

Applying to Oxford and Cambridge



Why are Oxford & Cambridge Different?

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



Financial and other support

- Fees : 9.25k per annum (same as elsewhere)
- Extensive programme of bursaries and fee waivers
- College awards: e.g. scholarships and small grants
- Low cost of living
- Pastoral support in College



What they offer: social life

- College community: broad, open and easy to settle into
- Student clubs and societies tend to be extensively subsidised and benefit from excellent facilities
- Sport, music, drama, charity work, volunteering, student journalism and student politics
- Pubs, clubs, bars, restaurants, theatres and cinemas



Who is it for?

- Outstanding students with a genuine interest and passion in their subject. Not just good at exams!
- Most people who apply are straight-A students; only a few get offers.
- 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 7.5 at GCSE and predicted minimum A*AA - A*A*A at A level
- 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:

- GCSE grades and contextual data
- A level (or equivalent) grades and subject combinations
- UCAS personal statement and school/college reference
- Submitted work (sometimes)
- Test results
- Interview performance



Application

- Students apply via UCAS by 15 October (*aka September*)
- Most applicants sit an entrance test in early November;
- Most applicants choose a College but some take the 'open' application route; choice of College has no impact upon likelihood of success (they say)
- Some students submit written work (eg marked essays)
- Typical offer: A*A*A to AAA



UCAS personal statements and references

- *Personal statements* 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*
- *Students need to start building your PS now! What wider reading/activity will you be able to discuss in your PS?*

Tests

- 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 tests 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
- Cambridge sometimes use specific tests in the interview period.

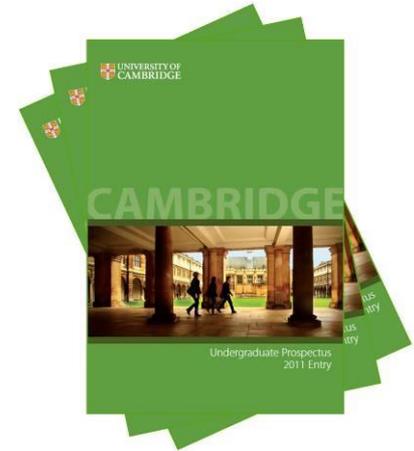
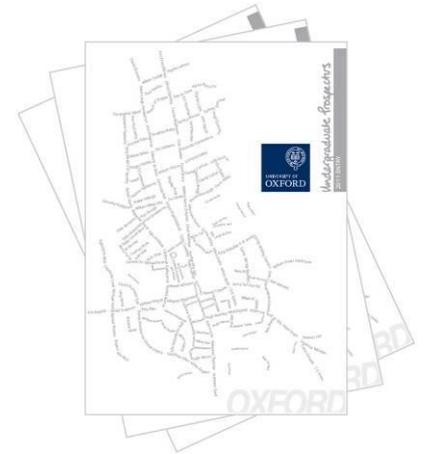
Interviews

- The majority of applicants at Cambridge are called for interview; fewer for Oxford
- 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!



Finding out more

- Undergraduate Prospectuses
- University websites
- Main Open Days: 1/2/3 July 2019 (must book/register!)



Timeline

- **This term:** book open days, apply for summer schools and other opportunities, lots of additional work/reading, attend trips
- **Summer term:**
 - End of year exams
 - Research ALL university choices
 - Draft (and redraft) personal statement
 - Prepare for entrance tests
- **Autumn:** submit application, take tests, submit additional work, practise for interviews

Oxbridge Support

- Oxbridge Academy
- Trips to Oxford and Cambridge
- Visiting speakers
- Many, many ad hoc opportunities
- Oxford Horizons programme
- OxFizz programme
- Lumina at Harrow
- ‘Stepmaths’ online test materials and videos
- Prospects weekend Schools
- Interview workshops and mock interviews

Doing now ...

- Extra reading – depth not breadth
- Ace A levels, need at least A*AA predictions
- Research all university course and options and book open days
- EPQ?