

Applying to Oxford and Cambridge



Why are Oxford & Cambridge Different?

- The most prestigious universities in UK
- The unique tutorial/supervision system
- College based provision
- Highly intense courses, often very distinctive
- Can only apply to one!



Financial and other support

- Fees : 9k per annum
- Extensive programme of bursaries and fee waivers
- College awards: e.g. scholarships and small grants
- Low cost of living: ~ £6000-7500 p.a.
- Pastoral support in College via Director of Studies, Tutor and other College staff



Who is it for?

- Outstanding students with a genuine interest and passion in their subject.
- People who are independent learners, who do extra work without prompts or direction.
- Hard workers who relish the intensity of fitting more in to shorter terms!
- You will enjoy the 1-1 interaction of tutorials/supervisions
- You do not have to be a well rounded person with a string of extra curricular achievements! Geeks rule!

What do they look for in applicants?

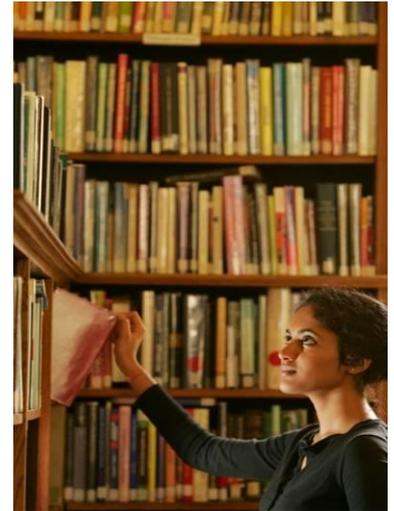
- Passion for their chosen subject and appropriate choice of course
- Very strong examinations record:
 - Applicants have, overall, an average of ~ 5-8 A*s at GCSE and ~ 90%+ across their three best AS levels
- Outstanding school/college reference
- Potential to succeed academically in Oxbridge, meaning:
 - Enthusiasm for complex and challenging ideas
 - Clarity of thought and analytical ability
 - Real intellectual flexibility



Selection criteria

Admissions decisions are based on:

- A level (or equivalent) grades and subject combinations
- AS grades and (Cambridge) unit marks (UMS)
- GCSE grades
- UCAS personal statement and school/college reference
- Submitted work (where requested)
- Test results (chiefly Oxford)
- Interview performance



Application

- Students apply via UCAS to Oxford OR Cambridge by 15 October (aka September)
- Cambridge applicants also fill in an online questionnaire after they have submitted their UCAS form
- Many Oxford applicants sit an aptitude test in early November; so do some for Cambridge
- Most applicants choose a College but many take the 'open' application route; choice of College has no impact upon likelihood of success
- Some students submit written work (eg marked essays)
- Typical offer: A*A*A to AAA



UCAS personal statements and references

- *Personal statements* confirm choice of subject and course and can provide a starting-point for discussion at interview
- They should be largely academic, focusing on chosen subject, reading and other wider exploration, which might include work experience for vocational subjects
- They must be both honest and *personal*.

Tests

- ~80%+ of Oxford applicants will be asked to take an aptitude test
- Some of these are multiple-choice tests of critical thinking and problem-solving, whereas others are text- and essay-based; some combine both elements
- All Oxford tests, plus the BMAT used by both universities, have associated websites with past papers and sample questions
- The tests are not generally content-based, though some of those that include essays will reward knowledge to a degree
- It is a good idea to do some practice, via the available past papers, in advance of taking a test
- In Cambridge we sometimes use specific tests in the interview period.

Interviews

- The majority of applicants are called for interview
- Interviews usually take place in December, and are conducted principally by the 'preference' College; Oxford applicants may well be interviewed by more than one College
- Applicants usually have 2-4 interviews, each lasting 20-30 minutes
- Interviews are academic, subject-focused discussions in which lecturers hope to see applicants thinking problems through for themselves
- No hidden agenda; no 'trick' questions!

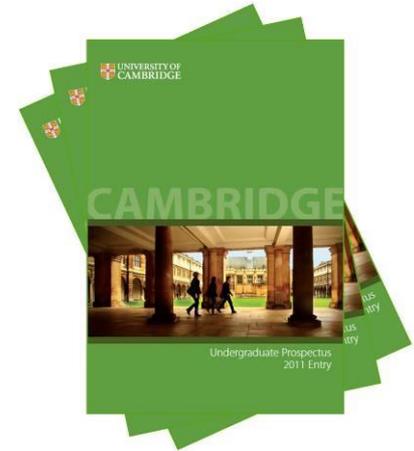


Interviews > *what to expect*

- Focused and challenging questions, typical of teaching and learning at Oxford or Cambridge
- Applicants are usually asked about:
 - Academic work they have completed in the last year or two
 - Relevant wider reading or work experience
 - Subject-related issues that are very readily visible in the wider world
 - ‘Prompt’ material
- You may be asked to think about your existing knowledge in new ways

Finding out more

- Undergraduate Prospectuses
- Alternative prospectus
- University websites
- Main Open Days (2015):
 - 1 and 2 July (Oxford)
 - 2 and 3 July (Cambridge)
- Contact the Oxford or Cambridge central Admissions Office, or any College Admissions Office



Timeline

- **Spring term:** book open days, apply for summer schools, lots of additional work/reading, attend trips and visiting speakers – inc March visit by Oxford/Cambridge admissions tutors
- **Summer term:**
 - AS exams
 - Research ALL university choices
 - Draft (and redraft) personal statement
 - Prepare for entrance tests
- **Autumn:** submit application, takes tests, submit additional work, practise for interviews