



Learning in England ∞ Oxbridge applications

21 > What must I do if I want to apply to Oxford or Cambridge Universities?

We have successful experience in supporting applicants to Oxford and Cambridge, but we can by no means guarantee securing a place for anyone. Oxford and Cambridge are known together as “Oxbridge”.

- 1 You must do thorough RESEARCH. You should study, in detail, these websites:
 - Cambridge University <https://www.cam.ac.uk/study-at-cambridge>
 - Oxford University <http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions>
- 2 CONSULT us to support your application. We will help you with your subject choice and the College best suited to that subject and check what the requirements are, especially for international applicants.
- 3 VISIT the University, Subject Department, and Colleges, if at all possible.
- 3 REGISTER with UCAS and complete the online Application Form. See our information sheet on Applying to University. In addition, to the detailed facts about yourself, you will need to write a Personal Statement and have a detailed Reference. Your teachers must comment on your competence and skills in each subject. There is a second online Application Form which needs to be completed for Oxbridge. **You may apply either to Cambridge or Oxford, but not to both, in one subject.** You cannot apply to read Law or Maths for example. You may also apply to three other universities in the same subject. Your UCAS application, duly completed, must be submitted by 15 October, in any year. There is absolutely no flexibility about this day - even after midnight is too late!
- 4 Depending upon the subject you choose to study you may also have to do an extra entry exam. You may have to go to an Exam Centre or the British Council to do this. You must register well in advance. You will also have to demonstrate your competence in English.
- 5 You can TRACK responses from Universities, for offers, or invitations for Interview.



- 6 Oxford and Cambridge Universities *and* Colleges INTERVIEW all prospective students. This is a mutually beneficial exercise. I know of students who have rejected an offer because of the style of interview. They could see they were not suited to such a searching and testing way of learning. We would arrange for a subject specialist to give you a Mock Interview to give you some practice and experience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In respect of both Universities you should be aware that:

- A. between six and seven people apply for every undergraduate place at Oxford, and more than five apply for every undergraduate place at Cambridge. All applicants are highly competent. So, you must mark yourself out as being exceptional in your proposed field of study. Having 3 or 4 A levels at A* does not guarantee a place. Having Work Experience or a wider knowledge beyond what you have done in A Levels is essential. You will need to demonstrate that wider knowledge, for example through an Extended Project Qualification, or some form of Work Experience. [See our information document on the Extended Project Qualification.]
- B. the way of learning at Oxbridge is distinctive. Terms are short, and intense - just eight weeks. There are three terms a year - the first begins in October, the second in January and the third in April. Some courses are lecture-based but most are tutorial-based. You will have to research and write two or three essays a week and then read them to your tutor and fellow tutees and critique one another's writing. This process is rigorous and requires an excellent command of English. You must be prepared to argue and reason, based on evidence. It is this art of questioning that develops a broad and deep discipline of thinking in Oxbridge graduates.
- C. you live in College. Choosing the best College for your subject is an essential point for a successful application. Tutorials are held in the College or Subject Department depending on what you are 'reading'.
- D. Living in College and eating formal dinners with people from other disciplines from your own means you develop a wide general knowledge and develop a great network of friends.
- E. Fees are very high for international students: between £15,295 and £22,515 per year, depending on what subject you choose to study. [For Medicine, it could be as much as £44,000 per year. College fees for accommodation and food will be on top of this. [Being part of a College is an essential part of the experience].
- F. Depending upon the subject you choose to study you may also have to do an extra entry exam. You may have to go to an Exam Centre or the British Council to do this. You have to register well in advance.



- G. Oxford and Cambridge are looking for teachable, enthusiastic and self-disciplined students. You are not an expert yet. It is OK to admit if you do not know something! The Universities want students who are skilled in study, but may not yet have the subject knowledge, so they can help them to discover and create new knowledge.
- H. Be prepared not to get a place. It is in some senses a matter of luck. Consider how difficult it is for the tutors to make the decisions about whether to accept you or not! Do not be like some people who go around for the rest of their lives labelling themselves as an Oxbridge Reject. Find another opportunity and live it to the full!

Contact us at Paths to Learning by emailing felicitygunn@hotmail.com

*"I was so excited by the idea of studying the subject I loved, with the absolute world experts in the field, and at Oxford we have the opportunity to learn from the very best. One of the things I love most about the College teaching system is the close contact we have with our tutors; you really feel that they're invested in you as a person, and it's amazing how much confidence you build up within just a few tutorials...from my first interview I realised that the tutors cared less about how many books I'd read, or how many facts I had memorised, and more about my intellectual curiosity and my willingness to learn. If you love your subject and want to work hard at it, Oxford really is an incredible place to be."*¹

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My school, my teachers and my parents all want me to go to Cambridge to read Natural Sciences, they think I am capable, but I am not sure it is really me. Can you help me make the right decision?

A

Your question is about *you*, not Cambridge or Natural Sciences! If you undertake the Plumtrees Life Counsel Assessment with us, you will have a good self-understanding and know your achievements – beyond the academic – and your skills, motivation and aptitudes. Then you will have evidence from which you can reconsider whether Cambridge is the best place, *for you*, to study. You will also have a long view, so you can think about what you want to do when you have graduated. This will also inform your decision.

You may find yourself better suited to a Russell Group University which also offer Natural Sciences or to focus on just one of the Sciences to fulfil your plans after university.

¹ <http://apply.oxfordsu.org/oxford-university/why-oxford/> Lily, St Catz, English, student from 2013
As at February 2022