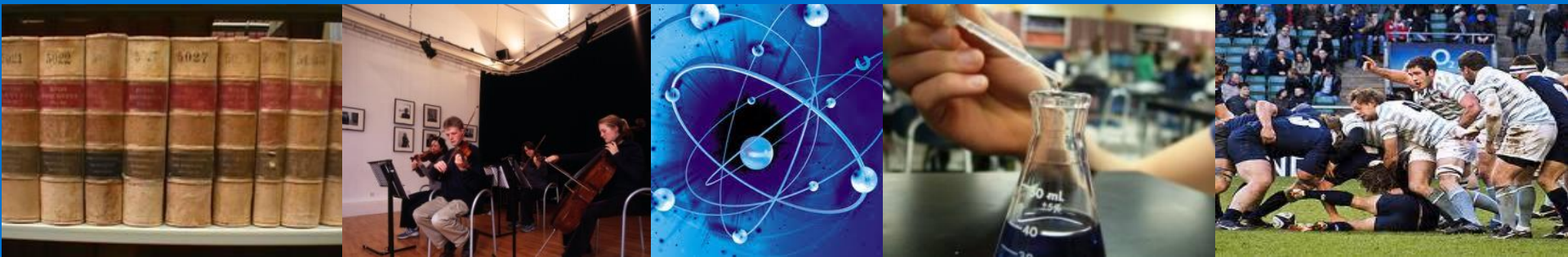
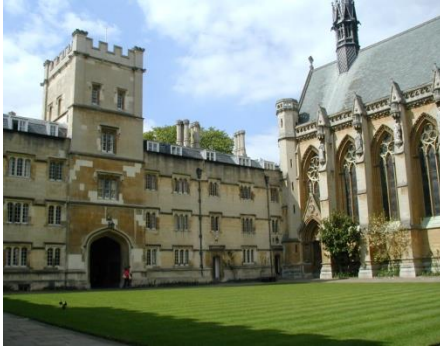


# Applying to Competitive Universities & Courses



# Introduction to University



What is the Russell Group?

Why might you choose to go to university?

What can you study at university? Does every university offer the same things?

**In small groups, can you answer one (or more) of these questions?**

Why are Oxford and Cambridge different to other universities?

Do you have to be from a certain background or type of school to go to a top university?



# Why go to university?

**Confidence**

**Experience**

Much cheaper and more accessible when you are younger

**Networking**

Safe environment

**Qualifications**

Skills



**Job prospects  
and earning potential**

**Opportunities**

Social life

**Studying something you're really interested in**

# A world of choice!

How many Universities do you think there are in the UK?

130

How many of those do you think are in England?

108



# What makes a 'Top' university? #1

## The Russell Group

University of Birmingham

University of Bristol

**University of Cambridge**

Cardiff University

Durham University

University of Edinburgh

University of Exeter

University of Glasgow

Imperial College London

King's College London

University of Leeds

University of Liverpool

LSE (London School of  
Economics)

University of Manchester

Newcastle University

University of Nottingham

**University of Oxford**

Queen Mary (University of  
London)

Queen's University Belfast

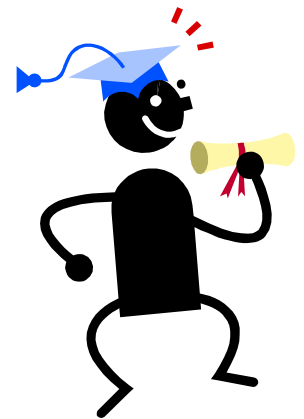
University of Sheffield

University of Southampton

University College London

University of Warwick

University of York



# What makes a 'Top' University? #2

Quality of Teaching

Student Satisfaction

Class Sizes

Ability of Staff

Student Support

Financial

Facilities Available

Personal

Social Life and Societies

Opportunities Available





# Why Oxford or Cambridge?



- Broad range of courses
- World-class teaching – lectures, seminars/classes, practicals
- Small-group teaching – tutorials/supervisions
- Excellent facilities and resources
- Academic, pastoral and financial support
- Wide range of extra-curricular options
- Excellent graduate opportunities, irrespective of degree discipline

# The cost of studying in Oxford or Cambridge?

- College-owned accommodation
- Short terms
- Long holidays for paid employment
- Subsidised catering on offer
- Extensive libraries and book grants
- No/low travel costs within the city
- Cambridge/Oxford Bursaries
- Reduced tuition fees (Oxford)
- Hardship grants
- College prizes and scholarships

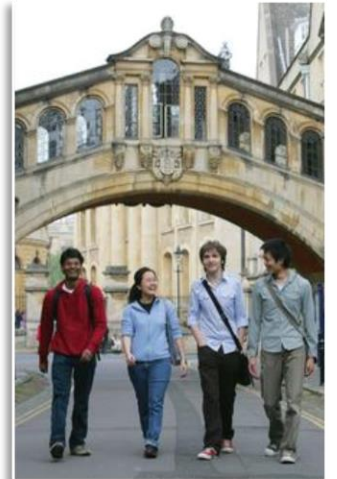
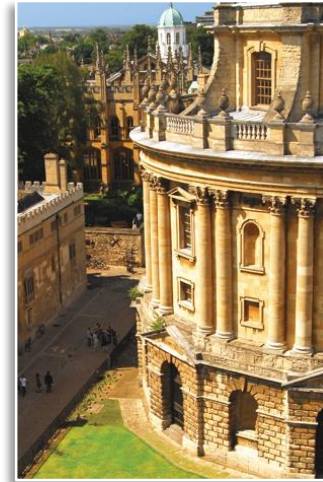




# Universities and departments

***As a student, you're a member of the University, a department and a College.***

- Course content
- Lectures, seminars, practicals and projects
- Assessments and exams
- Award degrees
- Careers advice



# Teaching & learning

**Lectures**



**Seminars**



**Practicals (Labs)**



**Independent study**



**Time in the library**



**Supervisions (Oxford and Cambridge)**



# Choosing a course

**How would you do it?**

# Choosing a course

- What are you enthusiastic about?
- Assessment method: modular exams, coursework or final exams?
- Broad or narrow range?
- ‘Traditional’ or new?
- Think beyond the obvious
- Some courses may be required for a specific career – e.g. medicine, architecture, veterinary medicine, engineering

# e.g. academic life in Cambridge

- Theoretical degrees
- Intensive 8-week terms
- Focus on independent study and learning
- Unique supervision teaching
- Assessment largely through exams

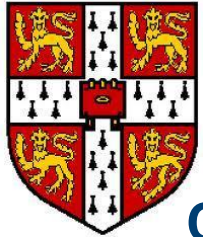
Other universities could have very different academic structures e.g. longer terms, more coursework etc.





# Choosing a course

Both offer a range of academic arts, science and social science subjects.  
Some courses vary between Oxford and Cambridge:



## Cambridge:

- ASNaC (Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic)
- Architecture
- Education
- Land Economy
- HSPS (Human, Social and Political Sciences)
- Veterinary Medicine

Courses divided into 'Parts'



## Oxford:

- PPE (Politics, Philosophy and Economics)
- Classical Archaeology and Ancient History
- Fine Art

Single science subjects

Joint Honours degrees

# What do you want from your university course?

- Spend five minutes chatting to the person next to you about the type of course you would like to study

Favourite  
subject?

Assessment  
method?

Broad?  
Narrow?

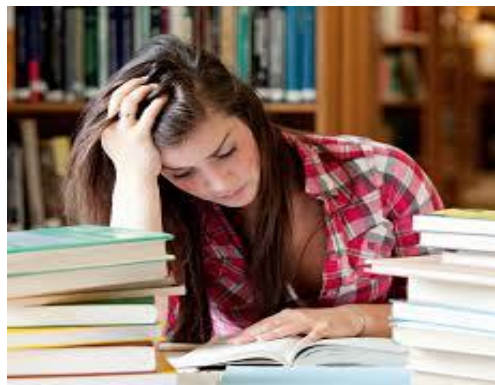
Traditional?  
New?

Career-  
focused?

## Feedback?

# Admissions Tutors...

## ...What are they looking for?



# What are Admissions Tutors looking for?

- Academic ability
- Suitability for the chosen course & potential to succeed
- Interest outside of the classroom
- (In some cases) evidence of work experience
- (In some cases) extra-curricular activity/transferable skills

NB: Requirements will vary depending on the **university** & **course** choice

[www.furthermaths.org.uk](http://www.furthermaths.org.uk)

[nrich.maths.org](http://nrich.maths.org)

[correspondence.maths.org](http://correspondence.maths.org)

# What are Top Universities looking for?

✓ **Academic  
ability and  
potential**

✓ **Subject  
requirements**

✓ **Genuine subject  
interest**  
– motivation and  
enthusiasm

✓ **Suitability  
for chosen  
course**



✗ **Particular  
school types**

✗ **Particular  
backgrounds**

✗ **Irrelevant extra-  
curricular  
activities**



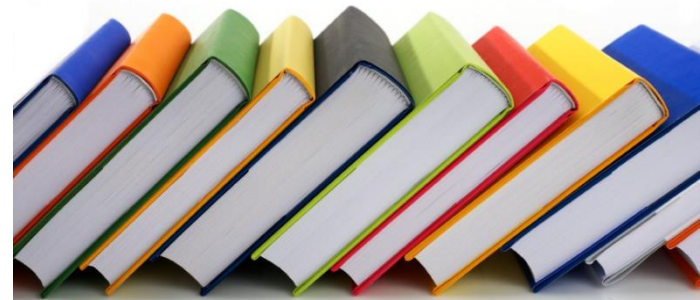
# Getting the most from wider reading

## Genuine interest in the subject outside the confines of the formal syllabus

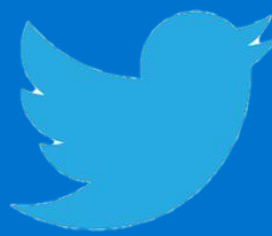
Extra reading and exploration are crucial to success, not just in arts subjects

Critical engagement with reading:

- What is the argument in this book/article?
- What is the supporting evidence?
- What do I think? How can I find out more?



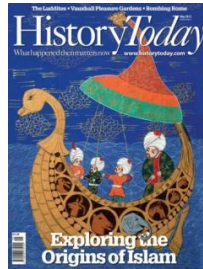
# Wider Exploration



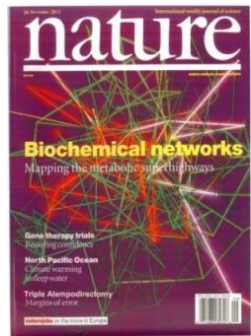
#ExploreYourSubject



92–95 FM



The Fitzwilliam Museum  
CAMBRIDGE



UCAS

ASHMOLEAN  
MUSEUM OF ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Le Monde  
EL PAÍS



Inside the Ethics Committee



theguardian

TLS



OX?LORE

# Recap

**What are Admissions Tutors at top universities looking for?**

**How can you show an interest in your subject outside of the classroom?**

# Information used in selection

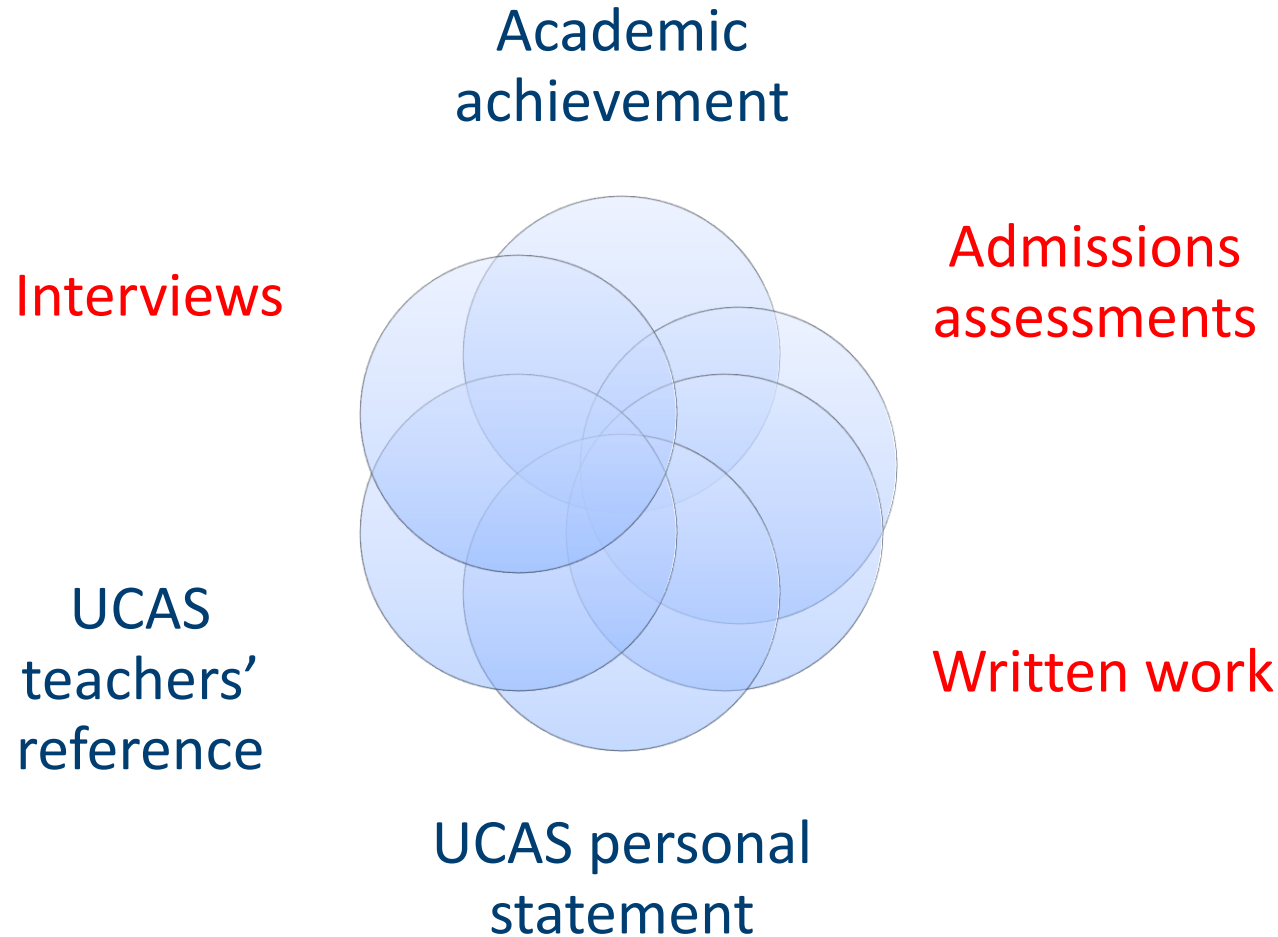
We consider every application individually, taking all aspects into account:

- Academic record
- Personal statement
- Teacher's reference
- Admissions assessment results (where required)
- Written work (where required)
- Contextual data
- Interview (if interviewed)

No part of an application is considered in isolation – all available information is looked at together before decisions are made.

	Offers for Cambridge
<b>A Levels</b>	A*AA for Arts/Humanities  A*A*A for Sciences
	<b>Offers for other Competitive Courses/Universities</b>
<b>A Levels</b>	A*AA - AAB for Arts/Humanities  A*AA - AAB for Sciences

# University of Cambridge Admissions Assessments





# Personal Statements: ALL universities

- differentiate yourself!
- very important for 'vocational' subjects
- enthusiasm and commitment to your subject
- subject interest beyond the school syllabus
- include activities that show helpful personality traits (leadership, enterprise, commitment ...)
- excellence in an extra-curricular activity cannot compensate for lower academic potential



# Personal Statements: Oxbridge

At Oxford & Cambridge the personal statement:

- confirms commitment and suitability for the course
- provides a discussion point at interview
- can indicate your subject focus and wider reading (super-curricular), interests, personality and honesty
- ALSO: Cambridge-specific personal statement on Supplementary Application Questionnaire

Earlier entry date for Oxbridge & Medicinal Courses –  
**15<sup>th</sup> October!!**



# Written work

- Depends on course (Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities) and College/University – list on university website
- Most commonly a piece of work completed as part of sixth form studies
- Have a think about the marker's comments
- The most effective submitted work tends to be that which applicants are likely to enjoy discussing and which has been completed relatively recently



# Why Do We Interview?

- Almost all applicants are predicted top grades
- Interviewing applicants allows:
  - 1) Us to assess whether the student is suited to the course
  - 2) The applicant to expand on information provided in UCAS application
  - 3) The student to experience what teaching at Cambridge is like and us to determine whether the applicant will flourish in the Cambridge environment

**No trick questions!**

**Not the ‘final hurdle’**





# Preparing for interviews

- Get used to talking about your subject and talking to unfamiliar adults
- Re-read your personal statement and any written work
- Revise what you already know
- Keep reading around your subject
- Be prepared to discuss things you don't know
- Don't believe the myths
- Don't pay for any training or advice
- Know what to expect!





# Preparing to apply

## P Programme of study

- Course choice is the most important decision – research thoroughly, personal interest(s)

## R Results

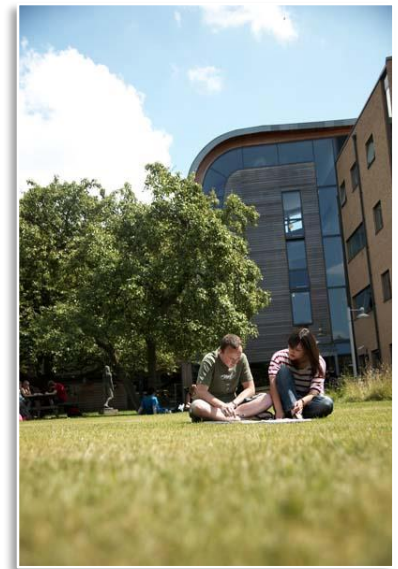
- Work hard to do as well as you can in your current studies

## E Engage and explore

- Be proactive in your learning – current studies and interests relevant to your intended degree

## P Practise

- Discussing your academic interest(s)
- Past/example admission test/assessment papers
- Time management – generally and for exams



# Finding out more...

Russell Group website - [russellgroup.ac.uk/](http://russellgroup.ac.uk/)

University and College prospectuses

University websites – Course information and requirements

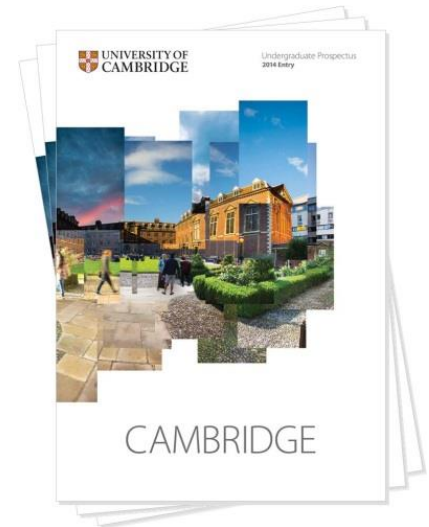
Open Days & Events

University Admissions Offices

e.g. [admissions@cam.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@cam.ac.uk)

Wider Subject Exploration

# RUSSELL GROUP



# Questions?



[slo@newn.cam.ac.uk](mailto:slo@newn.cam.ac.uk)  
[@NewnhamSLO](https://twitter.com/NewnhamSLO)