are transcribed onto student's home institution transcript	Grade report and prose report from Wycliffe Hall; credits are transcribed onto student's home institution transcript
Ability to play on Wycliffe Hall sports teams or teams with which Wycliffe has an affiliation	Yes	Yes
Access to Wycliffe counselling and pastoral support	Yes	Yes

In addition to the above chart, below are some example student situations that we've created to help guide students in making your selection:

I'm taking humanities courses. I like to get up early and get into the library where I work best. What's the better status for me?

You can choose either status. Your subjects will work well with the AM status as lectures are less important and there is less reliance on centrally provided information: you'll receive most of your information via your tutor. Because you like getting out and about and like working in libraries you'll be able to do your reading there happily or download material to consult offline.

I like working at night and mainly work in my room or social spaces like cafes. I am a psychologist. What's the better status for me?

With your subject you'll benefit from access to lectures so the RVS status is better for you. This is particularly so since you work best when libraries are closed. You'll need remote access to the journal literature and for that you need to have RVS status. If you chose AM status you could still have a fruitful time in Oxford, but you'll need to work when libraries are open or be organised enough to download material on a library visit and then consult it when you're offline.

I hope to play sport at a high level. I'm taking a range of courses from a range of disciplines. What's the better status for me?

With RVS status, but not AM status, you'll be eligible to try out for a place on various University sports teams so we'd recommend RVS status for you. That way you'd be able to get remote access to books and journals too so your work will be easier to fit round matches. If you decide that you'd like to play sport more for fun so that you don't have to take so much time in training (and that's something that a lot of students do decide), you can choose either status as there are lots of less intense sports opportunities open to AMs, from rugby to soccer to tiddlywinks. AMs and RVSs can play in teams associated with Wycliffe Hall and its partner college Queen's and this gives lots of social and well as sporting opportunities.

I'm a performing musician and want to join a choir and orchestra. Do I need to have RVS status to do that?

No. Almost all performing opportunities for sacred or secular music, are open to students of both statuses, and there are also music opportunities outside the university. On the other hand, if you're interested in things like University masterclasses then you'll need to be an RVS to attend. Students of either status will find a wide variety of musical ensembles open, from singing evensong in college chapels to playing in orchestras to involvement in musical theatre.

I'm a STEM student but I'm on a tight budget: must I be an RVS?

No. You can come as an AM, but you won't have access to University lectures and accompanying lecture notes and problem sheets. For some students that works well, but others really value having the online material, especially as they get used to the Oxford way of approaching STEM (research literature, not textbooks). Access to journal literature will be really important for you. If you're happy to go into libraries to have access and/or to download material, then you can choose either status. If you like to work remotely, then we'd recommend RVS status.

I see a counsellor regularly on campus and want to continue that when I'm in Oxford so that I can be confident that my studies will go well. Which status is better for me?

Either status works for you. We have general support available from within our staff but for specialist and regular counselling you would have to look outside the SCIO staff. RVSs can use the University of Oxford Counselling Service at no extra charge (though there may be a waiting list for non urgent appointments). For AMs, SCIO staff can point you to specialist practitioners whom you could consult, paying their professional fees. Most SCIO students remain members of their home university while they're at Oxford. If this applies to you, you could continue to meet your campus counsellor remotely while you're in Oxford and some students find that continuity helpful.

Will I get to meet more Oxford students if I'm an RVS?

You won't have access to University classes or lectures if you're an AM, so RVSs will meet more Oxford students in academic settings. However, AMs will have plenty of opportunity to meet students and other Britons and international residents in social settings, including University clubs and societies, and churches, through volunteering etc. Whatever your status, you'll get to meet students and staff at Wycliffe Hall, and make life-long friends among the other SCIO students.

I understand that tutorial tutors are the same whatever my status. Is that also true of advisers for undergraduate research essays and British culture courses?

Yes. Your status won't affect which tutors or seminar leaders or research advisers you are taught by. The only difference in personnel is that RVSs can attend University lectures and University classes so that they will meet more Oxford professors in those particular settings; but all the one-to-one teaching and things like field trips and small discussion classes are organised separately from University lectures and are done by the same tutors, whatever your status.

I need a visa to study at Oxford: what status should I choose?

Any student who needs a visa will need to have RVS status. This is because your visa application will be sponsored by the University of Oxford. All year-long students require a visa. At the time of writing, one semester students from the US, Canada, and some other countries do not need a visa. If you are not from the US or Canada, please check here to see if you need a visa to study for a semester in the UK: <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>.