Lucy Cavendish College
University of Cambridge

Preparing for Admissions Assessments

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Today's session

- Overview of the application process
- How admissions assessments are used to assess applications
- Practical details
- How to prepare
- Final top tips
- Questions

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Summer Application Bootcamp

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Admissions Assessment sessions

- This session: Applicable for all students who will be sitting an admissions assessment
- Admissions Assessment Preparation Workshops: usually applicable only for applicants for certain subjects at Cambridge

Sciences & Maths
• Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology (NSAA) • Computer Science (TMUA) • Economics (TMUA) • Engineering (ENGAA) • Medicine (BMAT) • Natural Sciences (NSAA) • Veterinary Medicine (NSAA)

Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
• Archaeology • English (CELAT) • History (HAA) • History and Modern Languages • Law (LNAT) • Linguistics • Modern & Medieval Languages

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Overview of the Application Process

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Our Application Process – why is it different?

Completed online – application deadline **15 October**

- Virtually all applications to Cambridge are strong
- UCAS forms don't provide enough detail to distinguish between them
- Therefore, we ask for more information (via 'My Cambridge Application') and ask applicants to go through additional processes (admissions assessments and interviews)

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What information do we use to assess applications?

- Academic record
  - GCSE grades
  - Predicted A-Level (or equivalent) grades
- UCAS application
- 'My Cambridge Application'
- Teacher reference
- Contextual information
- Written work**
- Admissions assessments**
- Interview (if interviewed)

No part of an application is considered in isolation – all available information is looked at together before decisions are made. We consider every application individually, taking all aspects into account.

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What are we looking for?

- Academic ability and potential
- Satisfy any subject requirements
- Ability to think critically and independently
- Genuine subject interest – motivation and enthusiasm
- Vocational commitment (where appropriate)

All universities are looking for the brightest and the best students, irrespective of social, religious, school or financial background. So go for it!

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How are admissions assessments used to assess applications?

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Why do we have our own admissions assessments?

- Provides a **universal, benchmark assessment** for all applicants to that subject, regardless of the qualifications they are studying in school
- Stretches and challenges applicants to assess their **potential**
- They are designed to gauge applicants' skills and abilities which might n
- Gives you an opportunity to demonstrate how you have developed academically since you took your GCSEs, or most recent exams

What are the admissions assessments assessing?

- Thinking and comprehension skills
- Where appropriate, subject knowledge and understanding
- Intended to introduce applicants to new information beyond their current syllabi and see how they try to address it
- Different to any exam you've ever sat before, so will be challenging and unfamiliar if you haven't looked at the papers in advance

How will admissions assessment performance affect students' applications?

- The assessments are **not** pass/fail tests
- Students' performance won't be considered in isolation, but will be taken into account alongside the other elements of the application
- Pre-interview admissions assessment performance **can** affect whether an applicant is invited to interview or not, but it is rarely decisive

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What practical details do I need to know?

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Admissions assessments

Pre-registration required	Cambridge College registered (only for applicants shortlisted for interview)	Some Colleges
• Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology (NSAA) • Computer Science (TMUA) • Economics (TMUA) • Engineering (ENGAA) • Law (LNAT) • Medicine (BMAT) • Natural Sciences (NSAA) • Veterinary Medicine (NSAA)	• Archaeology • Architecture • Classics • English • History and Modern Languages • History of Art • Linguistics • Modern and Medieval Languages • Philosophy • Theology, Religion, and Philosophy of Religion	• Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic • Asian and Middle Eastern Studies • Education • Geography • History • History and Politics • Human, Social and Political Sciences • Mathematics • Psychological and Behavioural Sciences

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Updates to written assessments for 2023-entry onwards

- There is no longer an admissions assessment required for **Land Economy**
- The new **Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology** Tripos will use the **NSAA** (Natural Sciences Admissions Assessment)
- **Economics** will now use the **TMUA** (Test of Mathematics for University Admissions), rather than the **ECAA**(Economics Admissions Assessment)
- **English** is no longer using the **ELAT** (English Literature Admissions Test) but rather moving to a Cambridge College-registered assessment
- **Law** will now use the **LNAT** (National Admissions Test for Law) rather than the **CLT** (Cambridge Law test). The LNAT must be taken by no later than) **October 15th**, with registration between **1st August-15th September**.

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Pre-registration required assessment practical details

Pre-registration required

- Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology (NSAA)
- Computer Science (TMUA)
- Economics (TMUA)
- Engineering (ENGAA)
- Law (LNAT)
- Medicine (BMAT)
- Natural Sciences (NSAA)
- Veterinary Medicine (NSAA)

You must ensure your assessment centre registers you by the relevant deadline.

LNAT:

- Applicant can register themselves from 1st August-**15th September**
- LNAT can be sat from 1st September onwards, and must be done by 15th October at the latest.

Other admissions assessments: **Register by 30th September**

- ENGAA (19th October) – Engineering
- TMUA – (18th October) - Computer Science, Economics
- BMAT- (18th October) - Medicine
- NSAA – (19th October) - Natural Sciences, Veterinary Medicine, Chemical Engineering & Biotechnology

Taken in the applicant's registered test centre (usually school or College). LNAT taken in a local LNAT test centre. LNAT and TMUA computer based. NSAA, BMAT and ENGAA paper based.

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At-interview assessment practical details

Choose course and college → Pre-registration required admissions assessment registration → UCAS 15 October → 'My Cambridge Application' 22 October → Submit written work (if required) → Cambridge-College registered admissions assessments → Interview (Nov or Dec) → At-interview assessments → Decision (Jan)

Cambridge College registered (only for applicants shortlisted for interview)

- Archaeology
- Architecture
- Classics
- English
- History and Modern Languages
- History of Art
- Modern and Medieval Languages
- Philosophy
- Theology, Religion, and Philosophy of Religion

Some Colleges

- Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic
- Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
- Education
- Geography
- History
- History and Politics
- Human, Social and Political Sciences
- Mathematics
- Psychological and Behavioural Sciences

- No need to register in advance
- Only for applicants shortlisted for interview
- Paper-based
- Remote – sat in your school/College or home
- Scheduled for the last two weeks in November, so no longer on the same day as the interview

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How do I prepare for my admissions assessments?

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How to prepare: **Resources**

- All information about all admissions assessments available online, including:
  - Full assessment specifications
  - Past and specimen papers with answer sheets and explained/exemplar answers
  - Videos
  - Extensive information, advice and guidance
- Download all documents for your assessment
- Discuss resources with your subject teachers

www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/admission-assessments

How to prepare: **Familiarise yourself with the paper**

- How many questions do you have to answer?
- How long do you have per question?
- What is the format of the questions?
  - Comparative?
  - Responding to some information?
  - Open-ended questions?

How to prepare: **Revise key knowledge**

Revision can be helpful for Science-based courses

- Specifications will tell you what you need to revise
- Identify what topics you need to focus your revision on
- If there are any gaps in your knowledge, fill them using online resources
- Ask your subject teachers for help
- Revise GCSE and A-Level notes

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How to prepare: **Revise key knowledge**

M2. Number

M2.1 Order positive and negative integers, decimals and fractions.

Understand and use the symbols: $=, \neq, <, >, \leq, \geq$.

M2.2 Apply the four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) to integers, decimals, simple fractions (proper and improper) and mixed numbers – any of which could be positive and negative.

Understand and use place value.

M2.3 Use the concepts and vocabulary of prime numbers, factors (divisors), multiples, common factors, common multiples, highest common factor, lowest common multiple, and prime factorisation (including use of product notation and the unique factorisation theorem).

M2.4 Recognise and use relationships between operations, including inverse operations.

Use cancellation to simplify calculations and expressions.

Understand and use the convention for priority of operations, including brackets, powers, roots and reciprocals.

M2.5 Apply systematic listing strategies. (For instance, if there are m ways of doing one task and for each of these tasks there are n ways of doing another task, then the total number of ways the two tasks can be done in order is $m \times n$ ways.)

M2.6 Use and understand the terms: *square*, *positive* and *negative square root*, *cube* and *cube root*.

M2.7 Use index laws to simplify numerical expressions, and for multiplication and division of integer, fractional and negative powers.

M2.8 Interpret, order and calculate with numbers written in standard index form (standard form); numbers are written in standard form as $a \times 10^n$, where $1 \leq a < 10$ and n is an integer.

M2.9 Convert between terminating decimals, percentages and fractions.

Convert between recurring decimals and their corresponding fractions.

M2.10 Use fractions, decimals and percentages interchangeably in calculations.

Understand equivalent fractions.

B4. Inheritance

B4.1 Know the nucleus as a site of genetic material/chromosomes/genes in plant and animal cells.

B4.2 Know and understand the following genetic terms:

a. gene
b. allele
c. dominant
d. recessive
e. heterozygous
f. homozygous
g. phenotype
h. genotype
i. chromosome

B4.3 Monohybrid crosses:

a. Use and interpret genetic diagrams to depict monohybrid (single gene) crosses.
b. Use family trees/pedigrees.
c. Express outcome as ratios, numbers, probabilities or percentages.
d. Understand the concept of inherited conditions.
e. Know that most phenotypic features are the result of multiple genes rather than a single gene inheritance.

How to prepare: **Revise key knowledge**

For the TMUA and ENGAA (and STEP), you should focus on developing your mathematical ability

STEP Support Programme

How to prepare: **Practice**

- Answering questions **without a calculator**
- Focusing for **60+ minutes**
- Practice questions
  - Look through **explained answers** to help you review your own work
  - Mark your answers and review where you have gaps in your knowledge so you can revise these areas
  - If you run out of resources, practice questions from similar pages
    - TMUA; NSAA Maths ←→ ENGAA Maths
    - ENGAA Physics ←→ NSAA Physics
    - BMAT (section 2) → NSAA (all sections)

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How to prepare: **Practice**

- Time management is often what students find difficult
- Complete timed practice papers

Essay-based admissions assessments:

• Create a plan
  • How much time do you need to write your essay?
  • How much time can you spend reading, planning and checking?
• These tests often involve **handwriting** for 60+ minutes
• Think about how you want to structure your essay in advance; ask your teachers for advice

Multiple-choice admissions assessments:

• You usually have **1-3 minutes** per question
• For the NSAA, choose in advance the sections you would like to answer (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) and factor that into your preparation
• Find out what multiple-choice strategy works best for you and stick to it
  • Start at the first question and work through sequentially?
  • Start with the easiest questions and then move on to the harder ones?
  • Get the hardest out of the way first, then move on to the easier ones?

Students who normally receive exam adjustments will also receive these in their admissions assessments.

How to prepare: **Critical thinking and problem solving**

- Admissions assessments will often be assessing a different kind of thinking than you're used to being assessed on
- Practice thinking about challenging material: continue to critically and analytically engage in supracurricular exploration
- Develop confidence in your knowledge
  - Discuss your ideas with a friend/teacher/family member
  - Explain your ideas to someone who doesn't know anything about the subject

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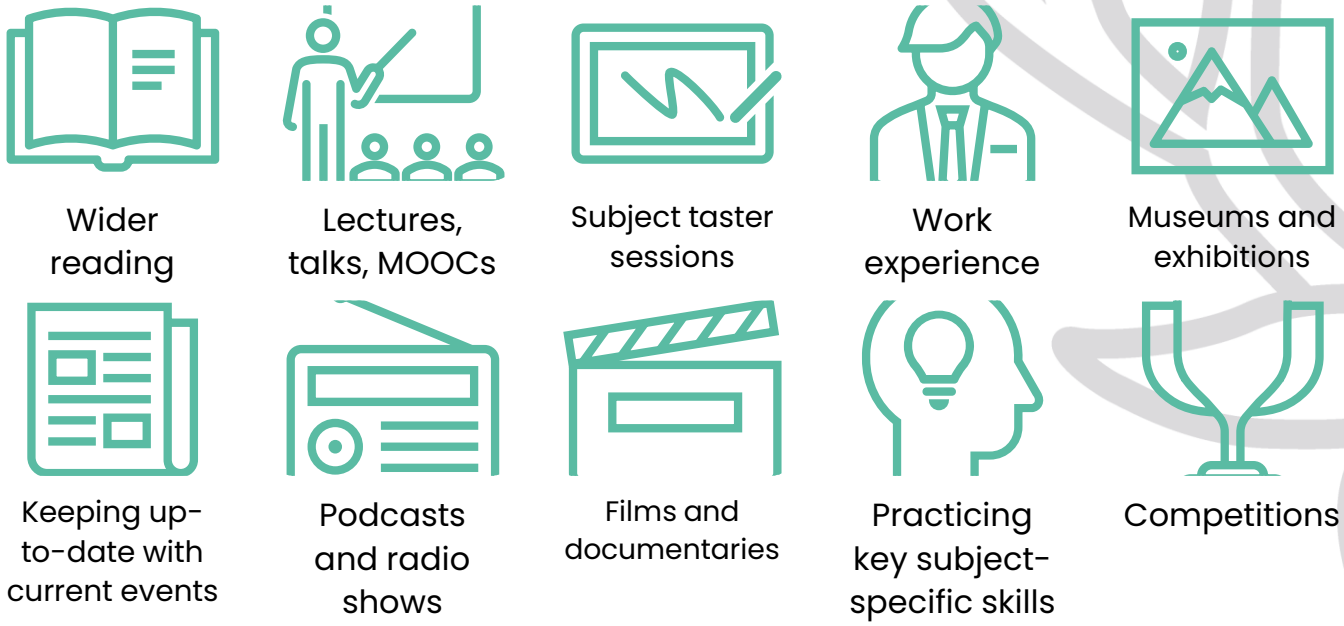
How to prepare: **Critical thinking and problem solving**

- Subject-specific academic exploration
- Goes beyond your studies in school
- Directly relevant to your chosen degree subject
- Activities you do for fun in your free time
- Supracurricular activities are directly focused on academic exploration, whereas extracurricular activities are not



www.lucy.cam.ac.uk/study-us/prospective-applicants

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Final top tips

Final top tips

- Don’t cram: revise gradually and in small chunks
- On the day
  - Get a good night’s sleep
  - Make sure you know when and where the exam will be held so you can get to the test room with plenty of time
  - Read each questions through carefully before answering, it is easy to misunderstand what is being asked

Admissions assessments are only one part of a much larger application process.

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Any questions?

Or you can always email us at **outreach@lucy.cam.ac.uk**

Find out more about Lucy Cavendish, sign-up to our newsletter and get involved with events:
www.lucy.cam.ac.uk/study-us/prospective-applicants