



MAKING AN APPLICATION TO OXBRIDGE for September 2020 entry



THIS DOES NOT PROMISE A SECRET FORMULA AND NOR SHOULD IT BE USED AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR FINDING OUT WHAT YOU NEED TO DO YOURSELF- BUT IT MIGHT JUST HELP GENERATE AN IDEA OF WHAT YOU NEED TO BE FINDING OUT!

Introduction: Is Oxbridge right for you? Are you right for the course?

Dear Carthusian,

I am so glad that you are thinking about applying to Oxbridge. Can I urge you to start by having a conversation with your beaks? They will be able to tell you if they think an application is a good



idea. We will never tell you not to make an application. What we're so aware of, however, is how time consuming making an Oxbridge application is and how emotionally draining it can be to go through the whole process- time and energy that might be better spent focusing on a choice of university and course more suitably matched to your GCSE qualifications, Pre-U/IB predictions and interests. We are just here to offer realistic advice.

Oxford and Cambridge make conditional offers. In Arts the average offer is D2D3D3 or 40 IB points with 766 in Higher Level. In Sciences the average offer is D2D2D3 or 40 IB points with 776 in Higher Level. Specific subjects may be required to apply for some subjects, especially in the sciences and some subjects require you to sit a written test or submit written work. *You should visit their websites to find out these details.* (www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/entrance-requirements/level-offers
www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/admissions-assessments)

Dr Sam Lucy, who oversees Cambridge admissions, is keen to say that, when considering applicants, her first and foremost concern is academic potential. Does this candidate possess the initiative to explore the subject, ask awkward questions and not be satisfied with an easy answer? Is there a flexibility in his/her thinking? This is assessed through at least 6 A* GCSEs, top predicted grades, interviews and special written tests prior to or during the interview stage- but another important consideration is whether you are currently studying the right combination of subjects. When Oxbridge admissions' tutors assess candidates they consider not only your predicted grades but also the combination of subjects you are studying. Generally they prefer applicants to have taken certain subjects or combinations of subjects that they feel will help their studies once they arrive at the university. Look at the Oxford and Cambridge 'Informed Choices List'. When you've decided on a course, review the information given at www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses or www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses-listing You'll find some IB/PreU subjects are desirable, highly desirable or essential for admission onto the course.



This booklet assumes that you are fully aware of this, that you see your present academic performance as matching up to this and you have made a final decision to apply. Know that I am the Oxbridge co-ordinator and always keen for a chat (Fr Adam ajmw@charterhouse.org.uk). There are also designated Oxbridge beaks in each subject who can give you more targeted advice (see the list at the back of this booklet)

REMEMBER TO RESEARCH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUR APPLICATION YOURSELF!

(1) Oxford or Cambridge?

Just because a course has the same name it doesn't mean it has the same content or way of being taught/assessed!

At Oxford, most subjects include compulsory courses in the first year, and then you're given the chance to pick options in the following years.

At Cambridge, courses cover the subject very broadly in the early year(s) and then become specialised in later years. *Comparing the Tripos system at Cambridge with the two-part system at Oxford is an important thing for you to do.*



The Cambridge Tripos system offers the flexibility of perhaps changing or adding another area of study to your degree (one recent Cambridge Medic was able to take a year off Medicine to study Mandarin and consequently now has a degree in both and works as a Doctor in China!). Each Cambridge course, or Tripos, is usually divided into two parts: Part 1 and Part 2. After each part there is an exam which counts towards your final undergraduate mark. A Part 1 can take one year (in Economics, for example) or two years (as in English). A two-year Part 1 is divided into Part 1A and Part 1B. Once you have completed Part 1 (A and B) you've the chance of continuing to specialise in the same subject, or swapping to a related or different subject for Part 2. If you want to swap subject mid-way through the degree- don't talk about it at the interview- it will make the Director of Studies think you're not committed to the subject you're applying for!

The system is different at Oxford. Oxford students do not have to take examinations at the end of each year which go towards the final degree result, as is the case in many Cambridge courses. The Preliminary Examinations (or Prelims) are mostly taken at the end of the first year and the final examinations ('Finals') are taken at the end of the third/fourth year. The Preliminary Examinations do not count towards the final degree result and it's harder at Oxford to change from the course that you're on.



(2) Which College?

School's advice is strongly to urge you to make an open application which will enable you to be allocated to a College with fewer applications in your subject. You may object and say "The College will be such an important place because it's not only the place I'll work but also the place where I'll live and eat". Yes, that's true, but the Tutor for Admissions at Cambridge, Dr Sam Lucy, put it this way, "Whichever college you end up at- and it might not be a college you'd ever thought about- you'd be amazed that within days you'll have bonded and it will have become 'your college'".

If you do decide to apply to a specific college, make sure you ask yourself the following questions;

(1) **Where does the college figure on the Norrington or Tompkins League Table?** (This table records the rank order of colleges at Oxford or Cambridge according to the number of First Class Honours achieved and will give you an idea of which colleges are the most academically competitive). Use this in conjunction with the Oxford or Cambridge University Alternative Prospectus and also look at an excellent book “Getting into Oxford and Cambridge 2019 Entry” Sean P Buckley published by MPW ISBN 978-1-911067-08-5 which gives an interesting insight into each of the Colleges along with some very helpful tips.

(2) **Does the college have just one or two undergraduates in my chosen subject per year or a significant number?** You have to ask yourself if it’s better to have a group of friends in your college studying the same subject who can act as a support mechanism for you! Also, does the college have a Tutorial Fellow in my subject? Once again, this could be an indicator of the level of support you can expect to receive in your college. There is an interactive graph generator into which prospective students can enter the name of the college to which they want to apply and the course to see specific statistics on applications and acceptance rates on www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/apply/statistics and www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/admissions-statistics.

(3) **Does the geographical location of the college make university libraries, lectures, seminars and (where appropriate) laboratories accessible to me?** Cambridge is much smaller than Oxford and has a market town feel about it. The university buildings are set much closer together. Oxford feels more like a university set inside a city with colleges and faculties more spread out.

(4) **Does the college offer accommodation** over the entire duration of the course or will I have to find my own accommodation for one/two years of the course.

(3) What are the admissions criteria for my chosen course? Remember-it’s YOUR responsibility to find this out!!

There are lots of different admissions criteria for the different subjects on offer. Over and above the information you’ve given on your UCAS application, some colleges will ask for a marked sample of work and some will even ask candidates to sit a test before or during the interview stage. If you’re applying to Oxford you should check your course webpage to see what is required for your course. All courses at Cambridge except Mathematics and Music require you to sit a common-format test. **MAKE SURE YOU READ THE CRITERIA FOR ADMISSIONS FOR YOUR SUBJECT CAREFULLY!**

(4) Make sure that you attend an Open Day for your chosen course! This is a copy of the bulletin sent out by the School HE and Careers Department:

COVID-19 Oxford and Cambridge have cancelled their campus open days, college tours, subject taster days and masterclasses. However they are planning to offer online versions of these and all the details are on our separate report on UK university open days.

Given that UCAS applications for Oxbridge have to be submitted very early in September, it is very important that any 1st Year Specialists thinking about applying to Oxford or Cambridge, spends some time over the next few months exploring the different courses and Colleges at each

University. As the information below shows, there are a number of opportunities to attend Open Days, subject masterclasses and College tours and they do give you some more insight if you think you will benefit from further information.

Oxford and Cambridge University Student Conference Sessions

A number of 1YS were planning to attend the Oxford and Cambridge Student Conferences, which have been cancelled. They have been replaced by a series of online sessions, which **they launched on Wednesday 29th April**. They are keen to make sure that students still have the opportunity to find out more about both universities and to hear from current students and admissions staff.

Full information is on **www.ocsc.org.uk** and students just need to follow this link to be directed to each of the webinar sessions which will be for some time.

Student sessions:

- The Student Experience and Applying to Oxford and Cambridge session
- Making a Competitive Application session
- Student Q&A panel with current University students

Oxford University Events

OPEN DAYS

They are currently exploring ways of transferring their outreach events, such as their subject taster days, online. **The next University-wide Open Days are currently due to take place on 18th September 2020.**

Oxford also offers College virtual tours. These 360° views cover each colleges facilities such as the dining hall, library, JCR, chapel, as well as an example of a student room, garden or quad, and the porters' lodge. **[Virtual tours](#)**

Cambridge University Events

OPEN DAYS

With the exception of the Student conference sessions listed above, **all other outreach activities and events organised by Cambridge Admissions Office have been cancelled until the end of August 2020**. They are committed to providing prospective applicants with information about the college system, its courses, and the admissions process and are looking at opportunities they can offer virtually, as well as the possibility of running some events later in the year. They will update the website with further information once this is available. **[College Open days](#)**

COLLEGE OPEN DAYS - Cancelled

College open days give you the opportunity to get a sense of what College life is like and to pick up a wide range of useful information. In addition to the individual Colleges' open days, there are a series of College Tours. These are open to students in Year 12 (or equivalent) and up to two accompanying parents/supporters per student. **Advance booking is essential for the College Tours.**

DEPARTMENT OPEN DAYS - Cancelled

Throughout the year a number of faculties and departments offer open days that focus on the specific course(s) in that faculty/department. You'll get to meet some of the lecturers, and see the libraries and other facilities. **[Department-open-days](#)**

(5) The Application Process: (a) The UCAS Application and Personal Statement

Your UCAS application will need to be submitted by the earlier closing date for all Oxbridge Applications of **6pm on 15 October** **BUT REMEMBER TO MAKE THE EARLIER SCHOOL DEADLINE OF 1st OCTOBER 2019** You'll complete the UCAS form online and it'll be sent to all five of your chosen universities. It will ask you about the schools you've attended, exam grades, employment experience, your university choices etc and a personal statement of 4,000 characters including spaces. We've had plenty of workshops and briefings on filling the UCAS form in and writing a personal statement- but make sure that there is evidence of personal initiative in progressing your knowledge of your subject and make sure that your personal statement authentically reflects you and doesn't look as if it's been manufactured using focus groups! Let the school Higher Education Department know at the start of September that you're definitely applying so that a reference can be written online by school within the deadline. Also, make sure that School has submitted the Extenuating Circumstances Form if you are eligible to apply for this.

See Timelines here: Oxford [Timeline](#) and Cambridge: [dates-and-deadlines](#)

External Tests: *You must check the deadlines for any special tests that you may be required to sit. Inform the School HE and Careers' Department as soon as you have submitted your UCAS application that you will need to be registered by school (for both Oxford and Cambridge). The universities give a full description of what the specialist tests entail at their websites: [Oxford test dates](#) and*



and www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/admissions-assessments.

Testing happens at different stages during the application process. Some tests are sat on 4th November at Charterhouse. Some tests take place when you go up for interview in early December. **MAKE SURE YOU KNOW WHICH TESTS YOU HAVE TO TAKE AND WHEN YOU HAVE TO TAKE THEM!**

1 August – 15 September: Register and book the LNAT (to sit the test, before or on, 15 October 2020)

1 October 2020: This is the deadline date for registering for the BMAT. If you register between 2 October and 6pm on 15 October you will pay a late fee.

15 October 2020: 6pm is the final deadline for registering for Oxford admissions assessments and Cambridge pre-interview assessments. Closing date for all UCAS applications to Oxford and Cambridge. LNAT: In order for your score to be considered by us, you must sit your test before or on, 15 October.

Oxford Admissions Tests See: Oxford test dates

4th November 2020

BMAT If you are applying for one of the following courses you will be required to sit the BMAT: Biomedical Sciences, Medicine, Medicine (Graduate Entry).

ELAT If you are applying for one of the following courses you will be required to sit the ELAT: English Language and Literature, Classics and English, English and Modern Languages.

HAT If you are applying for one of the following courses you will be required to sit the HAT: History, History (Ancient and Modern), History and Economics, History and English, History and Modern Languages, History and Politics.

PAT If you are applying for one of the following courses you will be required to sit the PAT as part of the admissions process: Engineering, Materials Science, Physics and Physics and Philosophy.

MAT Aptitude Test for Mathematics and Computer Science. Students applying for joint honours Computer Science and Philosophy. Mathematics and Computer Science, Mathematics and Philosophy or Mathematics and Statistics should also take this.

TSA The Thinking Skills Assessment is a paper-based test, divided into two parts: a 90-minute, multiple-choice Thinking Skills Assessment and a 30-minute writing task. If you are applying for one of the following courses you will be required to take both sections of the TSA: Economics and Management, Experimental Psychology, Human Sciences, Philosophy, Politics and Economics, and Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics.

MLAT If you are applying for one of the following courses you will be required to sit the MLAT as part of the admissions process: European and Middle Eastern Languages, Classics and Modern Languages, English and Modern Languages, History and Modern Languages, Modern Languages, Modern Languages and Linguistics or Philosophy and Modern Languages.

OLAT Oriental Studies: If you are applying to study Hebrew, Persian, Turkish, Arabic or Jewish Studies as part of one of the following courses you will be required to sit the OLAT

CAT If you are applying for one of the following courses you will be required to sit the CAT: Classics, Classics and English, Classics and Modern Languages and Classics and Oriental Studies.

Philosophy Test: All candidates applying for Philosophy and Theology are required to sit the Philosophy Test.

Different dates:

LNAT (Law National Assessment Test- see www.lnat.ac.uk)

Candidates for the LNAT must take the test before 15 October in the year they apply. Please see below for a summary of the important dates:

- **1 August – 15 September:** register and book the LNAT (in order to sit the test, before or on, 15 October 2020)
- **before or on 15 October:** take your test. In order for your score to be considered by us, you must sit your test before or on, 15 October.
- **15 October:** deadline to submit your UCAS form

You may take the test on any day when there is availability at your chosen test centre between those dates. The earlier you book, the more chance you have of getting an appointment on the day of your choice. **You are therefore strongly advised to begin making arrangements as soon as possible.**

If you are applying for Fine Art or Music and are called for interview, you will be asked to complete a practical test at the interview. There are no written tests for Biochemistry, Biological Sciences, Classical Archaeology and Ancient History, Earth Sciences (Geology) History of Art or Theology and Religion.

Cambridge Admission Tests

Most applicants are required to take a subject-specific written admission assessment, either [pre-interview](#) or [at interview](#) and these will take place at school on 4th November 2020.

Pre-interview assessment	At-interview assessment
<p>All Colleges require a pre-interview assessment for the following courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chemical Engineering ▪ Computer Science ▪ Economics ▪ Engineering ▪ English ▪ Land Economy ▪ Medicine ▪ Natural Sciences ▪ Veterinary Medicine 	<p>All Colleges require an at-interview assessment for the following courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Archaeology ▪ Architecture ▪ Classics ▪ History and Modern Languages ▪ History of Art ▪ Law ▪ Linguistics ▪ Modern and Medieval Languages (MML) ▪ Philosophy ▪ Theology, Religion, and Philosophy of Religion <p>Some Colleges may require an at-interview assessment for the following courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic ▪ Asian and Middle Eastern Studies ▪ Education ▪ Geography ▪ History ▪ History and Politics ▪ Human, Social, and Political Sciences ▪ Mathematics ▪ Music ▪ Psychological and Behavioural Sciences

For details of what the tests involve visit

<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/admission-assessments>

For more details of the above I do recommend you buy Matthew Carmody's "Oxford and Cambridge Entry 2020" Trotman 978-1-911067-98-6 A brilliant book and a must-read!

(6) The Application Process (b) Filling in additional questionnaires

When you've sent off your UCAS form you'll receive an acknowledgement from Cambridge by e-mail along with a Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ) which you'll need to fill in by the following week. You'll find a link to this at www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/saq. You'll have to fill the SAQ online and you'll need to give them a photograph, tell them whether you've applied for a scholarship, give more details about your personal situation as well as more specific details about which course you have chosen eg in Languages which language etc., details of your school eg class sizes and an opportunity to add to your personal statement. Oxford will acknowledge your UCAS form but doesn't ask you to fill in an additional form except if you're applying for a choral or organ award.

(7) Sending to Oxbridge samples of written work

Different Cambridge colleges have different policies about sending in samples of essays you've written in school and have been marked by your beak but generally you are more likely to be asked to send in work if you're applying for an Arts subject. Don't worry- the college will contact you if you need to do this.

Oxford gives clearer guidance about whether or not you need to submit a sample of marked essays. Just go to www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses-listing

(8) So what is the overall timetable for the application process including not only the official deadlines but the school deadlines?

September:

Book onto Admission Tests through School

Take LNAT tests if applying for Law

Ask your Housemaster for an early UCAS reference.

Plan essays to be submitted (if required) in consultation with the relevant beaks

Finalise your personal statement

Visit the UCAS website (www.ucas.com) and register

Fill in the UCAS form- UCAS applications can be submitted from September (www.ucas.com/apply-and-track/key-dates)

Register and book a place to sit the LNAT (if you want to study Law at Oxford) www.lnat.ac.uk

Register for the BMAT if you are applying for biomedical science (at Oxford) medicine (at Oxford or Cambridge) (www.admissionstestingservice.org/for-test-takers/bmat/dates-and-costs)

Register for other subject related pre-interview tests for Oxford and Cambridge.

October:

1 OCTOBER 2020: INTERNAL SCHOOL DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF OXBRIDGE APPLICATIONS TO THE SCHOOL HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

15 OCTOBER- OFFICIAL DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS TO OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE and LNAT EXAM AND REGISTRATION FOR ALL OTHER TESTS.

Fill in the separate Cambridge SAQ- this will be e-mailed to you and must be completed by 6pm on 22 October (but please check that this applies to your subject)

Receive the acknowledgement letter from your chosen college in mid to late October.

November

Sit Oxford admissions tests and Cambridge pre-admissions tests on 4TH November in school.

Receive the letter inviting you to interview explaining if and when to submit work.

Submit work with special form- see Faculty website for details- work should be sent directly to the college unless you've submitted an open application in which case you'll send it to the Faculty. The work should be marked by a Beak.

December

If invited, attend interview in first three weeks of December. You may have to sit some tests at the interview. Notification of being 'pooled' (where you didn't make your choice of colleges so your application is being sent to other colleges which may be interested in you) will be sent to you from Cambridge in early January. Final outcomes are given by Oxford around 11 January and Cambridge by end of January.