



Cardiff High School



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

APPLYING TO OXBRIDGE Information Booklet 2026 Entry

Name:

Form:



Dear Student,

Congratulations on making the choice to apply for Oxbridge. As with all the other students applying to University you will be given information about the UCAS process and on writing your personal statement, all of which is very relevant, however this booklet gives you more specific detail on making an Oxford or Cambridge application.

In the early part of September, you will work with Miss Jones and she will help and guide you through the application process. However, you will also need to ensure that you meet with the Curriculum Leader for the subject you are pursuing, to ensure that you have advice on extra reading and how to build up your super-curricular skills. You will still need to work very closely with your referee, but this extra support will deal with the special demands of an Oxbridge entrance. The key to success is to keep asking for guidance until you feel your application is as strong as you can make it.

Whilst we wish you all to aspire to achieve, it is important to remember that the competition for places at Oxford and Cambridge is exceptionally high. Every year thousands of Oxbridge applications are unsuccessful, but they go on to achieve three or more A/A* grades at A Level and be accepted at other excellent universities. Oxford and Cambridge both acknowledge that they are often unable to make offers to excellent candidates and you should not allow yourself to become disheartened if you are not offered a place.

If you are successful in obtaining an interview you will be given further support via mock interviews and advice on submission of work (if needed).

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you good luck for your application.

Best Wishes

Mrs. K. Dilks
Head of Upper School

Mrs. N.S. Pyart
UCAS Coordinator

WHAT MAKES A GOOD OXBRIDGE APPLICANT?

Oxford and Cambridge are primarily interested in your suitability for demanding academic study.

Qualifications:

- Most successful applicants will have mainly A*s and A grades at GCSE
- Generally successful applicants will have at least 7A*s at GCSE
- An Average of 90+% UMS points across their three best AS subjects
- Candidates should have been predicted A*/A grades in their A level subjects

See link below for statistics from both Universities which demonstrate the average grade profile of an Oxbridge student:

<http://www.oxbridgeapplications.com/resource/what-results-do-you-need-in-your-exams/>

Other Qualities

Getting high A level grades is necessary but not sufficient to gain a place at Oxford and Cambridge. In addition, admission tutors will be looking for:

- A genuine subject interest—Super Curricular
- Enthusiasm, motivation and ability to work under pressure
- Clarity of thought and analytical ability
- Intellectual flexibility
- The ability to study independently
- The ability to manage your time effectively
- Vocation/professional commitment (where appropriate)
- Evidence of breadth of interests

AM I SUITABLE?

If you decide you want to go to Oxford or Cambridge, you need to find out if it will suit you and if you are a suitable applicant.

- Speak to your teachers—What do they think about whether you should apply?
- Do you know anyone who went to Oxbridge? The school will or will be inviting a previous student to talk to you. Ask them questions?
- Am I good enough for Oxbridge? Check your GCSE and predicted A level grades (Cambridge in particular likes to see your UMS scores for AS)

Find out all you can, we suggest these websites:

- *(Sign up to this website for free resources and a guide called 'So you want to go to Oxbridge?'*
<http://www.oxbridgeapplications.com/>)

<http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/universities/applying-to-university-and-ucas-deadlines/guide-to-applying-to-oxford-and-cambridge/>

How Do I Apply?

- You will have to complete a UCAS application form where one of your five University choices (or four for Medicine) is either Oxford or Cambridge.
- The deadline for Oxbridge applications is **15th October 2025, 6:00pm**. You will need to complete your application for the school in advance of this deadline.
- Cambridge applicants will be asked to provide additional information through an online supplementary questionnaire. This questionnaire will allow students to supplement their UCAS personal statement with Cambridge specific comments and will require students to provide details of their UMS performance in their AS units.

How Do I Choose A College?

When applying to Oxbridge you can either apply to an individual college or make an open application. An open application does not specify a college instead you are assigned to one by the admission board. When choosing a college, you should look at the college and university website or prospectuses. Some points to consider are:

- Courses available at the college
- Gender—some colleges only admit women
- College size, location, building and facilities

Cambridge—<http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/colleges/choosing-a-college>

Oxford—<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/colleges/college-listing>

Interviews

At Oxford, interviews take place early to mid-December. You will receive an email or letter indicating whether or not you have been invited to interview. You may not receive this until a week before the interviews are due to take place and the letter will contain practical details of your interview.

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/interviews>

At Cambridge, interviews usually take place in the first 3 weeks of December. If your chosen college is unable to make you an offer, you may be 'pooled' and possibly recalled for an interview by another college in January,

Applicants may have 1, 2 or 3 interviews lasting 20-45 minutes. Interviews are predominantly academic and subject focused.

<http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/interviews>

Before attending interview, you should:

- Look at the Oxford or Cambridge website
- Arrange a mock interview, the school will organise this for you.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT AN OXBRIDGE INTERVIEW

Interviews are a discussion where applicants will be required to think through problems for themselves. You will be asked focussed and challenging questions, typical of the teaching and learning at Oxford or Cambridge.

You may be asked to talk about:

- Academic work that you have completed over the last year
- Relevant wider reading or work experience
- Subject-related issues that are very readily visible in the wider world
- Prompt material given to you by the interview
- Unexpected questions designed to assess your thinking processes

Do not be put off if you don't know the 'right' answer to a question. The interviews will be keen to see how far you are prepared to work through a problem or question. Can you engage with what they have asked you? Are you prepared to take a risk in working through a poem/mathematical problem/ethical dilemma out loud?

CONTEXTUALISATION

The Extenuating Circumstances Form which has replaced the Cambridge Special Access Scheme gives teachers the opportunity to provide contextual information about applicants so they can be fairly assessed. In addition, Cambridge Admissions tutors are provided with publicly-available school performance data to help them contextualise educational achievement when considering applications.

Oxford encourages teachers to include details of any special circumstances or other relevant information in the main UCAS application. Oxford also uses publicly-available information to indicate those applicants who may have experienced educational or socio-economic disadvantages. Where applicants demonstrate the necessary academic aptitude for Oxford, they are likely to be considered for interview and seen in addition to students identified through the normal shortlisting process.

OXFORD PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENTS

For full information see:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/guide/admissions-tests>

You have to be registered separately from your UCAS application you are not automatically enrolled for the assessment, **so you must ensure it is done and it is your responsibility**.

This year's tests will take place between **21st – 27th October 2025** and are as follows:

- Ancient History and Classical Archaeology Admissions Test (AHCAAT) - NEW
- Biomedical Sciences Admissions Test (BMSAT) – NEW
- Classics Admissions Test (CAT)
- Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT)
- Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT)
- Philosophy Test (PHILAT)
- Physics Admissions test for Physics, Engineering and Materials Science (PAT)
- Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)
- **History Admissions Test (HAT) – this is not running in 2025*

Candidates for all of the above Oxford tests will be able **to register themselves** via the Oxford Admissions Test Registration portal between 18 June – 19 September. Registered candidates can then access a booking link via the portal dashboard, select a test centre and book their test: **18 August (1pm BST) – 26 September (6pm BST)**. Test will be taken in Pearson VUE test centres between **21st – 27th October 2025**. When registering, candidates will be able to request the access arrangements which are normally available to them for public examinations taken in their schools and colleges.

In place of the BMAT, in 2025, Oxford will use the [Pearson VUE UCAT \(University Clinical Aptitude Test\)](#) for Medicine and Graduate Entry Medicine with arrangements and charges as advertised by Pearson VUE. You must be registered by **12 noon on 19th September 2025**.

As in other years, candidates for Law will take the [Pearson VUE LNAT](#), with arrangements and charges as advertised by Pearson VUE. You will need to sit the LNAT before, or at the latest on, **15 October 2025**. Registration opens on the 1st August and testing starts on 1st September every year.

Detailed guidance on test preparation will be available shortly and there will be practice materials and a sample test provided. In the meantime, for existing Oxford tests, you may find the existing practice materials on the individual test pages useful.

In 2025, there will be no English Literature test for candidates for English Language and Literature, English and History, English and Modern Languages or Classics and English. [Check the relevant course page](#) for details on applying for any of these courses. Candidates for joint schools will still need to take the relevant test for their other subject, if applicable.

In 2025, there will be no test for Geography candidates.

CAMBRIDGE PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENTS

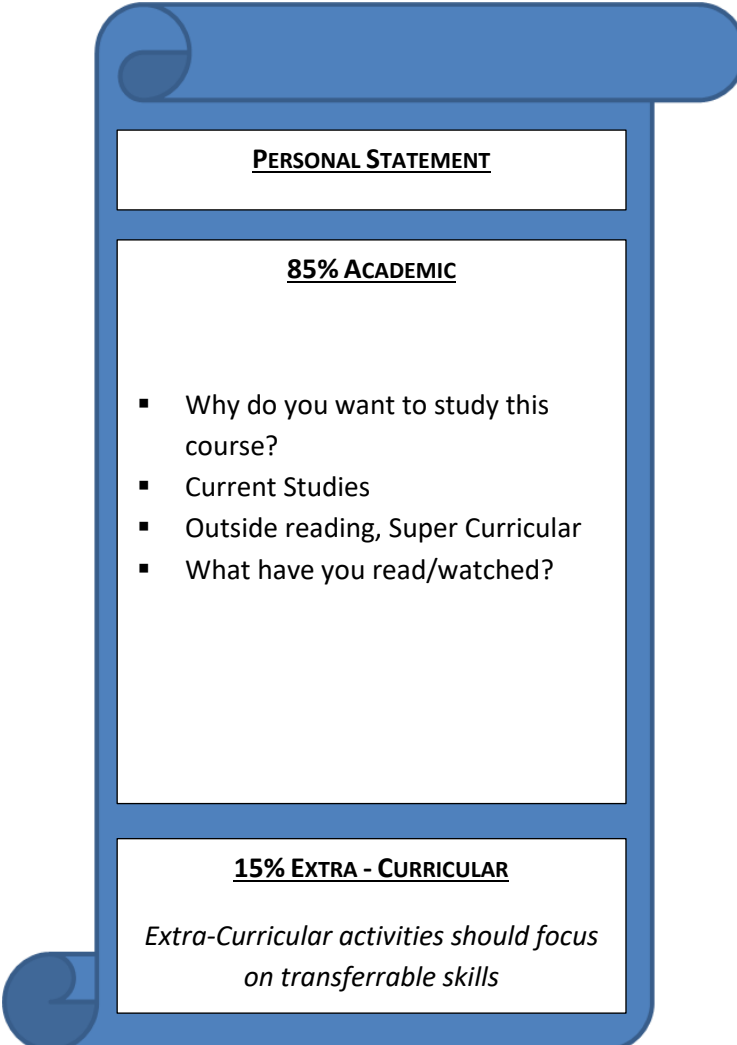
Below is a summary of what type of assessment is needed for each course for 2026 entry. You should visit the following website as the website has hyperlinks to each subject specific examination: <https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/apply/how/admission-tests>

COURSE NAME	PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT
Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic	No admission assessment.
Archaeology	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Architecture	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (AMES)	College admission assessment You don't need to register in advance.
Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology	Engineering and Science Admissions Test (ESAT) You must register in advance for this test.
Classics (3-year and 4-year)	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Computer Science	Test of Mathematics for University Admissions (TMUA) You must register in advance for this test. If you're applying to Peterhouse or Trinity College you will also need to take the Computer Sciences Aptitude Test (CSAT)
Design	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Economics	Test of Mathematics for University Admissions (TMUA) You must register in advance for this test.
Education	No admission assessment.
Engineering	Engineering and Science Admissions Test (ESAT) You must register in advance for this test.
English	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Geography	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
History	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
History and Modern Languages	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
History and Politics	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
History of Art	No admission assessment
Human, Social and Political Sciences (HSPS)	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Land Economy	No admission assessment.
Law	National Test for Law (LNAT) You must register in advance for this test.
Linguistics	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.

COURSE NAME	PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT
Mathematics	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Medicine (Standard Course A100)	University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) You must register in advance for this test.
Modern and Medieval Languages (MML)	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Music	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Natural Sciences	Engineering and Science Admissions Test (ESAT) You must register in advance for this test.
Philosophy	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Psychological and Behavioural Sciences	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion	College admission assessment. You don't need to register in advance.
Veterinary Medicine	Engineering and Science Admissions Test (ESAT) You must register in advance for this test.

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

It is important to remember you will not be able to write a separate personal statement for Oxford or Cambridge so you need to consider the wording carefully. At the back of this booklet are some examples of personal statements written by successful Oxbridge candidates. *Please note that there is a new format for the personal statement that was introduced in September 2025 – these statements were written under the old format.*



PERSONAL STATEMENT

85% ACADEMIC

- Why do you want to study this course?
- Current Studies
- Outside reading, Super Curricular
- What have you read/watched?

15% EXTRA - CURRICULAR

Extra-Curricular activities should focus on transferrable skills

Remember:

- Plan it first
- Sell yourself
- Check spelling
- Check grammar

An Example of a Personal Statement from a successful Oxford application for Philosophy, Politics and Economics

I struggle to pinpoint a single epiphany-style moment regarding my overwhelming desire to study philosophy, politics, and economics, but I believe that through my love of history I have gravitated towards these disciplines. My passion for history has stayed with me through to my A-level studies, culminating in my selection to be a Holocaust Educational Trust ambassador. After visiting Auschwitz as part of the 'Lessons from Auschwitz' project, I worked with a team to publish a newsletter about our experiences reaching 3000 members of our local community. I found the political, economic and philosophical ramifications of the Holocaust especially fascinating.

To further my attraction to Economics, I successfully applied for an internship at the Institute of economic Affairs. The experience was very enriching and despite not agreeing with their extreme libertarian views, I could see the merit to policies such as privatisation and free trade. I particularly enjoyed a talk by Razeen Sally on 'Capitalism in Asia' in which he explained what had made the Asian Tigers successful as well as the future for the region, especially in China. A number of political questions were raised, like whether successful capitalism and democracy are interdependent; intricately linked to philosophy. Nowhere was this clearer than in the seminar on Bleeding-heart libertarianism, which sought to find balance between what initially seem like the opposing ideas of libertarianism and social justice. I am a regular reader of The Economist and Private Eye; I love keeping up to date with current affairs, preferring to read different sources to get varied opinions. I have also read a number of the IEA's publications since my internship.

To pursue my love of politics I interned in the office of my local MP, Jenny Willott, for 6 months during her 2015 re-election campaign. Despite the crushing outcome for the Liberal Democrats, this was a rewarding time working with a great team, gaining understanding of campaign management and insights into a political career. I organised work experience at the Assembly Office of Eluned Parrott AM completing a number of research tasks related to her Enterprise & Business Committee. I enjoyed this so much that I have continued working in her constituency office every week. Through these experiences I have learned a great deal, such as how casework is handled.

During the 2015 General Election I applied and was selected to attend two live television debates with leaders of the Welsh Parties. The debates were interesting and reinforced the importance of clear thinking and speaking. The chance to meet some of the leaders also gave me insight into the qualities that make a good leader. I have enjoyed participating in a number of debates and public speaking events including the Wales Schools Debating Championships in 2013 and 2014 winning two outstanding individual debater awards. I perform poetry recitation in Welsh and was a finalist in an Urdd Eisteddfod group recitation competition and won the Carys Lewis Jones memorial prize for a piece of written work in Welsh. This has helped to build confidence in my oration and expression in addition to expanding my appreciation of Welsh culture.

This year I was selected as Deputy Head Boy for my school. One of my main aims in this role is to promote care and mentorship for pupils. I recognise the benefits of this and encouraging others through my experiences in volunteering; on residential school trips and helping pupils in younger years develop their reading skills in addition to helping others to learn Welsh. As well as personally rewarding, I found this challenged me to learn to express myself clearly and concisely.

Fuelled by my experiences, the opportunity to explore how decisions have and will influence the world we live in, galvanizes and affirms me in my determination and enthusiasm to study these three subjects at university.

Example of a Personal Statement from a Successful Cambridge application for Geography

Geography is a subject in constant evolution and increasing in diversity, and is therefore one of the most contemporary, relevant and current areas of study. Geography excites me not only with its vast breadth and depth, but also because it teaches me how to think critically (to analyse topical issues) and creatively (in aiming to solve contemporary issues). My recent attendance at a week-long UNIQ summer school introduced me to many new geographical concepts and during tutorials I had to think laterally about geographical issues that were new to me, such as whether we are witnessing the "death of the nation-state". This required a close examination of the definition of the "nation state", which in itself was problematic due to the possibility that no "real nation-state" has ever existed. Therefore I concluded that the idea of the nation state is changing but not necessarily "dying". I was also able to plan, carry out and present my findings of a field study examining the effect of ivy on limestone.

I am fascinated by the interactions between humans (and their activities) within changing physical environments, and the conflicts which may consequently arise, hence my keen interest in the UK's National Park system (with focus on Wales). In July 2015, I secured a work experience placement with the Brecon Beacons Park Authority, where I witnessed the development of solutions to conflicts between opposing stakeholders. One example was the creation of a phone app which enabled the Park Authority to provide information to visitors without altering the landscape. This scenario highlights the competing needs of stakeholders that geographers have to address. Having also completed work experience with the RSPB, I was able to discover how organisations with similar aims can take different approaches to solve the same issue. Both work experience placements helped me to improve my team work and problem solving skills.

Geography is a discipline affecting each member of society due to its diversity, including concepts ranging from the effect of flooding on people and landscapes, and the correlation between transport, mobility and a country's development. Extensive reading has helped me explore the geographical world in more depth, including "On the Map" by Simon Garfield, "Geography: a very short introduction" by John A. Matthews and David T. Herbert, and "Injustice" by Danny Dorling. I also hold a subscription to the Royal Geographical Society's magazine. I enjoy the way in which I can use my study of Geography to understand and develop opinions on topical geographical issues, such as the current global migrant crisis. The study of Geography has helped me to improve my understanding of other disciplines, especially the application of mathematics and my grasp of economic concepts. In November 2014 I was a volunteer helping to conduct an otter survey with Cardiff University. This gave me an insight into how a specialist survey is carried out. In particular, the importance of communication was highlighted in comparison with A level Geography projects since data collection for this survey took place over a much wider area and timescale, as data was collected at sites across South Wales and over 10 months.

At GCSE and AS level I was awarded the academic prize for results, which provided motivational encouragement. I am also a keen musician. Having gained ABRSM grade 8 Flute and grade 8 Piano, I am now working towards sitting the Flute DipABRSM this December. Consequently, I have been a member of the Cardiff County and the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Orchestra for four years, which has required commitment and helped me develop my time management and communication skills. These skills have been enhanced by my completion of the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award and John Muir Discovery Award. I hope that by studying Geography I can enhance my geographical knowledge and skills by learning from specialists at the forefront of current research.

Example of a Personal Statement from a Successful Cambridge application for Mathematics

The challenge of a difficult mathematical problem and the satisfaction of solving it using creativity and logic is what I love about maths. I love the absolute truth of mathematical proof and that the elegance, beauty and generality of maths stem from its abstract nature. I enjoy the more challenging maths in the Sixth Form. Learning about the wide applicability of different proof structures and of powerful tools such as calculus has shown me how closely interlinked the different areas of mathematics are. Outside school I enjoy finding proofs when none is given, and I explore extensions of ideas I have been taught by working through BMO and STEP questions. I like to broaden my knowledge of mathematical ideas and their rich historical context by reading popular maths books, and these feature regularly on my Christmas lists!

Alex's Adventures in Numberland by Alex Bellos is one of my favourites, with its fascinating discussion of number systems, our perception of numbers and the interaction between mathematics and society. I also enjoyed the brief overview of the important questions in mathematics in Ian Stewart's The Great Mathematical Problems, although it was frustrating to read because I felt that one chapter was not enough to do each problem justice. By contrast, Timothy Gowers in Mathematics: A Very Short Introduction discussed some of the foundational ideas more thoroughly. Learning about the commutative and associative laws and how they could be used to prove basic arithmetic results showed me just how rigorous mathematics has to be.

My interest in maths began when I sat the UKMT junior maths challenge and encountered problems that required real thought, inspiring me to try more interesting questions. I have since achieved gold awards in all three challenges and taken part in a variety of follow-on rounds including most recently the BMO1. I have represented my school in maths quizzes and the UKMT senior team challenge, where it was really interesting to see how others approach problem solving. I take every opportunity to attend enrichment programmes such as maths masterclasses at the University of South Wales and the Women in Maths day at Oxford University. Throughout Year 12 I helped a Year 7 pupil with basic and applied arithmetic every week, deepening my own understanding through justifying simple concepts I take for granted. Because maths is also fun, I co-write a maths blog where I post entertaining mathematical tidbits such as my recent post on the pigeon-hole principle.

True to my Welsh roots, I love singing and have performed in County choirs since I was 7. I'm now in my third year with the County Youth Choir which practises weekly and performs a wide variety of music. We participate in national competitions and qualified for the 2015 Music for Youth Festival in Birmingham. I have also sung with the National Youth Training Choir of Wales and was excited to attend the singing masterclasses during the residential course. I play the violin in the prestigious Cardiff and Vale Youth Orchestra which rehearses weekly, performs every term, and is going on tour to Europe in summer 2016. I also support various school musical ensembles and thoroughly enjoyed playing for the school production of Jekyll and Hyde.

I'm very interested in French culture and have enrolled on an evening class to pursue my goal of speaking fluent French. For three summers I've attended language immersion courses in France. As well as improving my French this gave me the opportunity to make friends from other countries, leading to an exchange visit to Germany.

I am really looking forward to studying maths in greater depth and taking part in university life. I hope to continue with my music but am also excited at the prospect of new challenges.

ADVICE FOR OXBRIDGE APPLICANTS

CHECKLIST	Yes	No
Have you researched your choice of course on Oxford and Cambridge websites?		
Are you sure that it is the right course for you?		
Have you checked the specific course entrance requirements?		
Are you sure that the style of teaching and learning will suit you?		
Do you think you will cope under pressure?		
Have you found out what pre-interview tests or tests at interview you will have to take?		
Have you done any extra reading around your subject?		
Do you visit websites relevant to your discipline?		
Are you involved in any super curricular activities which will extend your knowledge of your subject or develop research skills? E.g. relevant work experience.		