Introduction to Cambridge and the Admissions Process

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Today’s session

• Why consider Cambridge
• The application process
• Common misconceptions
• Next steps
• Questions
Why consider Cambridge?
Why consider Cambridge?

- World-class education
- Supportive environment
- Fulfilling student experience
- Extensive facilities and resources
- Small-group teaching
- Excellent graduate opportunities
Why consider Cambridge?

World-class education

• Broad range of challenging, stimulating courses
• Extensive small-group teaching – supervisions
• Expert teachers/lecturers – many national and world subject leaders
Why consider Cambridge?

Alongside lectures, seminars, and practicals, Cambridge offers supervisions.

Supervisions are a chance to...

- Do your own independent research and reflection on a particular topic.
- Have a go at a topic without worrying about it counting to your final mark just yet.
- Discuss ideas in detail with an expert in the field, deepening and stretching your understanding.
Why consider Cambridge?

- Academic
- Pastoral
  - Tutor
  - Student unions
  - Peer support
  - Counselling Service
  - Disability Resource Centre
- Financial
Why consider Cambridge?

Excellent graduate opportunities

- 89% of students are in work or further study within 15 months of graduating\(^1\)
- Top 10 in the UK for graduate prospects\(^2\)
- Dedicated Careers Service for students and graduates

\(^1\)Based on responses to the Graduate Outcomes Survey. This records the outcomes of students who completed their studies between August 2017 and July 2018. 62.4 per cent of graduates responded to the survey.

\(^2\)Complete University Guide 2021
Why consider Cambridge?

Extensive facilities and resources

- Over 100 libraries, including the University Library
- Language Centre
- 9 specialist museums and collections
- Course-specific facilities, including laboratories, surgical suites and concert halls
Why consider Cambridge?

Fulfilling student experience

- Over 800 university clubs and societies, all free or as low-cost as possible
- Sport, music and drama at every level
- College and University Student Union
- Clubs, clubs, bars, theatres
- Safe and relaxed city
- Only 50 minutes from London
- College system
Colleges at Cambridge

A College is like a mini campus, providing a base for students.

Role of Colleges:
• admit students
• academic and pastoral care
• accommodation, dining and recreation
• organise small-group teaching
• facilities for academic study

Role of the University:
• determines course content
• organises lectures, seminars, practicals and projects
• sets and marks examinations
• awards degrees

www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/colleges/what-is-a-college
Introducing Lucy Cavendish College

• Previously a College for women aged 21+, now open to all
• We welcome all students for all subjects offered by the university
• We are uniquely committed to widening participation at Cambridge
• We pride ourselves in having one of the most socioeconomically diverse student communities in Cambridge
• Our students are driven by a desire to make a difference and who are committed to having a positive and lasting impact on society
How do I apply?
What qualities do you think Oxbridge looks for in a competitive applicant?
What is Cambridge 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!
What we are NOT looking for

• Particular backgrounds
• Particular school types
• Irrelevant extracurricular activities
What information do we use to assess applications?

- Academic record
- Personal statement
- Teacher reference
- Performance in any admission test/assessment (where required)
- Written work (where required)
- Contextual information
- 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.
The application process

1. Choose your course
2. Choose a College or open application
3. Check admission assessment registration deadlines
4. UCAS application deadline – 15th October
5. Additional questionnaire for Cambridge (SAQ)
6. Submit written work and/or take admission assessment
7. Interview (December)
8. Decision (January)
Choose your course

Choose a College or open application

Check admission assessment registration deadlines

UCAS application deadline – 15th October

Additional questionnaire for Cambridge (SAQ)

Submit written work and/or take admission assessment

Interview (December)

Decision (January)

• Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic
• Archaeology
• Architecture
• Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
• Chemical Engineering
• Classics
• Computer Science
• Economics
• Education
• Engineering
• English

• Geography
• History
• History and Modern Languages
• History and Politics
• History of Art
• Human, Social, and Political Sciences
• Land Economy
• Law
• Linguistics
• Mathematics
• Medicine

• Modern and Medieval Languages
• Music
• Natural Sciences
• Philosophy
• Psychological and Behavioural Sciences
• Theology, Religion, and Philosophy of Religion
• Veterinary Medicine
Some criteria you could think about...

- Location
- Size
- Age
- Gender
- Accommodation
- ‘Feel’
- Make sure that your college offers your course!

Remember that your course is standard across the colleges and that ultimately they are more similar than they are different.
• **15th October** (6pm UK time) for Oxbridge (+ most courses in medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry)

• **29th January** (6pm UK time) for other applications

• One UCAS application for all universities

• Includes:
  • Personal details
  • Employment history
  • Course/university choices (up to 5)
  • Academic record
  • School/college reference and predictions
  • Personal statement
Personal statement:
• 47 lines or 4000 characters
• A chance for you to reflect on your chosen course – why you want to study it and why you would be good at it
• Your chance to ‘sell yourself’ to universities
• You send the same personal statement to every university you apply to, so it needs to be relevant to every course you are applying for
Things to include in your personal statement:

- Why this course?
- A demonstration of your enthusiasm for and commitment to your chosen course
- Areas of interest in your subject
- Analysis of what you have done to learn/prepare
- What you have gained from undertaking supracurricular activities

Cambridge does not take into account extracurricular activities that are not related to the course applied for. Some universities are interested in extracurriculars. If included, they should demonstrate relevant transferrable skills and only constitute a small proportion of the personal statement.

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• Additional online form completed after submitting the UCAS application
• Link received within 48 hours of completing the UCAS form
• Deadline: Usually 22\textsuperscript{nd} October (6pm)
• Asks for more detailed information that we do not receive on the UCAS form
  • Topics studied at school
  • Additional contextual information
  • Optional additional Cambridge-specific personal statement
You must ensure your assessment centre registers you by the relevant deadline

**Deadlines:**
1 October 2021: BMAT

15 October 2020:
- Chemical Engineering
- Computer Science
- Economics
- Engineering
- English
- Land Economy
- Medicine
- Natural Sciences
- Veterinary Medicine

Please note, some Colleges may also require applicants to take a College-set written assessment at interview, in addition to the pre-interview assessment. See individual course pages for details.

**Pre-interview assessment**

- Chemical Engineering
- Computer Science
- Economics
- Engineering
- English
- Land Economy
- Medicine
- Natural Sciences
- Veterinary Medicine

**At-interview assessment**

- Archaeology
- Architecture
- Classics
- History and Modern Languages
- History of Art
- Law
- Linguistics
- Modern and Medieval Languages (MML)
- Philosophy
- Theology, Religion, and Philosophy of Religion

Some Colleges may require an at-interview assessment for the following courses:

- Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic
- Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*
- Education
- Geography
- History
- History and Politics
- Human, Social, and Political Sciences
- Mathematics
- Music
- Psychological and Behavioural Sciences
• First three weeks of December
• Usually interviewed in person, online in 2020 and 2021
• 20–30 minutes
• 2 interviewers
• Cambridge interviews approx. 80% of applicants; Oxford interviews 20–70% of applicants (depending on course)
• Cambridge interviews are normally over just one day; while Oxford interviews may be spaced out over multiple days

*Interviews are the last piece in the jigsaw rather than the final hurdle.*
You should expect…

- Discussion-based and intellectually challenging
- Conducted by lecturers and predominantly academic and subject-focussed

Discussions might include…

- Discussion of academic interests mentioned in the personal statements
- Discussion surrounding subject-related current events
- Challenging questions related to topics studied in school
- Discussion of any submitted work
- You might be given a text or problem sheet to discuss and work through
- Open-ended questions designed to test your ability to apply existing knowledge in new ways
What interviews are **NOT**:

- Full of trick questions with bizarre answers
- A memory or knowledge test
- Questions with immediately obvious answers
- An opportunity for interviewers to trip you up
- A public speaking or debate contest
- A test of how you speak, dress, sit or shake hands
- A cultural or social test of what type of person you are
- Scripted and identical for all applicants
The Colleges are responsible for undergraduate admissions decisions, and they will notify students of their application outcome.

You may be made an offer from:

- The college you applied/were allocated to
- Another college (via the Pool)

You may be unsuccessful

- Don’t be deterred – we can only offer places to those who apply!
True or false
Cambridge has minimum GCSE requirements – True or false?
Cambridge has minimum GCSE requirements – False

• No minimum fixed requirement
• Broadly speaking, competitive applicants from a well performing school have at least 5 8-9s
• **Contextual data is taken heavily into account:** the school’s year specific average GCSE score goes towards assessing whether the student has performed well relative to their school, and their year.
Competitive applicants for Cambridge should take 4 A-levels – True or false?
Competitive applicants for Cambridge should take 4 A-levels – False

- 4 A-levels not usually an advantage, except for Chemical Engineering, Physics Natural Sciences and potentially Computer Science
- Students interested in Arts/Humanities would be well advised to pick from a range of academic, essay-based subjects and perhaps one or more Science/Maths subjects
  - Mathematics can be useful for Languages, Law or Philosophy
  - Biology can be useful for Archaeology/Anthropology
- Students interested in Maths/Sciences subjects are well advised to take three Maths/Science A-levels
- Students interested in the physical sciences – Physics, Engineering, Computer Science, etc. – and mathematics itself, or related disciplines, would be strongly advised to do Further Mathematics

Find out more on www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses and www.lucy.cam.ac.uk/study-us/prospective-applicants
You can’t apply to both Oxford and Cambridge – True or false?
You can’t apply to both Oxford and Cambridge – **True**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oxford</th>
<th>Cambridge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60% interviewed</td>
<td>80% interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams in Year 2 and 3</td>
<td>Exams after each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,820 students (2020)</td>
<td>24,450 (2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% undergraduate, 40% postgraduate</td>
<td>50% undergraduate, 50% postgraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 undergraduate courses</td>
<td>30 undergraduate courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contextual data is not looked at by Cambridge – True or false?
Contextual data is not looked at by Cambridge

- **False**

• Every applicant is considered individually in a holistic assessment using all the information available to us

• We use contextual data as part of the overall information used to help us decide who to make offers to.
  - Postcode information
  - School/college data
  - Certain individual circumstances (e.g., care experience and Free Schools Meals eligibility)

• This data is not, however, usually used to make lower offers to certain candidates
A student’s choice of college will make or break their application – True or false?
A student’s choice of college will make or break their application – **False**

- The minimum entry requirements across colleges are essentially the same
- It is true that there are different ratios of applicants per subject across the colleges, however colleges are always ultimately looking at the gathered field of applicants from across the university
- Strong applicants to whom oversubscribed colleges have not been able to make an offer go to the ‘winter pool’ for consideration by other colleges with more spaces
- Our goal is to ensure the most talented applicants will be offered a place at Cambridge, irrespective of their initial college choice
Studying at Cambridge is more expensive than at other universities – True or false?
Studying at Cambridge is more expensive than at other universities – **False**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Tuition Fees</th>
<th>Maintenance Costs</th>
<th>Total Annual Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>£9,250</td>
<td>Approx. £11,788 to £15,520</td>
<td>£21,038 to £26,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Russell Group</td>
<td>£9,250</td>
<td>Approx. £7,650 to £15,510</td>
<td>£16,900 to £24,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>£9,250</td>
<td>Approx. £9,160</td>
<td>£18,410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Student Loan covers tuition fees
- Maintenance loan of up to £9,488 (£12,382 in London) also available
- All Russell Group universities have a bursary system to support students in financial need
- Extensive financial support available at Oxbridge
Studying at Cambridge is more expensive than at other universities – **False**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household income</th>
<th>Cambridge Bursary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£20,000</td>
<td>£3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£25,000</td>
<td>£3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£30,000</td>
<td>£3,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£35,000</td>
<td>£2,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£40,000</td>
<td>£2,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£45,000</td>
<td>£1,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£50,000</td>
<td>£1,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£55,000</td>
<td>£759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£60,000</td>
<td>£302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£62,215</td>
<td>£100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students in receipt of a Cambridge Bursary who also have been eligible for free school meals will receive the Educational Premium, which is an additional non-repayable bursary of £1000 per year.
Studying at Cambridge is more expensive than at other universities – **False**

- Hardship grants
- College prizes and scholarships
- College-owned accommodation for 3+ years
- Subsidised catering
- Extensive libraries and book grants
- No/low travel costs within the city
So what should I do now?
So what should I do now?

P Programme of study
R Results
E Engage and Explore
P Practice
So what should I do now?

**P Programme of study**
- Course choice is the most important decision
- Research different courses thoroughly – be open to subjects you may have not even have heard of!
- Ensure you are aware of all relevant deadlines, including for any admissions assessments you may need to sit

**R Results**

**E Engage and Explore**

**P Practice**
So what should I do now?

**P** Programme of study

**R** Results

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

**E** Engage and Explore

**P** Practice
So what should I do now?

**P** Programme of study

**R** Results

**E** Engage and Explore
- Be proactive in your learning: undertake supracurricular activities
- Engage with programmes for students interested in applying to University

**P** Practice
Engage and Explore

- Wider reading
- University lectures and talks, MOOCs
- Theatre
- Academic taster sessions or workshops
- Work experience
- Visits to museums/exhibitions (also digital collections)
- Keeping up-to-date with current events
- Podcasts and radio shows
- Films and documentaries
- Practicing key subject-specific skills

www.lucy.cam.ac.uk/study-us/prospective-applicants
So what should I do now?

P Programme of study
R Results
E Engage and Explore
P Practice

• Get used to discussing your academic interests with teachers, friends, family…
• Past/example admissions assessment papers
• Time management – generally and for exams
Final points

• Oxbridge looking for academically high achieving students with a genuine, well-informed enthusiasm for their subject, irrespective of background

• Subject specific skills, knowledge and enthusiasm is assessed all the way through the application process—from the personal statement to the interview, and you can start developing this now

• The process is holistic, so all aspects of the student’s application are taken together

• Let your own interests and personality shine
Any questions?
outreach@lucy.cam.ac.uk