

County Sixth Form



Applying for Oxbridge

APPLYING: Apply through UCAS in the usual way but the deadline is earlier (deadline 15th October).

OPEN DAYS 2020: *Please note that given the current situation, these dates may be subject to changes. There are also department open days held throughout the summer and autumn terms – please check their websites carefully.*

- Oxford University: Virtual Open Days 1st and 2nd July 2020. Open Day currently planned for 18th September.
- Cambridge University: Virtual Open Days on 2nd & 3rd July 2020.

WHICH SUBJECT SHALL I CHOOSE? This is the key decision for you as Oxbridge make their decisions primarily on the basis of your commitment to your subject. They will want to assess evidence of enthusiasm and motivation i.e. wider reading, interest in the subject, within **and** beyond the syllabus. Suggestions of wider reading and research can be found by asking your teachers or visiting the following website: www.myheplus.com (Cambridge) and <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/suggested-reading-and-resources?wssl=1> (Oxford)

- They will also request samples of your work, especially for arts and social science subjects.
- In order to make your decision you will need to be clear about the courses from the universities – the courses offered by Oxbridge are often different to those offered by other universities and they will ask why *their* course appeals to you.

SCHOOL SUPPORT: We have a programme with additional meetings and support for anyone considering applying to Oxbridge. We also take students on a visit to Oxford (although this wasn't possible in 2020 due to Covid). We are fortunate that past students who have gone on to study at Oxford or Cambridge often offer to support current students. We also have notes from past students on their interview process which we will share with you.

OXFORD OR CAMBRIDGE? WHICH COLLEGE?

- The subject / degree you want to study will probably be the first thing to consider.
- If the course itself doesn't make your decision for you, there are other factors to consider. You will need to decide between applying for a **college** and making an **open application**. The Universities are keen to promote open applications and insist that they do not prejudice an application. However, be careful as you may be allocated to a college that you do not wish to attend, especially if you are female!
- Cambridge offer the following advice to students:
<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/colleges/choosing-a-college> . The respective website for potential Oxford candidates can be found here:
<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/colleges/do-you-choose-a-college?wssl=1>

Cambridge

THE CAMBRIDGE APPLICATION PROCESS – the Supplementary Application Questionnaire:

- Once you have submitted your UCAS application, you will be asked to complete the online SAQ form which you must return via e-mail. **You will only be given a week to complete this** so you should give it some thought before it comes - there is a guide to completion available here: <http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/saq>
- You will be asked for additional information including results for A level units already completed, and **details of reading** that you have completed to supplement your studies.
- There is the option of an additional personal statement which should be used to explain why the Cambridge course (or 'tripos' as they call it) appeals to you. You do not have to fill this in (better not to than to do so badly) – but it is an opportunity to help your application if you have got intelligent reasons for preferring the Cambridge course (based on research). You could also explain your college choice here but only do so if you have a particularly good reason (flattery is pointless).
- Remember that this form will be used by tutors at interview – it is an **opportunity to exert some control over the topics** that come up, which could be valuable, but you will be expected to be relatively confident in discussing the information you provide (books etc). Don't make the mistake of referring to a book that you have not read – you will be asked about it and replies that you intended to read it but didn't have time are unimpressive.

THE CAMBRIDGE APPLICATION PROCESS –SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK:

- For many courses, you need to send in written work as part of your application (usually before the end of October); you should check which courses will demand this by looking here: www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/admissions-assessments
- Most colleges will ask you to post your written work (unfolded), although some will accept it electronically. Written work can't be returned, so do make sure to keep a copy. You should liaise closely with the Sixth Form Team and subject teachers to decide which work you will submit.
- Think carefully what you will send well in advance of this. You do not want to be hurriedly rewriting work, and asking staff to mark it, at the last minute.
- Keep a copy of written work submitted to enable you to prepare for your interview. Be prepared to justify the contents of the written work and consider how to react to teacher's comments.

THE CAMBRIDGE APPLICATION PROCESS – ENTRANCE TESTS:

- Most students will now have to sit a common format written assessment either pre-interview, 4th November 2020 or at interview (in December). Please look carefully at the following webpage to see how you will be assessed for a particular subject, as well as information regarding the nature of each individual test: www.cam.ac.uk/assessment. Most at-interview assessments will be one hour in duration, and pre-interview assessments will last no longer than two hours. The results of these assessments will form part of their holistic assessment of applicants.

Oxford

THE OXFORD APPLICATION PROCESS –SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK:

- For many courses, you need to send in written work as part of your application (usually before the end of October); a full list of subjects which require this is here: www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/written-work?wssl=1.
- Most colleges will ask you to post your written work (unfolded), although some will accept it electronically. Written work can't be returned, so do make sure to keep a copy. You should liaise closely with the Sixth Form Team and your subject teachers to decide which work you will submit.
- Think carefully what you will send well in advance of this. You do not want to be hurriedly rewriting work, and asking staff to mark it, at the last minute.
- Keep a copy of written work submitted to enable you to prepare for your interview. Be prepared to justify the contents of the written work and consider how to react to teacher's comments.

THE OXFORD APPLICATION PROCESS –ENTRANCE TESTS:

- For most courses at Oxford you will need to sit an entrance test on 4th November 2020. The school's Examinations Officer will enter you for these tests which you will sit in school (however please see note below for Medicine and Law). It is **your** responsibility to inform the Examination Officer which tests you need to sit. You should read their guidance carefully at so that you are clear as to the nature of the test you will be expected to take: www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-tooxford/tests?wssl=1
- Please note that if you are applying for **Medicine**, you will need to register through the school for the **BMAT** test by **mid September**. Similarly, if you are applying for **Law** at Oxford, you will need to register **personally** for the LNAT test by early September, and have taken the LNAT assessment **before 15th October**.
- You should give early consideration to how you will prepare yourself for these entrance tests. There are specimen papers available at the website above.

OXBRIDGE INTERVIEWS:

- All applicants with a realistic chance of being offered a place are invited to attend an interview. Most interviews take place in the first three weeks of December. We will arrange mock interviews in November and you will receive feedback to help you prepare.

- We have information on the interviews our students have had in past years. Mrs White or Mrs Black will discuss these with you. It is important to remember though that no two interviews are the same!
- At Oxford, you may be interviewed by several colleges over several days. At Cambridge, you will initially be interviewed by just one college on one day, but you may be 'pooled' and called by another college in January.
- The interviews are essentially academic and aim to examine your thinking and ideas. It doesn't have to be smooth i.e. hesitation/changing your mind/thinking time is fine. Be prepared to discuss your **wider reading** and **your views** of what you've read – you won't just be asked to list books and their contents. Questions during interviews are designed to assess applicants' **problem-solving abilities, assimilation of new ideas and information, and their intellectual flexibility and analytical reasoning.**
- Be prepared to discuss the written work you submitted.
- Be prepared to discuss any of the information that you have provided on your **UCAS** and **Oxbridge application forms.** Unfortunately there are sometimes candidates who are tripped up by questions which focus upon topics completed during Year 12 and have not been recently revised – please note this point carefully!
- You are likely to be given a '**test**' of some sort – possibly a written test, or a source/poem for you to discuss. The key here is to trust your instincts – relax and say what you think. To an extent it pays to be cautious e.g. if you're given an unseen poem and asked to speculate on the gender of the poet, try to find reasons for why it could be by a man or a woman. For any course which relied heavily upon mathematical ability (including Economics, Engineering, Physics, Chemistry etc) you should expect to be given mathematical problems to solve under the careful watch of the interviewers.
- Questions are designed to assess how you think.
- Oxbridge insists that the purpose of interviews is partly to differentiate between candidates who look excellent on paper, and also to allow students to assess the suitability of the course for their needs. Most of all they're looking for potential. There is further guidance offered by the university on preparing for interviews here:
www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/interviews?wssl=1
www.cam.ac.uk/interviews

OTHER INFORMATION

Cambridge runs Masterclasses for Year 12 students:

<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/events/masterclasses> The face to face ones have been cancelled for Summer 2020 due to Covid but keep an eye on this page.

Oxford has Explore at <http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/increasing-access/explore> where there are a series of learning resources based on research at Oxford.