

## Oxbridge (applications to Oxford or Cambridge to study any course)

Oxford and Cambridge are widely considered to be two of the most prestigious universities in the world and are unusual in that all of their courses offered require students to meet an early UCAS deadline (typically the 15th October at 6PM). Part of the reason for this is that all students that apply to these universities will be required to attend an interview if they are shortlisted and they could also be required to complete other pre-admissions assessments as well – these different admissions expectations will be considered in more detail below. It is probably worth mentioning at this point that candidates are only able to apply to one of these two universities – so if you like both, you will eventually have to choose!

Oxford and Cambridge both have some unique quirks, one of which is the ‘collegiate’ system. Although there are a handful of other universities that apply this system, such as Durham, is it unusual. Essentially, it means that being a member of either Oxford or Cambridge is only the umbrella, you will also be part of a college and they all differ in various ways. You might have a preference of college and if you do this would be indicated on your UCAS application, or, you might wish to make an ‘open application’ which would then open you up to all colleges where you met their individual entry expectations (colleges have their own entry expectations and these can vary for the same course and can be different from the general overall expectations). For more information about the collegiate system and general application information, please see the link below from the complete university guide:

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/applying-to-uni/guide-to-applying-for-oxford-and-cambridge-university>

### - **Application considerations:**

- *Do you meet the standard entry requirements?*

Before beginning to investigate further into your chosen course’s admissions process, ensure that you meet the minimum entry requirements. Typically, this will be predicted grades, i.e. A\*AA; possibly specific subject requirements, i.e. ‘must include A\* in A-Level Mathematics’; and there could also be some GCSE requirements. In all instances, with both Oxford and Cambridge, their websites are excellent, up to date and contain all of the necessary information. To give you an example of how this looks, please see below the links for engineering entry requirements at Cambridge and psychology at Oxford as examples:

<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/engineering>

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses-listing/psychology-experimental>

- *Familiarise yourself with any additional requirements of your specific course or college*

There are some admissions expectations that are consistent across all courses such as the interview and the need for a complete UCAS application form (this will include your personal statement) but the form they take and any additional requirements, such as pre-admissions tests and submission of written work, can vary. Referring back to the links above as examples, you will see that to be successful in gaining a

place at Cambridge to study engineering you will need: predicted grades of at least A\*A\*A and all colleges also require that you have Maths and Physics, 'some' colleges will also require you to have a third science/maths subject and STEP (this is an additional test that you take in the summer). You will also need to take a pre-admissions test for this course but are not required to submit any written work.

As another example, in the case of English, you would have to do both a pre-admissions test (the ELAT) and submit one or two pieces of written work, depending on the college that you want to apply to. The key things to keep in mind here are deadlines and prep, again, both Oxford and Cambridge's websites are clear and contain all of the information that you need.

- *Think early about the ways in which you can ensure that you have the best application possible*

Any application to Oxford or Cambridge needs to be of a high quality in order to give you the highest chance of success and there are a variety of things that you can do. You will need to complete all of the necessary pre-admissions tests and other requirements on time but you will also need to have an exemplary personal statement and be in a good position to perform well at interview. In order to do this, you need to think about the experience and supra curricular activities that you engage in. To understand more about the broad expectations and about how best to prepare, take a look at the podcast below. Several admissions tutors participate in podcast linked below covering what they would expect to see in a high-quality personal statement:

<https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/personal-statement-ucas-form>

Hertford College at the University of Oxford, have put together a very informative but brief flyer covering some key considerations/info on the personal statement:

<https://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Hertford-Personal-Statements.pdf>

For more information, please see the general admissions and Christs Cambridge's advice for prospective undergraduates writing their personal statement:

<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/writing-a-great-personal-statement>

<https://www.christs.cam.ac.uk/how-apply-1/uk-support/personal-statement>

The most important thing to remember with this kind of application is that it is never really too early to begin thinking about the process and engaging with it. Early familiarity and awareness can only improve your application and help to ensure that you are doing the right things at the right time. For all internal deadlines please see the USP UCAS Apply instructions for your campus.