



# Cardiff High School

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UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

## APPLYING TO OXBRIDGE Information Booklet 2020 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 someone from the Achievement Team will be assigned as your referee their role will be to 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. Students specifically applying for Medicine, Veterinary Science, Dentistry and all science-based subjects should see Mr. N. Jones or Miss. S. Isaac for advice. 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. Dilkes  
Head of Upper School

Miss. N.S. Jones  
UCAS Support Officer

## **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 2019, 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.

## **PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENTS**

### ***When and where will the testing take place?***

The pre-interview written assessments are organised by the Admissions Testing Service. Cardiff High is an authorised centre.

### ***Is there a registration requirement for pre-interview assessments?***

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.**

The registration deadline is dependent on the course you're applying for:

- For Medicine (Standard Course, A100) or Veterinary Medicine, the pre-interview assessment you are required to take is the Biomedical Admission Test (BMAT), for which you must be registered by 5:00pm on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019.
- The registration deadline for the other pre-interview assessments is 6.00pm on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

In order to register for you for your pre-interview assessment, you must provide the following pieces of information to your assessment centre; this should be done via Mrs. S. Walsh (Exams Officer)

- UCAS Personal ID
- Name, as it'll appear on your UCAS application
- Gender
- Date of birth
- Details of any access requirements/arrangements
- The university/institution (and Cambridge College or open application) you're applying to
- The course (including the UCAS course code) you're applying for

You must provide this information to the Exams Officer in good time to ensure you can be registered. If you are not registered by the relevant deadline you will not be able to take the appropriate pre-interview assessment, which will mean your application to the University will not be considered.

Successful registration generates a candidate number – a letter followed by five digits – which your assessment centre will be forwarded to you as confirmation. You may be required to provide your candidate number as part of your application, and you will need it on the day of the assessment.

## CAMBRIDGE PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENTS

Below is a summary of the Cambridge Pre-Interview Assessments that they have developed. You should visit the following website as the website has hyperlinks to each subject specific examination: [www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/admissions-assessments/pre-interview](http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/admissions-assessments/pre-interview)

COURSE NAME	PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT	SECTION 1	SECTION 2
<a href="#">Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic</a>	Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic Admissions Assessment (ASNCAA)	Reading Comprehension 60 minutes	Critical response to text(s) 60 minutes
<a href="#">Asian and Middle Eastern Studies</a>	Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Admissions Assessment (AMESAA)	Reading Comprehension 60 minutes	Critical response to text(s) 60 minutes
<a href="#">Chemical Engineering</a>	Chemical Engineering via Engineering (H810) requires the Engineering Admissions Assessment (ENGAA).  Chemical Engineering via Natural Sciences (H813) requires the Natural Sciences Admissions Assessment (NSAA).		
<a href="#">Economics</a>	Economics Admissions Assessment (ECAA)	Problem solving and Maths for Economics 80 minutes	Essay on topic of economic interest 40 minutes
<a href="#">Engineering</a>	Engineering Admissions Assessment (ENGAA)	Maths/Physics 80 minutes	Structured sets of multiple-choice Maths and Physics questions 40 minutes
<a href="#">English</a>	<a href="#">English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT)</a>		
<a href="#">Geography</a>	Geography Admissions Assessment (GAA)	Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) and Reading Comprehension 80 minutes	Interpretation of graphical data 40 minutes
<a href="#">History</a>	History Admissions Assessment (HAA)	Reading Comprehension 60 minutes	Critical response to text(s) 60 minutes
<a href="#">History and Modern Languages</a>	History Admissions Assessment (HAA) and <a href="#">MML at-interview assessment</a>	Reading Comprehension 60 minutes	Critical response to text(s) 60 minutes
<a href="#">History and Politics</a>	History Admissions Assessment (HAA)		
<a href="#">Human, Social, and Political Sciences</a>	Human, Social, and Political Sciences Admissions Assessment (HSPSAA)	Reading Comprehension 60 minutes	Essay 60 minutes
<a href="#">Medicine</a>	<a href="#">BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)</a>		

COURSE NAME	PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT	SECTION 1	SECTION 2
<a href="#">Natural Sciences</a>	Natural Sciences Admissions Assessment (NSAA)	Maths/Science MCQs <sup>1</sup> 80 minutes	Structured sets of Maths / Physics / Chemistry / Biology (open response) 40 minutes
<a href="#">Psychological and Behavioural Sciences</a>	Psychological and Behavioural Sciences Admissions Assessment (PBSAA)	Part A (compulsory) Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)  Plus <b>either</b> Part B Mathematics and Biology <b>or</b> Part C Reading Comprehension 80 minutes	An essay discussing a quotation. Candidates discuss one quotation from a choice of four. 40 minutes
<a href="#">Veterinary Medicine</a>	Natural Sciences Admissions Assessment (NSAA)	Maths/Science MCQs <sup>1</sup> 80 minutes	Structured sets of Maths / Physics / Chemistry / Biology (open response) 40 minutes

<sup>1</sup> MCQs – multiple-choice questions

Please note:

- there's no common format written assessment for Mathematics (applicants will continue to sit STEP in June 2020) – Colleges will assess aptitude, knowledge base and potential through short tasks at the time of interview
- there's no common format written assessment for Music – Colleges will assess aptitude, knowledge base and potential through short tasks at the time of interview
- applicants to History and Modern Languages are required to take written assessments both pre-interview (the History assessment) and at interview (the Modern Languages assessment), if interviewed
- applicants to Chemical Engineering will sit the assessment relevant to their chosen route/first-year course (Engineering or Natural Sciences)



## OXFORD PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENTS

Below is a summary of the Oxford Pre-Interview Assessments which you can register for anytime from mid-September to 15<sup>th</sup> October 2019. The tests must be taken on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019; please note that this is during half term. All candidates must take the LNAT (the National Admissions Test for Law) between 1<sup>st</sup> September and 20<sup>th</sup> October 2019. To guarantee a test slot you will need to register by 20<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

You should visit the following website as the website has hyperlinks to each subject specific examination:

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

COURSE NAME	PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT	TEST DETAILS
Biomedical Sciences	Biomedical Admissions Test (BMAT)	You need to register by 1 October. Late registrations are accepted up until 15 October, but there is an additional fee for this. <a href="http://www.bmat.org.uk">www.bmat.org.uk</a>
Chemistry (F100)	Thinking Skills Assessment: Section 1 (TSA S1)	TSA S1 is a 90-minute test that consists of 50 multiple-choice thinking skills questions. <a href="http://www.tsaoxford.org.uk">www.tsaoxford.org.uk</a>
Classics	Classics Admissions Test (CAT)	<a href="http://www.catoxford.org.uk">www.catoxford.org.uk</a>
Classics and English	Classics Admissions Test (CAT) AND English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT).	Please note that separate registration is required for each of the two tests. Classics: <a href="http://www.catoxford.org.uk">www.catoxford.org.uk</a> English: <a href="http://www.elat.org.uk">www.elat.org.uk</a>
Classics and Modern Languages	Classics Admissions Test (CAT) AND Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT)	Please note that separate registration is required for each of the two tests. Classics: <a href="http://www.catoxford.org.uk">www.catoxford.org.uk</a> Modern Languages: <a href="http://www.mlatoxford.org.uk">www.mlatoxford.org.uk</a>
Classics and Oriental Studies (Classics with Oriental Studies - Q8T9)	Classics Admissions Test (CAT)	<a href="http://www.catoxford.org.uk">www.catoxford.org.uk</a>
Classics and Oriental Studies (Oriental Studies with Classics - T9Q8)	Oriental Languages Aptitude Test (OLAT)	<a href="http://www.olatoxford.org.uk">www.olatoxford.org.uk</a>
Computer Science	Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT)	<a href="http://www.matoxford.org.uk">www.matoxford.org.uk</a>
Computer Science and Philosophy	Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT)	<a href="http://www.matoxford.org.uk">www.matoxford.org.uk</a>

COURSE NAME	PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT	TEST DETAILS
Economics and Management (E&M)	Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)	<a href="http://www.tsaoxford.org.uk">www.tsaoxford.org.uk</a>
Engineering Science	Physics Aptitude Test (PAT)	<a href="http://www.patoxford.org.uk">www.patoxford.org.uk</a>
English and Modern Languages	English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT)	<a href="http://www.elat.org.uk">www.elat.org.uk</a>
English Language and Literature	English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT)	<a href="http://www.elat.org.uk">www.elat.org.uk</a>
European and Middle Eastern Languages (EMEL)	Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT) AND Oriental Languages Aptitude Test (OLAT).	Please note that separate registration is required for each of the two tests. Modern Languages: <a href="http://www.mlatoxford.org.uk">www.mlatoxford.org.uk</a> Oriental Languages: <a href="http://www.olatoxford.org.uk">www.olatoxford.org.uk</a>
Fine Art	Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview, which will include a practical test.	
Geography	Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)	<a href="http://www.tsaoxford.org.uk">www.tsaoxford.org.uk</a>
History	History Aptitude Test (HAT)	The HAT paper will have three questions. <a href="http://www.hatoxford.org.uk">www.hatoxford.org.uk</a>
History (Ancient and Modern)	History Aptitude Test (HAT)	The HAT paper will have three questions. <a href="http://www.hatoxford.org.uk">www.hatoxford.org.uk</a>
History and Economics (HECO)	History Aptitude Test (HAT) AND Thinking Skills Assessment: Section 1 (TSA S1)	Please note that separate registration is required for each of the two tests. History: <a href="http://www.hatoxford.org.uk">www.hatoxford.org.uk</a> Economics: <a href="http://www.tsaoxford.org.uk">www.tsaoxford.org.uk</a>
History and English	History Aptitude Test (HAT)	Please note that candidates for History and English are NOT required to take the English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT).
History and Modern Languages	History Aptitude Test (HAT) AND Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT)	Please note that separate registration is required for each of the two tests. History: <a href="http://www.hatoxford.org.uk">www.hatoxford.org.uk</a> Modern Languages: <a href="http://www.mlatoxford.org.uk">www.mlatoxford.org.uk</a>
History and Politics	History Aptitude Test (HAT)	The HAT paper will have three questions. <a href="http://www.hatoxford.org.uk">www.hatoxford.org.uk</a>
Human Sciences	Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)	<a href="http://www.tsaoxford.org.uk">www.tsaoxford.org.uk</a>
Law (Jurisprudence) and Law with Law Studies in Europe	Law National Admissions Test (LNAT)	<a href="http://www.lnat.ac.uk">www.lnat.ac.uk</a> Candidates for Law with Law Studies in Europe who are applying for the French, German, Italian or Spanish Law options may be given an oral test in the relevant European language in December if they are shortlisted for interview.

COURSE NAME	PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT	TEST DETAILS
Materials Science	Physics Aptitude Test (PAT)	<a href="http://www.patoxford.org.uk">www.patoxford.org.uk</a>
Mathematics	Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT)	<a href="http://www.matoxford.org.uk">www.matoxford.org.uk</a>
Mathematics and Computer Science	Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT)	<a href="http://www.matoxford.org.uk">www.matoxford.org.uk</a>
Mathematics and Philosophy	Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT)	<a href="http://www.matoxford.org.uk">www.matoxford.org.uk</a>
Mathematics and Statistics	Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT)	<a href="http://www.matoxford.org.uk">www.matoxford.org.uk</a>
Medicine (A100 and A101)	Biomedical Admissions Test (BMAT)	You need to register by 1 October. Late registrations are accepted up until 15 October, but there is an additional fee for this. <a href="http://www.bmat.org.uk">www.bmat.org.uk</a>
Modern Languages	Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT)	<a href="http://www.mlatoxford.org.uk">www.mlatoxford.org.uk</a>
Modern Languages and Linguistics	Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT)	<a href="http://www.mlatoxford.org.uk">www.mlatoxford.org.uk</a>
Music	Shortlisted candidates will be asked to take a practical test in December	
Oriental Studies	Oriental Languages Aptitude Test (OLAT)	<a href="http://www.olatoxford.org.uk">www.olatoxford.org.uk</a>
Philosophy and Modern Languages	Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT)	<a href="http://www.mlatoxford.org.uk">www.mlatoxford.org.uk</a>
Philosophy and Theology	Philosophy Test	<a href="http://www.admissionstestingservice.org/phil">www.admissionstestingservice.org/phil</a>
Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)	Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)	<a href="http://www.tsaoxford.org.uk">www.tsaoxford.org.uk</a>
Physics	Physics Aptitude Test (PAT)	<a href="http://www.patoxford.org.uk">www.patoxford.org.uk</a>
Physics and Philosophy	Physics Aptitude Test (PAT)	<a href="http://www.patoxford.org.uk">www.patoxford.org.uk</a>
Psychology (Experimental)	Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)	<a href="http://www.tsaoxford.org.uk">www.tsaoxford.org.uk</a>
Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics	Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)	<a href="http://www.tsaoxford.org.uk">www.tsaoxford.org.uk</a> Candidates for courses including Linguistics (Psychology and Linguistics, Philosophy and Linguistics) must also take the Linguistics Test. This is part of the Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT). <a href="http://www.mlatoxford.org.uk">www.mlatoxford.org.uk</a>

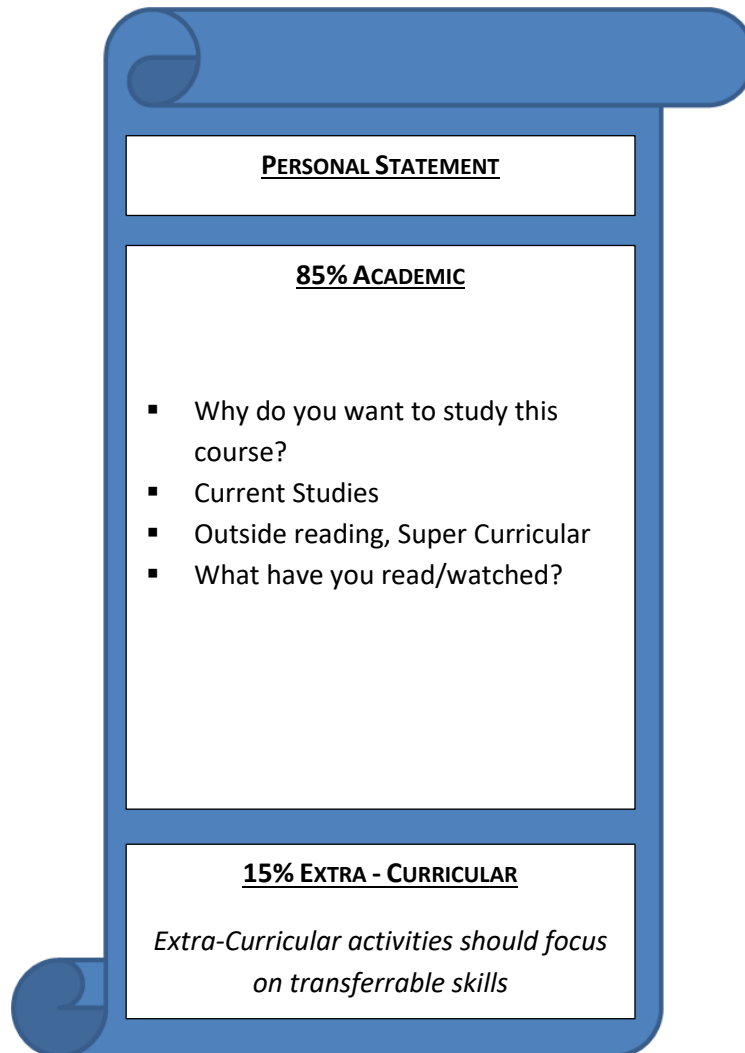
COURSE NAME	PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT	TEST DETAILS
Religion and Oriental Studies	Oriental Languages Aptitude Test (OLAT)	Only applies for those applying to the Judaism and Islam strands, intending to study Hebrew, Arabic, Persian or Turkish. Candidates for the Buddhism, Hinduism and Eastern Christianity strands do NOT have to sit a written test. <a href="http://www.olatoxford.org.uk">www.olatoxford.org.uk</a>

## TEST ABBREVIATIONS

CODE	TEST TITLE	WEBSITE
BMAT	BioMedical Admissions Test	<a href="http://www.bmat.org.uk">www.bmat.org.uk</a>
CAT	Classics Admissions Test	<a href="http://www.catoxford.org.uk">www.catoxford.org.uk</a>
ELAT	English Literature Admissions Test	<a href="http://www.elat.org.uk">www.elat.org.uk</a>
HAT	History Aptitude Test	<a href="http://www.hatoxford.org.uk">www.hatoxford.org.uk</a>
LNAT	Law National Admissions Test	<a href="http://www.lnat.ac.uk">www.lnat.ac.uk</a>
MAT	Mathematics Admissions Test	<a href="http://www.matoxford.org.uk">www.matoxford.org.uk</a>
MLAT	Modern Languages Admissions Test	<a href="http://www.mlatoxford.org.uk">www.mlatoxford.org.uk</a>
OLAT	Oriental Languages Aptitude Test	<a href="http://www.olatoxford.org.uk">www.olatoxford.org.uk</a>
PAT	Physics Aptitude Test	<a href="http://www.patoxford.org.uk">www.patoxford.org.uk</a>
STEP	Sixth Term Examination Paper	
TSA Cambridge	Thinking Skills Assessment	
TSA Oxford	Thinking Skills Assessment	<a href="http://www.tsaoxford.org.uk">www.tsaoxford.org.uk</a>

## **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.



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.		