

Oxbridge Information Evening

Thursday 5th February 2026

Why choose Oxford or Cambridge?



- World-class teaching
- Small group teaching - tutorials/supervision
- Excellent facilities and resources
- Excellent graduate opportunities irrespective of degree discipline

How do they compare?



Top universities in the UK 2026

UK Rank 2026	WUR Rank 2026	University	Overall	Teaching	Research Environment	Research Quality	Industry	International Outlook
1	1	University of Oxford	98.2	97.2	100	97.7	99.9	96.4
2	=3	University of Cambridge	97.2	96.2	99.9	97.1	87.6	96.3
3	8	Imperial College London	94.7	90.6	94.9	98	91.9	98.2
4	22	UCL	87.5	77.8	85.9	97.6	74.7	97.5
5	29	University of Edinburgh	82.5	75.7	74.7	94.8	71	96.2
6	38	King's College London	78.7	64.2	72.1	95.5	72.3	96.9
7	52	London School of Economics and Political Science	75.4	60.5	71.2	93.4	46.8	94.2
8	56	University of Manchester	74.9	61.2	65.9	92.4	74	94.5
9	=80	University of Bristol	69.7	51.4	56.5	94.4	74.6	91.8
10	84	University of Glasgow	68.9	50.6	52.2	95.9	73.2	95.5



What are they looking for?

- Academic ability and aptitude for chosen subject
- Top grades - ranging from AAA to A*A*A
- Genuine enthusiasm for the subject
- Self-discipline, self-motivation and commitment
- Ability to think for yourself and to be open to intellectual challenges
- Good 'fit' between applicant and course - would the Oxbridge learning environment and assessments suit you?
- Vocational commitment (if appropriate)



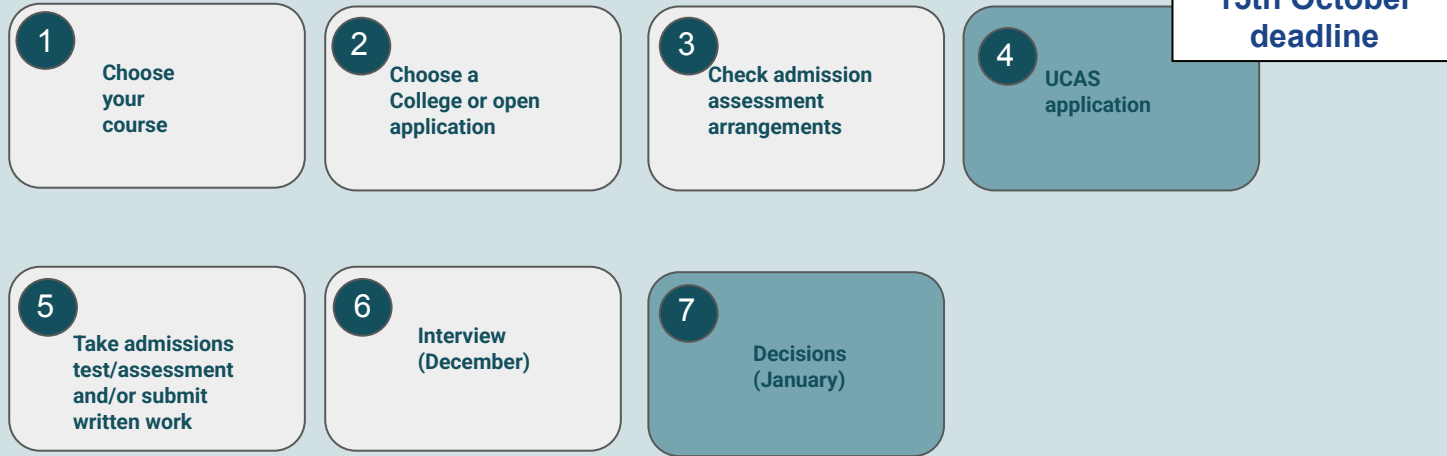
What are they looking for?



Notes for Year 11 students

- All GCSE grades matter
- Plan ahead when choosing A levels

The application process



How are applications assessed?

All aspects of application are considered together

- Academic record
- Personal statement
- Teacher's reference
- Contextual information
- Performance in admission test/assessment
- Written work submitted
- Interview

No one part is considered in isolation and no one part is more important than any other



Admissions assessments

Not all courses have admissions test requirements



Some have **Pre-Interview** assessments

or

You provide the university with your writing, a recent essay is typically sent

or

Admissions Test

At interview assessment

An article, a maths problem or piece of literature

Write an essay, answer questions.....

Admissions assessments

If you apply for a course that requires an admissions test, you'll need to check:

- The registration deadline for the test
- When and where you will sit it
- What it includes

Most admissions tests happen between August and November the year before you're due to start your studies. **Some have a registration deadline before you need to submit your UCAS application.**



**Cambridge
Assessment
Admissions
Testing**

KWS
SIXTH FORM

Oxford Admissions Test



Admissions assessments



MAT (Mathematics Admissions Test)



LNAT (Law National Aptitude Test)



UCAT (University Clinical Aptitude Test for Medicine)

What are they looking for?

- How you react to new ideas or information?
- Can you think flexibly and analytically?
- Do you think logically?
- How do you engage with a problem when you don't know the answer?
- How you work under pressure

How can you prepare?



Find examples of assessments online and practice under timed conditions

REMEMBER: This is just one part of your application. There is no pass/fail.
Just do the best you can!



Super-curricular activities

Super-curricular = going beyond the curriculum

Demonstrating your passion for the subject

Examples:

- Reading a book or academic article
- Attending a lecture in person or online
- Listening to a podcast
- Visiting a museum/gallery/science centre
- Your own research project (EPQ)
- Academics programme



Personal Statements



Students have a 4000 character limit (including spaces) to answer three questions. These are:

- Why do you want to study this course or subject?
- How have your qualifications and studies prepared you for this course?
- What else have you done to prepare, outside of education, and why are these experiences helpful?



What to include



Why do you want to study this course or subject?

- Highlight your enthusiasm for and understanding of your chosen field
- Explain why you are passionate about the subject and how it aligns with your career aspirations
- Highlight specific aspects of the course that particularly interest you
- Describe how do you plan to contribute to and benefit from the programme



What to include



How have your qualifications and studies helped to prepare for this course or subject?

- Describe relevant skills and knowledge gained through your education so far
- Discuss specific coursework, projects or experiences that have prepared you for the challenges of the course
- Highlight academic achievements or recognition you received
- Explain how your academic background makes you a strong candidate



What to include

What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences helpful?

- Work experience, internships and volunteer work
- Summer schools
- Competitions, debates etc

For Oxbridge applications these should be academic and linked to the subject you are applying to study if possible



Interviews



Cambridge

Mostly in December

May be online or in person

One or two interviews with a specific college (35-50 minutes in total)

Oxford

Mostly in December

All online

Usually more than one which may be with different colleges



Interviews



What are they looking for?

- Passion for your subject
- Academic ability
- Are you able to think critically?
- How do you deal with challenge?
- How do you approach the unknown?
- How well will you fit in at Oxford or Cambridge?



Interviews



For neurodiverse students, there will be a slightly softer start to the interview to give the student time to get comfortable in the environment.

You are likely to be asked about what you wrote in your Personal Statement. Make sure you are ready to discuss any books etc that refer to.

You may be asked about current events related to your subject.



Interviews



Shortly before your interview you may be given materials relevant to your course e.g a text, poem, graph or object.

In the interview you will be asked questions about these materials to see how well you can think critically under pressure.

Interviewers will be interested to know how you cope when you don't know the answer to something.

For maths based subjects you are likely to be asked to talk through how you would complete a maths problem given to you during the interview.



What next?

- Research colleges and courses
- Research entrance exams and assessments
- University Open Days
- Take up extra-curricular opportunities linked to your chosen course
- Challenge yourself
- Work hard to get the best results you can



What next?

Staircase12 is an online hub of resources and information for students thinking about applying to top universities



<https://www.univ.ox.ac.uk/applying-to-univ/staircase12/>

Choosing a college

KWS
SIXTH FORM



KWS support for Oxbridge applicants



Competitive universities group

Oxbridge interview P7

Super curriculum

Oxbridge Academics Programme [link](#)

Personal statement support and advice

Balliol college Oxford - Floreat, Fibonacci and Frontier programmes

Gonville and Caius college Cambridge

Subject specific mock interview

Rotary club mock interviews

Support from students currently studying at Oxbridge colleges



Zara - History at Cambridge



Becky - PPE at Oxford



University of Oxford
www.ox.ac.uk/study
study@ox.ac.uk

University of Cambridge
www.study.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/
admissions@cam.ac.uk