



St Catharine's College  
Cambridge



# ALTERNATIVE PROSPECTUS

## Life at Catz as an undergraduate



CREATED BY  
**Catz undergraduates**

# Hello! From all of us!

## WELCOME TO THE ST CATHARINE'S COLLEGE (CATZ) ALTERNATIVE PROSPECTUS!

**This is a chance to find out about all aspects of life at Catz from a student perspective, including why we love life at Catz and what the College has to offer you.**

Catz is centrally located just next to King's College, with Sainsbury's (other supermarkets are available) an ideal 5(ish)-minute walk away. The close proximity to other colleges also means you can't go far without bumping into a friend, conveniently aiding procrastination and ultimately giving life here a really social, community feel.

For the pub quiz enthusiasts among you, Catz was founded in 1473, making it the 10th oldest college in Cambridge, but this sense of history is also combined with a modern, friendly outlook, summed up by our unofficial college motto 'for the wheel'.

Whilst you might recognise our front gates topped with the college symbol of the wheel, we'd love for you to come inside and see for yourself, either on an open day or at any time as a prospective student. Of course, it isn't possible for everyone to visit before applying and we hope this guide gives you a flavour of what it's like to live, eat, work and socialise at Catz and why it might just be the place for you.

Enjoy!

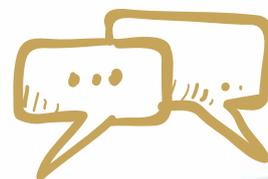
**\* The Catz Junior Common Room (JCR) Committee xx**

**\* Think of the JCR as a student council, with a committee elected to represent all aspects of undergraduate life: from sports and societies, to BME issues.**





## Academic life at Catz



**Cambridge is world-renowned for providing the very best education. Whilst lectures, which are organised by the University, are usually the main way you learn your subject, it's the supervision system that makes studying here so unique.**

Each college is responsible for organising supervisions for its students. At Catz, we're lucky enough to have some of the best supervisors in Cambridge: many are actively involved in research, some lecture, and a large number are authors of books on reading lists across the University! The frequency and structure of supervisions varies a lot by subject, but they always offer an unparalleled opportunity to discuss your subject in a small group (usually two students and one supervisor) with an expert in the field.

In terms of academic resources, we have two libraries (one more than most colleges!), which we can access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Sherlock Library was built in 1675-1677 (so no, not 'that' Sherlock) and houses books on most humanities subjects, such as modern languages, English literature, art and architecture. The new, or at least newer, facility is called the Shakeshaft Library and contains the rest of the College's collection, providing us with a massive 65,000 volumes in total! The College's Librarian is always very happy to receive requests for new books, making us quite lucky in comparison to other colleges with smaller libraries.

We have access to two computer rooms on our main site (and another at St Chad's, our second year accommodation), with scanners and colour printers installed. All college computers have plenty of software on them, saving you lots of money (and, of course, a trip to your department). Our central location also means that both departmental libraries and the University Library (ten minutes' walk away from the main site) are very accessible.

Each student has a Director of Studies (DoS for short), who is someone who works in your subject (usually one of your supervisors) and is responsible for overseeing your academic performance. Our strong academic reputation is illustrated by our consistently high rankings in the Tompkins Table (an annual ranking of colleges by academic performance).

But it's important to remember that there is also lots of support available if you find yourself struggling with any aspect of your academic work, and that your supervisors will be understanding and willing to provide accommodations should you need them. Additionally, many subjects, such as natural sciences, maths or languages, have their own student-led societies at Catz, which provide lots of opportunities to meet other people doing your subject and also to attend fun social events! With all of this, I think it's clear why Catz students love studying here (myself included!).



## Accommodation & facilities

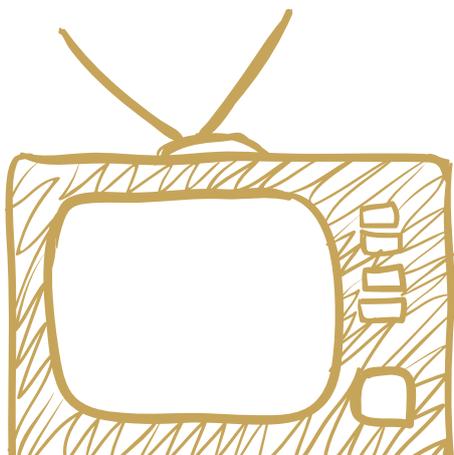


**All Catz students are guaranteed accommodation for the first 3 years of their undergraduate degree. First and third years live on the main site on Trumpington Street, known as the Island site; whilst second years live at St Chad's.**

On the Island site, there are a large range of rooms, some of which are smaller, some with en-suites and others which are larger and more traditional – there is something for everyone. Those who share bathrooms typically share with 6–8 people and each room has a large basin and a mirror. Kitchens (or ‘gyps’ as we call them) are also shared between approx. 8 people and they are equipped with a microwave, hob, kettle, toaster and fridge. All college rooms are well-furnished with a single bed, desk, lamp, chair, wardrobe and some drawer space. All heating and lighting are provided.

St Chad's, where second-year students live is an off-site accommodation block, an approximate 10-minute walk/3-minute cycle away. Here, students choose to live in flats of 4 or 5 with their mates – flats are allocated in the first year by a random ballot. Each flat consists of 2 bathrooms and a kitchen with an oven. Some of the flats have large corridors that students can use to make into a dining space. All rooms are modern and large, and as an extra bonus are in an octagonal shape (for our ‘wheel’ theme of course!).

On the Island site, there are 2 laundry rooms – with a total of 7 washing machines and 7 tumble driers. All these machines are coin-operated, which means coins become very valuable to students; alternatively, there is a note-to-coin exchange machine in one of the laundry rooms. At St Chad's, there is also a laundry room on site – which is very convenient. These washing facilities are fairly good value for money, compared to other colleges – costing £1.80 for a wash. All rooms have radiators, but some rooms do not have double glazing (so an extra jumper may be needed in winter.)



Unlike most colleges, our JCR committee is responsible for organising the room ballots each year, a process coordinated by our Accommodation and Facilities Officer, which makes the process of choosing rooms very fair. Due to the wide variety of rooms for people to choose from, no-one usually ends up disappointed. Rent for accommodation usually only lasts 8–9 weeks (for the time that we are in Cambridge) and you have the option to pay for a longer contract to include the holidays.

### Facilities

**JCR:** The JCR room itself is an extra place where students can study or chill. It is a great a space with games, a PS4 and a TV to hang out with friends or book out for events.

**McGrath Centre:** The McGrath Centre was newly opened in 2013 and contains a large auditorium used for events, talks, performances and receptions.

**Music Practise Room and Chapel:** For those interested in music, we have a music practise room in college, which contains speakers, amps, microphones, music stands and serves as a place to practise away from your room. All Choral and organ scholars as well as music students can request a piano or keyboard to practise with in their rooms (though if you fit neither of these categories, you may request one for the duration of term, if there is one available). The Catz Chapel is the heart of music at college. The Catz choir practise here daily and services are held here regularly. It is a place to go and sit, regardless of faith. The College's Music Society uses the Chapel to hold concerts throughout the year as well as for ‘Chill in the Chapel’ events – an evening event where all musical acts are welcome (with hot chocolate and biscuits afterwards!).



# Access



**The JCR Access & Admissions Officer's job, along with the other 'liberation' officers (BME, women, etc.), is to make Catz a welcoming space for undergraduate students from all backgrounds, including those more typically underrepresented at Cambridge.**

In the 2020 admissions cycle, 70.5% of successful Catz applicants were from UK state schools, making it a place for everyone, whatever your educational background might be. The Access Officer is available, both for applicants and current students, to listen to concerns and work on making Catz an even more diverse, welcoming community.

The College has also appointed a Schools Liaison Officer to support prospective students in their application process – even those who have never considered Cambridge before!

At a University level, groups such as Class Act work with current Cambridge students, whether working class, carers, first generation or state educated, to ensure they feel supported in their life at Cambridge.

We all want to reassure you- whatever myths or stereotypes you may have heard – that Cambridge is, and can be, a place for you.





## What is BME?

For those of you who may not be familiar with the term 'BME', it stands for Black (and Asian) minority ethnics. The role of the BME Officer is to be a voice for those from BME backgrounds at Catz, representing BME related concerns and perspectives. Each year new representatives are elected to represent the Catz BME Community on the JCR. As well as being the port of call regarding events at Catz, they keep everyone updated about things going on at a wider level throughout the University. Catz has been experiencing a growth of students from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, and so it is important to make sure everyone feels welcomed in this new environment!

## What do the BME officers do?

Currently, the BME officers hold a range of events for current students, such as BME Chills and Socials, discussion panels, and intercollege BME Formals... with a lil' more flavour. And for prospective students the College holds BME Access Days and create BME guides for incoming freshers to make sure everyone can feel comfortable in an environment that may feel different from what they are used to. Any ideas for events to make the Cambridge experience as fun and inclusive as possible are always welcome!

A new mentoring scheme is also being introduced, in which freshers will be paired with someone in either 2nd or 3rd year from a similar background, to provide a bit more insight into what life is like for them. It's nice to have a friendly face around when you're new, and also helps to foster a strong community throughout the years within Catz.



## What is life like a Catz for a BME Student?

Obviously, everyone's experience at Catz and Cambridge is different. It can take time to adjust to a new environment, and how quickly/easily you are able to do this will depend on a number of different factors. But Catz in particular is an extremely inclusive place of everyone, and is known for being very friendly, and we have certainly found it a warm and welcoming college to be at! Through attending the BME chills/socials, it is possible to get to know students from a range of backgrounds across all the different years, and there is a sense of community. Many different initiatives have been suggested by students over the years to help improve the life for BME students, and the vast majority of these have been met receptively by senior members of staff - Catz is certainly a place that acknowledges different experiences and is keen to make life in College the best for everyone.

## What about wider University networks and support?

Cambridge has a number of cultural and religious societies that you can join to find another community within Cambridge. Some people join societies to feel more at home, others to reconnect with their cultures - in any case, they can provide a safe space with lots of fun activities to keep you empowered and entertained throughout the rest of your academic career. Some examples include the

African-Caribbean Society, Islamic Society, Indian Society, Jewish Society, and many, many more which you'll get to find out more about during Freshers' Fairs and other activities put on to welcome new students!

Although it would be naive to say that Cambridge is perfect regarding BME issues/admission, exceptional progress is certainly being made. The BME Officers, alongside a University-wide BME campaign, are ensuring that BME voices are represented, and more importantly, listened to. Catz in particular is extremely good at this.

Don't let possible fears or presumptions stop you from applying to Cambridge (and of course Catz!). We're sure you'll have as much fun as we have had, and would encourage ANYONE and EVERYONE to apply.

If you ever want to find out more or ask any questions, contact the College's BME Officers (you'll find their email on the JCR website!).

## Catering



**Food at Catz can be a real delight, with the Hall offering both lunch and dinner, and breakfast available in the Bar.**

There is always plenty of choice to suit a range of dietary requirements, and the College is always striving to improve the options so that everyone is represented. With a delicious brunch now being served on Saturday as well as Sunday, all hash brown desires can be met!

There is also the choice of cooking for yourself in the shared kitchen facilities known as gyp rooms, equipped with a hob, microwave, kettle and fridge. This can be a good way of getting to know the people living near you! The second year accommodation in St Chad's involves an upgrade in both kitchen size and facilities, as you will also find an oven and a freezer in most flats.

If you are celebrating something or just want to dress up nicely for dinner with your friends, there is the option of booking a place at Formal Hall on a Wednesday or a Sunday, which costs just over £12 and involves a much coveted cheese course - we can assure you that this alone will be a source of great envy from friends from other colleges.



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## Charity

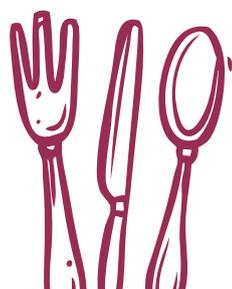


**There are countless ways to get involved in charity work at Catz, both within college and in the wider Cambridge community.**

Within Catz, this is coordinated by the role of the Charities Officer, an elected position on the JCR committee. Along with other JCR officers and members of the wider Catz community, they'll organise College-based events throughout the term. These include pub quizzes, formal dinners and games like assassins. There are also schemes such as end-of-term food donation points, that enable students to leave their left-over food in boxes, which are then donated to 'Jimmy's Cambridge,' a 24/7 homeless charity.

In the wider community, there are a number of University societies for specific charities that organise their own events for you to get involved in. These include Amnesty International, CATS, the Charity Fashion Show, May Week Alternative and Pink Week. There are also an incredible number of different charitable organisations. Cambridge RAG is the biggest student-led charitable organisation in the University, and works with charities on a local, national and international level. In 2019, for example, they raised over £70,000 through extremely popular events including RAG Blind Date, Jailbreak and LOST. If you want to do some volunteering during your time at Cambridge, Student Community Action has been providing fun and unique volunteering opportunities that will fit in with your student lifestyle since 1972.

These are just a handful of examples of the many ways you can help good causes while at Catz. There is something to suit everyone, ranging from University-wide roles with responsibility, to one-off activities around Catz, and the JCR is always open to suggestions for new ideas designed to make a positive impact!





## Disabilities

**Catz is here to help anyone who has a disability, and works hard to be as accessible as possible to everyone with different needs.**

The JCR has a disability representative whose sole role is to look out, campaign for and support the disabled members of the Catz community. The other liberation officers including the welfare officers, also work closely with the disability rep to help support and improve the lives of every member of the Catz community no matter their needs.

Catz is a very supportive and open community that in my own experience is very accepting and willing to work to support you. As part of the renovation of our central spaces, major efforts are being made to improve accessibility, including one-level access in the dining hall.

Academically, your support network of your Tutor and Director of Studies work closely with you to make sure that your access arrangements are met and that studying at Cambridge is as stress free as possible. Whilst at Cambridge, you are also supported by the Disability Resource Centre (DRC), where you will have a specialist advisor to help guide you and give you advice throughout your time at Cambridge.

### Useful links

The Catz Accessibility guide: [caths.cam.ac.uk/about-us/visiting-and-viewing-college/accessibility-guide](https://caths.cam.ac.uk/about-us/visiting-and-viewing-college/accessibility-guide)

DRC: [www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk](https://www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk)



## Environment & ethics

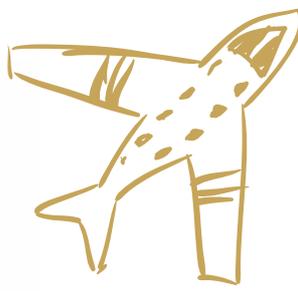
**Catz is working towards being as sustainable and ethical as possible. There are lots of little changes we can all do to reduce our carbon footprint and its part of my job to try and make these as easy as possible for everyone.**

This is done in a variety of ways from using your keep cup for drinks from the bar or to fill up with (free!!) coffee at brunch, to making it clear what can be recycled and how. The types of activities planned by the JCR include a plant sale so we can all have a little bit of green goodness in our rooms, a second-hand clothes sale to keep fashion funky and sustainable and hosting scoop – a zero-waste food group. A green guide will be published soon to help students settle into life at Cambridge in the most environmentally friendly way!

The Catz Green Working Group meets regularly, which students are welcome to get involved in. These meetings are chaired by the Chaplain who is both a super eco-warrior and a never-ending ray of positivity who makes working towards a greener Catz a hopeful and exciting experience. As the future is uncertain, many issues surrounding the environment and wider ethical problems have never been more important. There will be plenty of opportunities to get involved with this discussion in College during your time here!



# International



**Catz has truly become a 'home away from home' for all of us. As an international student, the move to university can be a bit more daunting, as you are entering a completely new environment, but Catz makes that transition as smooth and fun as possible, no matter how far away you have come from.**

Even before you arrive, international students can sign up to be paired with an older international/BME Catz student who is there to answer any questions you might have, give advice and just be a friendly face around College during your first year. This makes it easier for international students to enjoy their time at Catz from the second they arrive as you will not need to worry about the trivialities of moving abroad that much anymore. Your mentor will always be open to have a chat, but in my opinion, all Catz students are very open and approachable; after all, we are called 'the friendly college' for a reason!

The views of international students are always taken into consideration, and the community is represented in the JCR committee by the International Officer, and there are also BME Officers always ready to listen and help.

Cambridge is such a diverse environment, with students from all over the world, that it truly is a hotspot for sharing cultures. However, you can always get the feeling of 'home' by joining one of the many societies for different countries and cultures, because sometimes all you need is just to talk to someone in your native language, or reminisce about a traditional snack.

Catz is a wonderful place to immerse yourself in the British culture, whether that is going to a nearby pub, watching rugby together in the Catz bar, insisting it is not cold on crisp days or having baked beans at brunch. In no time, you will feel at home and wish that terms were just a little bit longer!



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## LGBT+



As has already been mentioned, Catz has a friendly and accepting environment. A much valued part of this environment is the Catz LGBT+ community. The JCR committee has an LGBT+ Officer representing LGBT+ interests within the undergraduate community, and through communication with the College's leadership and administrative team. This is to enhance the welfare of the community here at Catz. You will be able to find and contact the Officer around college, through their email, and with regular meeting times they schedule in case you haven't had a chance to raise something you'd like to, or in case you'd like a general chat.

As a college striving for progression, we always look for ways to facilitate the needs of our LGBT+ community. One such example of this is our Gender Expression Fund. The GEF is a medium through which individuals seeking to purchase resources for the purpose of gender expression, but are perhaps financially constrained in doing so, may apply for funding to acquire these items. This is done through communication with the JCR LGBT+ Officer and is done in strictest confidence. We believe there should be no constraint to the expression of one's identity, and we seek that each person in college feels as comfortable and free as possible.

Another way the Catz LGBT+ Community thrives is our many events allowing us and our allies to come together and have fun: everyone is welcome at our gatherings. Such events include LGBT(ea)+ café trips where the community gathers, gets to know one another, hang out and take a well-deserved chill. We also have collective gatherings where we all meet together and go to Glitterbomb — the main LGBT+ night out in Cambridge, aside from DotCotton (a once a month LGBT+ event hosted at Fez club)! Some other delights include the LGBT+ History Month Formal, hosted in February, as well as a spoken word night in the college chapel which was open to all colleges and celebrated the literature of LGBT+ individuals, historically, and of those currently studying at Cambridge.

Some new features coming to Catz to enhance the community in 2020 onwards include an LGBT+ Society facilitating many of the LGBT+ events, and allowing more resources to be directed towards enhancing community visibility and presence. Additionally, there is an LGBT+ representation scheme being introduced for the purpose of creating a wider representation than that of the LGBT+ Officer alone, so students feel there are others they more closely relate to when seeking advice and/or liberation. This is a voluntary scheme and is one of the many ways the Catz LGBT+ community gets to interact and to take an active role within the college.

### Recommended activities

- The LGBT+ parenting scheme, which allows you to meet more LGBT+ individuals outside of college
- Glitterbomb (for much more tasteful music than most other club nights)
- The various LGBT+ events on in college
- Joining a Cambridge University LGBT+ freshers chat – or, if necessary, making one
- Allowing yourself to be you!

### Useful links

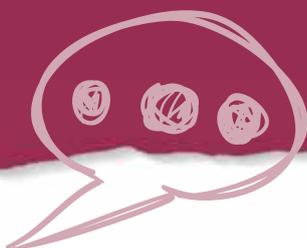
Catz LGBT+ Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/catzlgbtplus/>

Cambridge University Student Union LGBT+ Student Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2202197406/>

Cambridge University Student Union LGBT+ Student Page: <https://www.facebook.com/lgbtcusu/>



CREDIT: DBAINBRIDGE

## Sports & societies



**One of the most impressive things about Catz is its variety in sports and societies. Whether you fancy a relaxed kick-about or wish to train 3-4 times a week and compete to a high standard, Catz has everything to offer.**

Sports ranging from rugby to squash, tennis and climbing are all thriving with new enthusiasts getting involved each year.

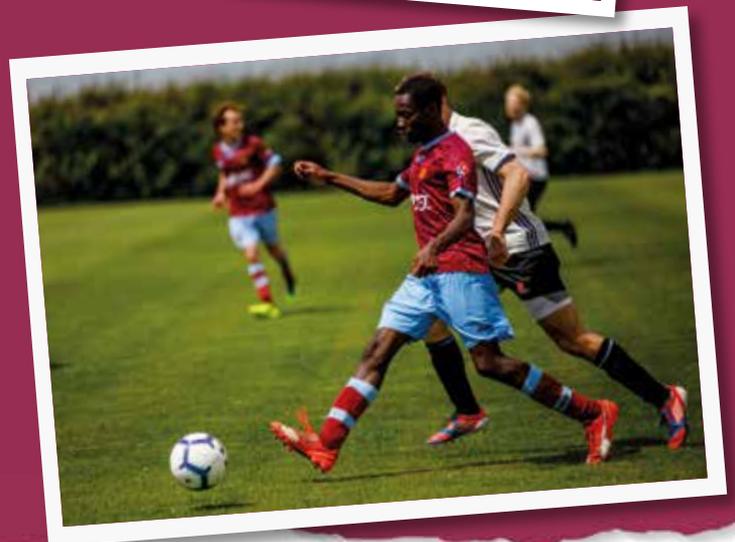
There are roughly 25 sports in College and all have their own appointed captain, so there is always somebody to ask if you want to get involved. Besides, if there isn't a sport for you, you are warmly encouraged to set one up! College sport helps you make lasting friendships with people in other year groups who you may not have come across otherwise – the most typical example of this has to be the infamous mixed netball team, who have games against other colleges on Sundays. This aspect of college life cannot be understated, and Catz certainly pride themselves on maintaining the friendliest of atmospheres. So many people throw themselves into as many sports as they can – it's a great way to escape the academic pressure of term and go have a laugh with some friends on the weekend.

On the more competitive side of things, each year Cambridge hosts the famous 'Cuppers' tournament in each sport. This constitutes a vast knock-out competition occurring over many weekends and is the pinnacle of college sports. The Cuppers finals are often played at University grounds (as opposed to college-owned smaller grounds) and are spectated by friends, family, supervisors and tutors. If your team is good enough to make it that far in a particular sport (historically hockey has been our best, having our own pitch not too far from the main site!), you will get the chance to play in these highly anticipated matches. It's great fun.

College societies are vital to almost every student's life and seem to pick up on things you yourself didn't even know you wanted. A free smoothie from the Smoothie Society on the weekend goes a long way in the middle of a hard day of work, or a cup of tea and a biscuit from Tea Society yields some of the best chats that are to be had in college. There are a vast number of societies, some bigger than others, all for their own purpose. Again, if there is something you think is missing, start the society yourself! You will receive lots of support from JCR members and college staff, and it's an easy way to get to know people around you better. Societies are another excellent way to meet other students across the college, and often this reward comes with very little time commitment. Whether you are into board games, you love to sing in a choir, you enjoy a bit of gardening or can't get enough debating, Catz guarantees to have the right societies for you.



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## Welfare at Catz



**Catz's reputation as a friendly college is definitely well-earned! As well as the many welcoming faces you see around college, Catz puts a lot of effort into its student welfare system, which has your back every step of the way.**

From JCR committee's welfare officers, to Ally (our lovely Chaplain) and Mary (Welfare Officer supporting the welfare of student, staff and Fellows alike), Catz has a fantastic support network that puts the wellbeing of its students first.

College life is such great fun and students at Catz make such fab memories here. But like any stage in life, we encounter new challenges or problems and there can be hardship from time to time. As a college, we not only support our students with mental health but are committing to promoting and normalising this discussion in the healthiest way possible. Whatever difficulties you might face at university, you can always find advice, support or just somebody to talk to at Catz - no matter what the problem!

At a JCR level, two people are elected every year to represent student welfare. These friendly faces around college are on hand to discuss whatever you have in mind - completely without judgement! Their job is to provide an open ear and help signpost you towards fantastic services both in College and the university at large. We provide free sexual health supplies as well as our famous college Welfairies (gifts that you can order to make somebody's day!). Welfare events run throughout the year and cover everything from animal petting farms to trips to the Botanic Gardens, mindfulness sessions and yoga!

Friendliness at Catz isn't just a Cambridge cliché. It's backed up by the students, college staff and the welfare team who are here for you whenever, whatever.



## Women at Catz

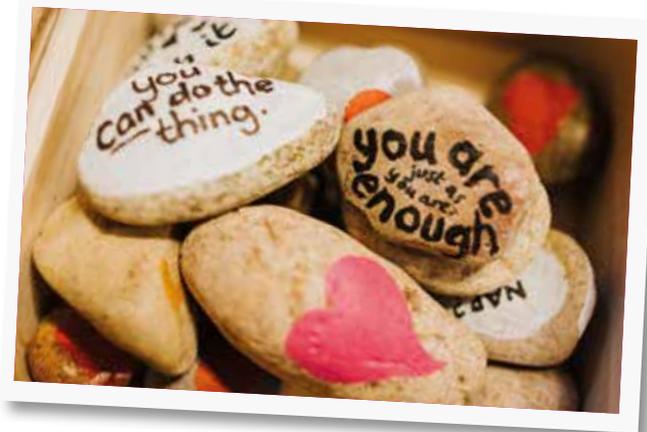


**Along with other members of the JCR, the Female and Non-Binary (NB) Welfare Officer's role is to make Catz a friendly and inclusive college where everyone feels safe and at home.**

The JCR runs a consent workshop (which you will attend in the first couple of weeks of arriving here as a fresher), provides free sanitary products in bathrooms around college and organises events that celebrate women and NB students at Catz, such as a special dinner for International Women's Day.



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St Catharine's College  
Cambridge

Thank you so much for reading our alternative prospectus! We love our college and hope you will too. If you have any questions that weren't answered here, feel free to check out our official prospectus, website, or get in touch.

## Useful links

Official information for prospective students:  
[caths.cam.ac.uk/study-us/undergraduate-study](https://caths.cam.ac.uk/study-us/undergraduate-study)

Contact the JCR Committee:  
[jcr.caths.cam.ac.uk/the-jcr/committee/](https://jcr.caths.cam.ac.uk/the-jcr/committee/)

 [instagram.com/stcatharinescollege](https://www.instagram.com/stcatharinescollege)

 [facebook.com/stcatharines.cambridge](https://www.facebook.com/stcatharines.cambridge)

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