

HAYDON SCHOOL

HIGH ACHIEVING PUPILS

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

FOR STUDENTS APPLYING TO
OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE OR
RUSSELL GROUP UNIVERSITIES.

INCLUDING MEDICINE, DENTISTRY &
VETERINARY APPLICATIONS

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Dear Students,

I decided to write this guide purely from a personal point of view. When I started the job as the Coordinator for High Achieving Pupils, I had no idea what was expected of an Oxbridge applicant, let alone a Medic, Vet or Dentistry applicant. Over the years I have received conflicting advice and have found it all pretty confusing.

I have collated all the advice and information given out to make it easier for you to understand the rigours you will have to go through and how incredibly important that we get it right.

I have included the Oxbridge process and the deadline dates you have to adhere to, as well as the various important admissions tests you have to take.

Please note that the list below is not exhaustive; there are many other admissions tests and you **MUST** check the course details on UCAS.

Please read this guide carefully. There is advice on personal statements and interviews. Even if you are not intending to apply for a medic course but want to go for a science based degree, you should read the guide. It has a lot of useful information for all students who are predicted the top grades. I am a firm believer of 'if you don't ask you don't get'. If your grades are good enough for Oxbridge, go for it! You have nothing to lose. You still have four other options if you don't get in... but what if you do?

If you have any questions, please feel free to come and talk to me about it or contact me on sbaker11.312@lgflmail.org.

Thank you.

Mrs Baker-Perkins (coordinator for High Achieving Pupils)

THE OXBRIDGE PROCESS

To apply to Cambridge or Oxford, the process is much the same as that for other universities. However, at Cambridge or Oxford the process starts earlier to allow time for all the application information to be gathered and considered. In addition, you are required to provide some further information not covered by the UCAS application.
You can only apply to either Cambridge or Oxford, not both!



A more detailed timeline

May-June	A Levels, IB and other examinations taken by students in Year 13 – including STEP, where required for Mathematics and other applicants.
1 October	Deadline for Medicine applicants to have been registered (by assessment centre) to take the BMAT.
15 October	Closing date for receipt of undergraduate and affiliated applications. Late applications will not be accepted. Deadline for applicants to be registered (by assessment centre) for pre-interview assessments other than the BMAT. Deadline for an Extenuating Circumstances Form to be sent to Cambridge only.
22 October	Deadline for the completion of the Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ)
By 26 October	All applicants will receive a confirmation email detailing what to expect. It will contain important deadlines and they must read the information contained in the email carefully You will also receive another email containing the University of Cambridge Data Protection statement. It is essential that you reply to this email in order for the university to proceed with their application
By 30 October	Candidates who have declared a disability on their UCAS application will be sent a form on which they are asked to indicate any adjustments that would need to be made if they were called to interview
31 October	BMAT taken by Medicine applicants.
31 October	Pre-interview assessments taken. Check if the courses you want to take have assessments.
8 November	The usual deadline for submission of written work to colleges in subjects where requested
8 November	Deadline for receipt of disability adjustments/allowances form
November	The university will be in contact with applicants who will not be invited for interview. Those invited for interview will also be sent their interview details during November. If you have not heard from the university either way by the end of November, then you should contact the Admissions Office. You should not telephone or email the Admissions Office before 25 November if you can possibly avoid doing so, as this delays the completion of interview invitations
December	Interviews generally take place between the end of November and mid December
Early January	<i>Winter pool</i> takes place and decisions posted to applicants Applicants being called back for further interviews at other colleges will be contacted by those colleges by telephone or email
January	Decision letters will be posted to all applicants. Please note that the aim is for UCAS decisions to show just after decision letters have arrived, but it is impossible, as a result of the postal system, to ensure that everyone receives a letter before the decision becomes visible on UCAS. Please note that if you receive a letter at this stage to say that the application is still under consideration, ‘No Decision’ will show on UCAS
January	Pool interview dates for those placed in the ‘Inter-Collegiate Pool’ who have been called back for further interview by another College
January	Latest date for those placed in the ‘Inter-Collegiate Pool’ to receive information, normally in the form of a final decision, about the status their application
Please note that, if unforeseen circumstances arise, communication by this date may be a note to say that you are awaiting a final decision	

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

WHAT MAKES THEM SPECIAL AND SO DIFFICULT TO GET INTO?

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford are two of the world's greatest universities, consistently rated at the top of national and international league tables. They provide a challenging, flexible and individual learning experience. Their teaching staff include many national and world subject leaders, so students have the exciting opportunity to be taught by experts in their field.

THE COLLEGIATE SYSTEM

Both Oxford and Cambridge universities are made up of individual colleges, as well as different subject departments. A college will be a student's home and their central focus of teaching for much of their time at university. Each college will have a range of students — usually including both undergraduate and graduate students — studying across a spectrum of subject areas.

The college system offers the benefits of belonging to a large internationally renowned institution, and also to a smaller, interdisciplinary academic college community. You will have access to their college's facilities, such as an extensive library and IT provision, as well as the resources of the wider university. College choice does not matter. Each college offers the same standard of teaching and has the same very high academic standards. Both universities work hard to ensure that the best students are successful in gaining a place, whichever college they've applied to. This means that you may be interviewed by more than one college and you may receive

an offer from any of them. You can make an open application to any college.

TEACHING

The teaching methods are very similar at both universities as students will attend lectures, classes and laboratory work as appropriate for their course. Unlike at many other universities, students at Oxford and Cambridge also benefit from highly personalised teaching time with experts in their field. The only difference is in the name: Oxford refers to these sessions as "tutorials" while Cambridge calls them "supervisions".

Students are required to prepare an essay or other piece of work in advance for these sessions and then meet with their tutor to discuss the work, perhaps with one or two other students. Tutors are often world experts in their field so this time is extremely valuable to students in developing their understanding of the subject.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Each course will have specific A-levels that the students should have taken. If they have not taken these A-Levels, it is unlikely that they will be offered a place.

Conditional offers for Oxford range between A*A*A and AAA (depending on the subject) at A-level.

The standard A-level offer for Cambridge is A*A*A for sciences courses (excluding Psychological and Behavioural Sciences) and A*AA for arts courses.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

The Collegiate System

Cambridge University is made up of more than 30 different colleges. Colleges are academic communities, where students usually have their tutorials. Each one has its own dining hall, bar, common room and library, and lots of college groups and societies. Some are for women only and some are graduate only.

COLLEGE NAME	AVERAGE SIZE OF COHORT
Christ's College	541
Churchill College	704
Clare College	655
Clare Hall College (Graduate only)	155
Corpus Christi College	467
Darwin College (Graduate only)	674
Downing College	623
Emmanuel College	750
Fitzwilliam College	688
Girton College	776
Gonville and Caius College	719
Homerton College	1181
Hughes Hall College (Mature Undergraduate and Graduate students only)	560
Jesus College	704
King's College	581
Lucy Cavendish College (Mature Undergraduate and Graduate students only)	220
Magdalene College	493
Murray Edwards College (Female only)	442
Newnham College (Female only)	524
Pembroke College	597
Peterhouse College (Haydon's link college)	370
Queen's College	832
Robinson College	495
St Catharine's College	621
St Edmund's College (Mature Undergraduate and Graduate students only)	499
St John's College	831
Selwyn College	630
Sidney Sussex College	506
Trinity College	1030
Trinity Hall College	580
Wolfson College (Mature Undergraduate and Graduate students only)	504

OXFORD UNIVERSITY

The Collegiate System

Oxford University is made up of more than 40 different colleges. Colleges are academic communities, where students usually have their tutorials. Each one has its own dining hall, bar, common room and library, and lots of college groups and societies. All colleges are mixed but some are for post grads only.

COLLEGE NAME	AVERAGE SIZE OF COHORT	COLLEGE NAME	AVERAGE SIZE OF COHORT
All Souls College (Graduate only)	6	St Cross College (Graduate students only)	558
Balliol College	655	St Edmund Hall	719
Brasenose College	573	St Hilda's College	576
Christ Church College	593	St Hugh's College	768
Corpus Christi College	343	St John's College	607
Exeter College	527	St Peter's College	552
Green Templeton College	542	Trinity College	424
Emmanuel College	217	University College	563
Harris Manchester College	622	Wadham College	650
Hertford College	517	Wolfson College	555
Jesus College	647	Worcester College	601
Keble College	905		
Kellog College (Graduate students only)	621		
Lady Margaret Hall College	437		
Linacre College (Graduate students only)	617		
Lincoln College	573		
Magdalen College	385		
Mansfield College	545		
Merton College	698		
New College	81		
Nuffield College (Graduate students only)	501		
Oriel College	627		
Pembroke College	484		
Somerville College	556		
St Anne's College (Haydon's link college)	778		
St Antony's College (Graduate students only)	453		
St Catherine's College	908		

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

Successful applications

Telegraph extract from an article by Rachel Spedding who is executive director of Oxbridge Applications and co-author of the bestselling book, "So You Want To Go To Oxbridge? Tell me about a banana..."

There is no blue print for a successful Oxbridge applicant however the ability to think logically and laterally about your subject, to analyse challenging new ideas and be confident so that you can demonstrate your subject motivation, personality and the crucial 'teachability' quality are key.

Here then are Oxbridge Applications' top tips for success:

Remember that the application process is there for you demonstrate what you can do and not to trip you up

Plan your personal statement.
Please see the Personal Statement section of this guide

The admissions tests are very similar to interviews in that they are designed to test how you respond to difficult problems you haven't seen before. They are about analysis rather than factual knowledge. Think about this.

Avoid doing reams of unstructured preparation because good sense and planning are more important.

Ask yourself whether you should practise analysing language/pieces in the newspaper/numeracy.

Practice is invaluable, particularly with exams like the LNAT or the TSA, where large sections of reading and/or multiple choice can be difficult to fit into the time.

Top tips for the tests:
BMAT essay – they are looking for structure, logic and detail.

When you're a doctor you will need these skills when writing patient notes so these are crucial abilities to demonstrate in the exam.

PAT & MAT test – ensure you have

looked forward to the whole of your A level syllabus before the exam.

TSA – this tests problem solving and critical thinking. Your maths needs to be on point, so revise all your formulas.

For critical thinking, read lots of newspaper articles to practice comprehension.

One of the main challenges you will come up against is the timing. 50 questions in 90 minutes averages out at around 1m 48 per question so speed is of the essence.

If you are better at either problem solving or critical thinking, do these questions first in case you run out of time.

LNAT – another test on comprehension and critical responses to articles, so again, read up on newspaper articles to ensure you are practising these techniques.

HAT – This exam tests your responses to sources out of their context so practise looking at as many of these as you can.

ELAT – Be careful not to just analyse two texts. You'll need to focus on the comparing and contrasting element: how are your chosen texts the same, how are they different?

Practice early and often for your interview they are an alien phenomenon to most young students.

Know how to use examples. Bringing in examples shows your interests and wider reading but it also, more importantly, cements an argument and demonstrates your ability to draw ideas from substance.

Build up a bank of examples, to

which you can confidently refer. There is no need to try to predict exactly what will come up in interview.

The most interesting candidates will apply whatever it is that they know about in a clever way to an strange question - a skill which is useful even through your Oxbridge final exams. Compare and contrast.

Despite the myths, it is extremely rare for an admissions tutor to try to make your life difficult.

They want to see what you can do and will usually try to make you feel at ease in order to demonstrate it.

However, that doesn't mean that things won't get hard in the interview. Try not to be phased when things don't feel like they're going your way.

Tutors will often push you further than they think you can go in order to try to draw as much out of you as possible.

So even when you don't know the answer, try to enjoy it.

If you don't know what the interviewer is asking you to do don't be afraid to ask for clarification!

Better to take time to understand the question properly and then give a strong answer, than to blunder on blindly hoping for the best.

Finally, if you are applying to Oxbridge then you have been successful in your academic career so far and have been achieving the top grades, which is brilliant. Remember to have confidence in yourself throughout the process so that the admissions tutors will have confidence in you also. Make sure you are fully prepared at all stages so you have no regrets.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY

Admissions tests for Oxbridge

THINKING SKILLS ASSESSMENT FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

If you are applying to study Land Economy at the University of Cambridge, you will need to take the Thinking Skills Assessment: Section 1 (TSA S1).

You must register with the exams office in order to take this test. Most candidates will sit the test at Haydon School

THINKING SKILLS ASSESSMENT FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

The Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) Oxford is a 2-hour pre-interview test for applicants to undergraduate courses at the University of Oxford.

It is designed to help tutors assess whether candidates have the skills and aptitudes needed to study the following courses:

- Economics and Management
- Experimental Psychology
- Human Sciences
- Philosophy and Linguistics
- Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)
- Psychology and Linguistics
- Psychology and Philosophy.
-

If you're applying for a joint course, you may also need to take a separate test in your other subject. You can confirm which test(s) your course requires at ox.ac.uk/tests. Separate registration is required for each test.

UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS TESTS

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

It may be that you have to sit an assessment before your interview, or at the interview stage of the application process. To do this, you'll need to register separately to your UCAS application – the deadlines for these vary, so make sure you check the university's website.

The deadlines for registrations are as follows:

- 12 August at midnight (UK time):
- BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) – September session
- 1 October at 18:00 (UK time):
- BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) – October session
- 15 October at 18:00 (UK time):
- all other pre-interview assessments

In addition to your UCAS application, you will also need to complete a Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ).

The University of Cambridge runs the following assessments as part of their application process:

- Cambridge Admissions Assessments
- BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)
- Sixth Term Examination Paper (STEP)
- Cambridge Law Test
- Other course-specific admissions tests

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

The majority of courses require tests.

You will need to register separately to your UCAS application to sit the exam. The deadlines for registrations are as follows:

- 1 October at 18:00 (UK time):
- BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)
- 5 October at 18:00 (UK time):
- LNAT – National Admissions Test for Law

15 October at 18:00 (UK time):

- Classics Admissions Test (CAT)
- English Literature Test (ELAT)
- History Aptitude Test (HAT)
- Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT)
- Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT)
- Oriental Languages Admissions Test (OLAT)
- Physics Aptitude Test (PAT)
- Philosophy Test (PHIL)

MEDICINE & DENTISTRY APPLICATIONS

Given the prestige associated with the medical professions, and the extremely challenging nature of most medical careers, it's unsurprising that getting into medical school is extremely competitive. In order to gain a place at a top medical school, it's necessary to demonstrate exceptional grades in science subjects (especially chemistry and biology), as well as showing evidence of commitment to the field.

This will usually mean gaining work experience, perhaps at a local healthcare centre, private consultancy or another type of care facility such as an elderly care home.

Medic students have the same early applications as Oxbridge candidates. Anyone applying to Medicine, MUST apply before the 15 October.

Most admissions tests happen between August and November the year before you're due to start your studies – some even earlier, before you've sent your UCAS application!

Nearly all medical degrees use an admissions test as part of their entry requirements. There are three admissions tests. You may sit different combinations of these tests according to the medical schools they intend to include in their application.

You will need to do this themselves. You will need to discuss it with the exams officer and arrange to complete the tests.

You will need to take either a BMAT (BioMedical Admissions Test) or a UKCAT (UK Clinical Aptitude Test).

BMAT

The BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) is an admissions test for applicants to Medicine, Biomedical Science and Dentistry courses.

You must register for the BMAT before the application is made, but the test is only taken afterwards, at the beginning of November. The score is then sent automatically to the relevant medical schools on the application.

You must only take BMAT once in an admissions cycle.

BMAT is a 2-hour, pen-and-paper test divided into three sections.

List of universities requiring the BMAT:
Brighton and Sussex Medical School, Imperial College London, Lancaster University, Keele University, University College London, University of Cambridge, Leeds School of Medicine, University of Oxford

UKCAT

An applicant must register for and sit the UKCAT before the UCAS application is made, noting his/her score in the application. Twenty-five medical schools use the UKCAT.

List of universities requiring the UKCAT:
University of Aberdeen, Anglia Ruskin University, Aston University, University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, Cardiff University, University of Dundee, University of East Anglia, Edge Hill University, University of Edinburgh, University of Exeter, University of Glasgow, Hull York Medical School, Keele University, King's College London, University of Leicester, University of Liverpool, University of Manchester, University of Newcastle, University of Nottingham, Plymouth University, Queen Mary, University of London, Queen's University Belfast, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, University of St. Andrews, St. George's University of London, University of Warwick.

BMAT Information: <https://www.themedicportal.com/application-guide/bmat/>

UKCAT Information: <https://www.ukcat.ac.uk/>

VETERINARY APPLICATIONS

A Veterinary Medicine degree in the UK will give students an excellent base to begin their veterinary career, equipping you with the knowledge and ability to help with the surgical treatment and care of animals. Transferrable skills will also see graduates move into sectors such as food safety, research and pharmaceuticals.

A typical Veterinary Medicine undergraduate degree lasts five years and modules generally cover anatomy and physiology, animal husbandry, microbiology, public health, parasitology and pathology. The first two years of the programme are classed as the foundation phase, with the third and fourth clinical and fifth professional.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

A- Levels: AAA including Chemistry, Biology or Physics.

VETERINARY SCIENCE OR VETERINARY MEDICINE?

If you are unsure about the difference, then you are not alone. There is much confusion about what the courses offer.

Essentially, there is very little difference except for the name of the course. What is really important is that they check the UCAS code. The code is D100. This allows you to become a Veterinary Surgeon once you have graduated.

CAREERS IN VETERINARY MEDICINE

Veterinary Medicine graduates are in demand and will move into private animal welfare practices, as well as working at charities, laboratories, abattoirs and within the public health sector. If you choose to continue study at postgraduate level, careers can be forged in more specialist areas of the profession. The top ranking Veterinary Universities as judged by The Guardian University Guide 2018

are:

1. University of Edinburgh
2. University of Glasgow
3. University of Liverpool
4. University of Cambridge
5. University of Nottingham
6. University of Surrey
7. Royal Veterinary College
8. University of Bristol

The University of Cambridge and The Royal Veterinary College both require students to take the BMAT.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Most veterinary schools suggest that students should have done enough work experience to be able to discuss and analyse their experiences at interview and have a realistic idea of what a veterinary/scientific career entails.

It is recommended that they complete a total of two weeks' 'seeing practice' with vets. The work experience does not have to be done in a single 'block'.

The best way to prepare for discussing your work experience at interview is to spend time with vets dealing with clinical cases, and be observant, interested, interactive and thoughtful. You should ask lots of questions about what is going on in the cases you see, and make sure you make time to talk to vets, nurses and auxiliary staff about your working life, as well as to clients.

Other Well Established Admission Tests

MATHEMATICS

MAT – Mathematics Admissions Test

The MAT takes place in October, usually at 09.00 GMT.

You must register with the exams office to be able to take the test. If you do not, you will not be eligible to apply to Oxford, Warwick or Imperial Universities.

Most candidates will sit the MAT at Haydon School.

The MAT is a paper-based test. It is a 2-hour 30-minute, subject-specific admissions test.

STEP - Sixth Term Examination Paper

STEP Mathematics is a well-established mathematics examination designed to test candidates on questions that are similar in style to undergraduate mathematics. STEP exam dates take place over the summer so they must be aware of this before making any holiday plans.

STEP is used by the University of Cambridge and the University of Warwick.

Other universities sometimes ask candidates to take STEP as part of their offer – in such cases, the university can advise on which papers to take.

There are also a number of candidates who sit STEP papers as a challenge.

Test of Mathematics for University Admission

The Test of Mathematics for University Admission is designed to give students the opportunity to demonstrate that you have the essential mathematical thinking and reasoning skills needed for a Mathematics course.

If you are applying to study Mathematics courses at Durham University, Lancaster University, the University of Warwick, the University of Sheffield or the University of Southampton, you are encouraged to take this test as part of your application.

The test is not compulsory, however a good performance on this test may result in a reduced offer.

You will also be able to share your results with the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) if you're applying to study Mathematics and Economics or Mathematics with Economics.

LAW

THE CAMBRIDGE LAW TEST

The Cambridge Law Test is intended to complement the other elements of the admissions process.

If you are called for an interview, you will sit the test while in Cambridge for your interview. The test is a paper-based test; it will not involve the use of a computer, except for applicants with a relevant disability.

LNAT (National Admissions Test for Law)

Registration for and booking of LNAT tests for entry into university opens on 1 August. Testing starts on 1 September.

You can take the LNAT before or after you send off your UCAS application.

Universities requiring the LNAT: University of Bristol, Durham University, University of Glasgow, King's College London, The University of Nottingham, University of Oxford SOAS, University of London, UCL

Deadlines for Oxford applicants

You must meet these deadlines in order to guarantee that your application to Oxford will be considered.

5 October: Register and book the LNAT test slot

15 October: Submit the UCAS form

20 October: Sit the LNAT before or on 20 October 2018 at the very latest

Deadlines for all other LNAT universities

You must meet these deadlines in order to guarantee that your application will be considered. (Please note these dates are for the year you are applying e.g. if you want to start your course in September 2019, you must register by January 2019)

15 January: Register and book the LNAT test slot

15 January: Submit the UCAS form

20 January: Sit the LNAT before or on 20 January

What is super-curricular?

This list can be used as an indicator as what you should have done or what to do over the summer (anything in bold is particularly appropriate).

Reading articles: You should be able to discuss the article, in an analytical and evaluative way. Your opinion is key here.

Books: This may be an entire book, a chapter, paragraph or even just a quote but you must be critically engaging with the text. There should be an explanation of why it is relevant to your studies and future studies.

Documentaries: You should be explaining the relevance, the sections you found interesting and what other avenues they could pursue from it.

Lectures you have attended with what you learnt.

University/summer Courses you have attended. What did you learn?

Relevant Work experience and what skills did you develop

Museum visits. What did you find out?

Your Extended Project Qualification and why you chose to do it.

Academic Competitions.

Running and performing at the TED Talks Club.

Theatre visits.

A visit to Bletchly Park.

Historical site visit.

Field trips (if appropriate).

Watch a film in the language you are studying and discuss it in that language

Perform scientific experiments and studies at home.

Join scientific societies.

Visit art galleries.

Completing a MOOC
(www.futurelearn.com)

Build a varied portfolio for art/ photography/media etc.

Take graded instrument exams

Perform and compose

Listen to subject-related podcasts

Tweet about your subject, and follow others who do the same

Tutor a younger student

Personal Statements

The Personal Statement should not exceed 47 lines or 4000 characters (600-650 words). Using size 11 font in Word, this comes out as roughly an A4 page.

The quality of your Personal Statement can play a vital part in the success of your UCAS application. The content should be appropriate, the expression lucid and coherent, and the English accurate in terms of spelling, punctuation and grammar; you must demonstrate that you are literate, whatever the subject of application, and the tone should be formal but natural. No waffling is allowed!!!

The Personal Statement is an opportunity to sell yourself to Admissions Tutors, who will be looking for evidence of knowledge and interest beyond A Level specifications, for intellectual independence, academic stamina, personal organisation and the ability to direct your own study.

The Unifrog Personal Statement tool will guide you through a recommended structure, with appropriate emphasis upon academic content.

Make sure your personal statement is yours in every respect. Be prepared to discuss anything in your personal statement at interview. A lot of universities no longer interview applicants but Oxford and Cambridge do. If you are applying for Medicine, Veterinary or Dentistry, you will be interviewed. Your personal statement will have been read and unpicked, with specific comments discussed at interview.

In case you are tempted by what is on the internet, be warned that UCAS use filtering software to detect where personal statements have been copied and pasted from existing ones. UCAS match this against their entire database of personal statements. If they find parts of your statement are copied, they will flag this to your universities of choice with predictable consequences for you.

Check what individual universities want to see in your personal statement. Virtually all departments of all universities now have something on their websites that will indicate what they require from applicants who are going to fit their course and therefore be successful.

Make sure you research the course requirements for each of the universities you are going to apply to in order that you 'tick all the boxes'.

For example, History at Bristol, indicates that some form of relevant work experience (like volunteering in a museum) would be beneficial. If you do not have this, you are unlikely to be successful.

STRUCTURE

The structure of a personal statement should be 80% academic and 20% extra-curricular.

To be honest, Oxbridge would prefer for you to write only about the academic but they are aware that you will be applying to other universities and that the other universities do actually want to know about the extra curricular activities you have done.

For those applying to Oxbridge / Medicine the split should be 90% to 10%.

Your personal statement should be full of super-curricular activities which explain what you did and how it has helped you.

You should discuss the reasons for choosing the degree subject, specific areas of interest in A Level and how you have responded to them independently; career aspirations and other relevant factors such as work experience; intellectual interests in areas not examined, such as wider reading, essay competitions, courses or lectures attended or hobbies and other relevant interests pursued

A few extra-curricular interests of a non-academic variety (sport, music, drama, debating, etc.), focusing on what they demonstrate about you. If you have too many to mention in the limited space available, ask your Form Tutor to include some in your reference instead. Include any gap year plans, only if they are relevant to the application.

You must DEMONSTRATE not just assert your enthusiasm and knowledge (avoid empty assertions such as, "I am passionate/ardent about polymers/Shakespeare/glaciation").



The people at Which? have created a University Guide and have talked to many different admissions officers. The basic guide is here for you to follow:

1. Explain your reasons for wanting to study the course.

2. Explain how you're right for the course. Provide evidence that you fit the bill to show that not only do you meet the selection criteria; but also that you've researched the course (or profession) and understand what studying the subject at university level will involve. Also show that you're prepared for this.

3. Say what you've done outside the classroom. If possible, outline how you've pursued your interest in your chosen subject beyond your current syllabus. For example, talk about any further reading you've done around the subject and give your critical views or reflective opinions about it (don't just write a list). This could be from books, quality newspapers, websites, periodicals or scientific journals or from films, documentaries, blogs, radio programmes, podcasts, attending public lectures and so on. Try to avoid mentioning the wider reading that everyone else is doing.

4. Why it's relevant to your course. Reflect on your experiences, explaining what you've learned from them or how they've helped develop your interest in the subject – it could be work experience, volunteering, a university taster session or outreach programme, summer schools, museum, gallery or theatre visits, archaeological digs, visits to the local courts, travel, competitions or a maths challenge.

5. ... And relevant to your chosen career. Reflecting on relevant experience or observations will be essential for some professional courses where, in effect, you're applying for the career as well as the course

6. Can you demonstrate transferable skills? It could be your ability to work independently, teamwork, good time management, problem-solving, leadership, listening or organisational skills.

7. Expand on the most relevant ones. But don't simply list off the skills you think you have – think about which ones relate most readily to the course you're applying to. Then demonstrate how you've developed, used and continued to strengthen these.

Again, admissions tutors want to hear about specific examples, like:

- projects and assignments (what role did you play, what went well?)
- positions of responsibility (what did you achieve, how has it improved your self-confidence?)
- sport, music or drama (what did you learn from your role, how did you work as a team?)
- Young Enterprise, Duke of Edinburgh's Award (what was the biggest challenge, how did you overcome it?)
- volunteering or a part-time job (what have you observed, what extra responsibilities have you taken on, what skills have you demonstrated yourself?).

8. Show that you're a critical thinker. University is all about being able to think independently and analytically so being able to demonstrate that you're working like this already is a big plus point. Briefly explaining how one of your A-level subjects, a BTEC assignment or placement, or additional studies such as the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) has made you think more critically could be a way of doing this.

9. What's the long-term plan? Mention what your longer term goals are if you can do it in an interesting way and you've got a specific path in mind. If you do, then try and show a spark of individuality or imagination.

10. Keep it positive. Start with your strengths, focus on your enthusiasm for the course and talk positively about yourself.

Personal Statement

Example

GEOGRAPHY

Since starting my A-Levels I have become increasingly aware of the delicate balance of the natural world and the impact of man on the planet. I am interested in many aspects of Geography and the Environmental sciences, particularly climate change and the ways in which politics and society impact on the physical and human environment and vice versa. In the future I would like the opportunity to explore these interests further through study and travel abroad, using the skills I have acquired on field trips in Geography and Biology in order to gain greater insight into other cultures and environments. Attending a range of courses has helped me to understand the many links between my A-level studies. Geography summer schools at Eton and UNIQ at Oxford have emphasised the breadth of Geography. I was especially interested in studying Geopolitics on UNIQ and debating the potential 'death' of the nation-state. Geography master classes at Oxford and King's College London gave me the opportunity to discuss the demands of the degree with lecturers and students. The latter also gave me the opportunity to use ArcGIS, which introduced me to climate modeling. A public lecture at Imperial College on water security, raised my awareness of the potential for future resource conflicts. Recently, I took part in a 6-week 'Urban Pioneers Project' in my local area where we investigated how diverse cultures shape and develop an area; I especially enjoyed examining street art through my photography and learnt how areas can be rebranded through careful design. Similarly Psychology has encouraged me to look at aspects of Geography from a different perspective. Studying A-Level Biology and Chemistry, has complemented my study of Geography and Environmental issues. I have gained a greater understanding of the science behind global warming from studying greenhouse gases in Chemistry and attended a public lecture at Imperial on the chemistry of global warming. Studying Biology has also helped with my understanding of ecosystems and the complex ways in which they interact. The course has allowed me to develop skills in statistical analysis which are transferable across all of my subjects. My interest in Biology led me to arrange a visit to the Grant Museum of Zoology where I saw the ways in which organisms have adapted to a changing environment, emphasising the dynamism of the natural world. I look forward to studying evolutionary biology this year as I am particularly interested in the way in which organisms have adapted to a changing environment and how this may affect our future. My interest in cellular biology and immunology prompted me to attend a public lecture at Imperial on pandemics which taught me more about the spread of disease. During a four day STEM Pathways course at Imperial I enjoyed developing my practical laboratory skills, through a dissection using their state of the art facilities. A Marine Biology summer school at Southampton University introduced me to Oceanography and the process of mapping the sea floor, along with studying zooplankton and phytoplankton. This course was key in developing my interest in ecology and the conservation of the oceans. My interest in photography has led me to discover the work of Rachel Sussman and Edward Burtynsky. Sussman's photographs of some of the oldest organisms in the world have helped me to put into context the huge impact that humans have had on the planet in such a relatively short period of time. Some of Burtynsky's work, on the other hand, highlights our dependence on nature to provide the materials for our consumption. I especially like 'Oil Fields 19ab' as it shows how the natural environment has been exploited for its resources and stripped of its beauty. All of these experiences have given me a clear understanding of the demands of a university degree course and I am confident in my decision and ability to pursue a degree in the field of Geography and the Environmental sciences

Please note that you should use paragraphs and it is only in this format due to space confines.

Including Medicine, Veterinary and Dentistry applicants

Personal Statement

Example

MEDICINE

Choosing to study medicine is not a decision I have taken lightly. It isn't a career I have wanted to do since a particularly young age, nor did a life changing event prompt my choice. I have thought very long and hard before deciding to apply. Various periods of work experience have taught me much about the career. A local hospital placement gave me the opportunity to visit A&E, Radiology and Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Whilst fleeting, these visits to the departments highlighted the variety and diversity of the fascinating specialities medicine encompasses. A placement shadowing a clinic staff was hugely informative regarding daily life as a doctor. During the day I sat in on consultations ranging from routine post natal checkups to discussions of treatment for young people with diabetes and overactive thyroid glands. Throughout my time there the doctor's genuine interest in his cases and unfaltering motivation highlighted to me the privilege of having such a stimulating profession. This, together with the ever advancing nature of a career in medicine, was brought to the fore by an infant who was having a check up as a result of her being put on an ECMO machine after her birth with Meconium Aspiration Syndrome. The ease with which the doctor broached and dealt with sensitive subject matter also emphasised the importance of a warm, approachable manner and an ability to communicate to a person on their level of understanding. I believe I have honed these skills and gained invaluable experience of the eccentricities of the general public myself in my job as a salesperson. Since February of this year I have volunteered in a care home for a couple of hours each week. I assist with serving meals to the residents as well as feeding one of the more infirm ladies. My time there has brought to my attention the more unpleasant side of medicine and has proved by far the most useful work experience I have had; preparing me for the stark realities of physical ageing and senility. In spite of this, I genuinely enjoy my time there; giving residents, some of whom go months without visitors, 10 minutes of my time to chat can be very rewarding in the obvious enjoyment they get from it. The experience has shown me very clearly the importance of caring for the emotional as well as the physical needs of patients. Outside of my lessons I enjoy orienteering with a local club. As part of an expedition I took part in, we walked 80km over 4 days in torrential rain. The challenging conditions demanded teamwork and trust to maintain morale and perform effectively as a group; as well as calm rational thought in stressful situations. Also, through this activity and the people I met, I have become a member of the SJA which has enabled me to gain first aid qualifications and go out on duties. I know that medicine is not a "9 to 5" job and is by no means the glamorous source of easy money it is often perceived to be. I understand the hours are long and potentially antisocial and that the career can be physically exhausting and emotionally draining. It is apparent that becoming a medic will involve inherent sacrifice.

However medicine is also a deeply gratifying and fascinating career path. I want to be a medic because my passion and aptitude is foremost scientific and to me 5 or 6 years more of formal education followed by a lifetime of further learning sounds like a stimulating career option and, thankfully, a far cry from the monotony some jobs pose. Nevertheless, as an intrinsically social person, I would relish a career requiring the development of strong empathic relationships with patients too. Crucially, I know I have the enthusiasm, capacity for hard work and the open and enquiring mind needed to succeed in such a fulfilling vocation.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT: No reference is made to the scientific subjects that are being studied at school or to particular modules that the applicant has found particularly exciting: this could have helped convey enthusiasm and curiosity in science. Although the applicant asserts that they have an 'open and enquiring mind', there is no description of any extracurricular project or reading that the applicant might have undertaken, perhaps to help them understand a highly-charged ethical issue.

Personal Statement

Example

VETERINARY

A career in veterinary medicine can at times be frustrating, repetitive and gruelling; conversely, with perseverance and dedication it has the potential to be one of the most rewarding occupations available. This drastic polarity makes it a true vocation- and one which I feel is mine.

I have always excelled in science, and striven to pursue it beyond the curriculum- I was part of a team of four who won Imperial College London's schools' science competition, enhancing my teamwork and public speaking skills. Thirsty for knowledge beyond the A-level curriculum, I achieved bronze in chemistry Olympiad, fuelling my drive towards a science degree. Learning about physiology at A-level has piqued my interest in this course- having a fundamental understanding of the mechanisms through which organs function amazes me. The way the body uses hormones to control so many processes inspires me to look into this further at university. Neil Paton's 'So You Want to Be a Vet?' emphasises some of the key ethical issues facing the profession. I am particularly curious about the breeding of pedigree dogs, an issue I feel is underrepresented in society. As an owner of one myself I can see how some breeds can be especially appealing to the consumer. However, health issues often accompany selective breeding, and viewing these animals as marketed products is fundamentally wrong especially when we impair their health by doing so.

My experience of the profession is varied- I spent three days on a dairy farm 140 miles from home, getting up before dawn to milk the herd. This was challenging as I was living with the farmer, but I loved spending time hands-on with the cows and learning the basics of dairy farming, such as how to recognise mastitis or when a cow is ready to be served.

I also enjoyed the two weeks I spent at Dogs Trust; I was inspired by the compassion shown by the staff towards the dogs- many of whom had been subject to mistreatment- and the lengths they would go to in order to improve the animals' lives.

In addition, I have been to four practices, observing numerous surgeries. Though many day-to-day procedures are similar, I am excited by the range of surgeries a veterinary surgeon could be called to perform and the stimulation this brings to the job. For example, I was intrigued by the enucleation I watched as- though the basic idea of the procedure is easy to grasp- there are many precise steps the surgeon followed to ensure a successful outcome. My time in surgery has emphasised that the job is not a glamorous one as I was involved in the removal of a dog's anal tumours, a task that is not for the faint hearted!

A long-term placement in a practice has allowed me to develop interpersonal skills and get a better taste of what working there is like. The most striking thing about the vets there is how they cooperate and discuss cases to reach a confident diagnosis. I see this behaviour mirrored when I am problem solving at school- when faced with a tricky maths problem I often find myself liaising with peers to confirm the solution. Thus, further maths has prepared me for this course due to the logical manner with which I can now work through problems with patience until I reach an answer. It is vital for a vet to be adept at communication in order to get the relevant information from their clients. To prepare for this I volunteered as a young leader and then trained as an instructor at my local outdoor activity centre. As part of this role I had to display responsibility, leadership, and maturity when giving feedback to parents.

Overall, my research and experience has impressed on me how being a vet is not merely a job but a lifelong commitment to improving your own knowledge and skills to keep up with constant developments in the field and ensure you are delivering the best possible care. This is a commitment I have already made as I strive towards university, and I know I will continue to work towards this goal long into the future.

Personal Statements:

The Six Most Common Errors According To Admissions Tutors

A PUNCHY START

The start of a Personal Statement is very challenging for many students. Few will have experienced writing anything similar, and many fail to strike the right balance in their opening sentences. Admissions Tutors emphasise the need for candidates to stand out – they need to sell their interest in the subject with a punchy start. All too many fail to get across their supposed passion in the subject to the reader.

The other side of this, however, is that some fall into the dreaded 'X factor style', overly-dramatic opening, which may even risk being treated with derision, so needs to be avoided too.

THEMES AND STRUCTURE

While there is no 'correct' structure for Personal Statements, and Admissions Tutors react positively to those which come across as genuinely personal when they are read, a failure to separate out themes with structure is a common issue. "One large paragraph is an eyesore, break up into 'why', 'experience', 'lateral reading' and 'conclusion' to bring everything together"

Points need to stand out by themselves, so a student trying simultaneously to get across their aptitude for calculus, their ability to work as part of a team and their interest in the work of a particular author. Presenting their attributes like this risks certain aspects being lost on the reader. The skill is in making the points stand out by themselves while still allowing the piece to flow neatly from one section to the

next. tone

The Personal Statement is, primarily, a chance to show one's academic achievements and potential. Accordingly, overly-jovial writing styles are frequently met with negative comments by Admissions Tutors. Our team consistently emphasise that the inclusion of jokes, anecdotes and inappropriate exclamation marks are risks that candidates simply should not take; an academic style is always preferable.

"Revise your tone: there is no need to be unconventional – this comes across as emotional storytelling at the moment" Furthermore, a student who is able to convey sensitivity to his or her existing experience and knowledge is always welcomed. Other students unfortunately come across as thinking they already know all that there is to know about their chosen subject, or make outlandish sweeping statements that may entirely overlook areas of academic debate.

DISCUSSION OF TEXTS

A very common issue raised is the way candidates discuss the books they (at least claim to) have read. Many will essentially just provide a list of books, while others' analyses are far too superficial.

With only a certain number of characters available there is clearly a limit to what can be done, but students should try to show why they thought of the book and why. A scholarly approach to this is essential, with the focus on the academic content rather than anything else.

Showing how the reading has had an impact on them, e.g. to do some further research in a particular area, is also a big plus. Explain more why your reading has been important for you.

THE ENDING

There is not necessarily a need for a 'conclusion' in a Personal Statement, though some admissions tutors indicate that they like to see something resembling one. There is certainly nothing wrong with drawing it to a close with a neat finishing couple of sentences.

However, some students waste hundreds of characters simply reiterating large aspects of what they have already said. In essence, given that Personal Statements should be content-heavy, and that this applies right until the end, any feeling that the final paragraph is dragging on should indicate the need for a rethink.

SPAG!

It is startling how many basic spelling and grammatical errors crop up. These are simply negative marks against an applicant's name that do not need to be there. Candidates should be perfectly capable of writing 4,000 characters of error-free text – many just need to take a little more time to ensure their work is thoroughly proofed, either by themselves or by their family/friends.

Oxbridge University

Interviews (all subjects)

There are lots of myths about interviews at Oxford and Cambridge, but really they're just conversations about your chosen subject.

WHY DO OXFORD/CAMBRIDGE INTERVIEW?

A good deal of the teaching at Oxford takes place in small classes or tutorials, and your interviewers – who may be your future tutors – are assessing your ability to study, think and learn in this way. This will depend on how carefully you listen to questions, and how sensibly you answer them.

They use interviews because it would be extremely difficult to choose between applicants fairly without them. This is because:

- Almost all Oxbridge applicants are predicted top grades
- Applicants tend to have positive references and strong personal statements
- Applicants come from many different educational backgrounds

All of this makes comparing applicants on paper, on a formulaic basis, problematic. Interviews help by allowing them to go beyond the paperwork.

However, the most important purpose of interviews is to allow them to judge whether:

- An applicant has chosen the right subject/course, and has the potential to study it to a very high level
- The Oxbridge course is well suited to an applicant's particular interests and aptitudes

The interview is designed to assess your academic abilities and, most importantly, your academic potential. Tutors are looking for your self-motivation and enthusiasm for your subject. Decisions are not based on your manners (although clearly, be polite), appearance or background, but on your ability to think independently and to engage with new ideas beyond the scope of Haydon's syllabus.

WILL I DEFINITELY BE INTERVIEWED?

Tutors review each application before deciding on a shortlist in late November or early December.

You will receive an email or letter indicating whether or not you have been invited for interview. You may not receive this until a week before the interviews are due to take place. If you have been invited, the letter will include practical details of

your interview and further information. Normally this will be from the college to which you applied or to which you were allocated if you made an open application. Occasionally if a college is significantly oversubscribed for a subject, you may be invited by a different college.

With so many excellent candidates for each place at Oxford/Cambridge, it just isn't possible to interview everyone. If you do not get shortlisted for interview, unfortunately that will mean that your application has not been successful.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

If you are shortlisted for interview - congratulations! Being invited to attend our interviews is a fantastic achievement in its own right, considering the number of strongly competitive applications that they receive each year.

You will be asked to come to Oxford/Cambridge for one day or more, depending on the course that you're applying for.

Once you arrive you will find out when your interview(s) will take place. In some subjects you will automatically be interviewed at a second college. For other subjects, you may be offered the opportunity to have an interview at a second or even a third. This does not necessarily mean that you will not be offered a place at the first college or that this college is no longer considering your application. This system of additional interviews is to give you the best possible chance of gaining a place.

Interviews:

- Are predominantly academic and subject-related
- Are conducted by Admissions Tutors, Directors of Studies and other Fellows in your preference College
- Last for 20-45 minutes each, and, where practicable, take place on the same day, together with any tests we may ask you to sit (other than the BMAT, which is usually sat in examination centres in advance of interviews)

In most cases, applicants are only interviewed by their preference College. However, some smaller subjects arrange additional interviews outside the preference College.

At all stages in the interviewing process, Colleges will provide overnight accommodation and meals where necessary, free of charge.

WHAT OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE ARE LOOKING FOR AT INTERVIEW

Interviews are intended to identify in applicants the characteristics that most suit students to undergraduate study at Oxbridge. Put generally, these are:

- A passion for your chosen subject
- An ability to think independently
- Enthusiasm for complex and challenging ideas

Interviewers do this by seeking to engage you in a discussion in which you think problems or issues through – and think for yourself.

It is crucial within this context that you are reassured that:

- They have no hidden agenda at interview – there really is nothing going on beneath the surface that you don't know about
- They do not erect 'hurdles' for you to jump over
- They do not ask 'trick' questions

WHAT TO EXPECT AT INTERVIEW

Interviews are structured but relatively informal in nature, and it is likely that your interviewers will initially seek to settle you down and get you talking. They may need to clarify factual or practical issues that have been raised by your paper application.

After that, you should expect:

- To be engaged in focused and challenging discussion of the sort that is typical of teaching and learning at Cambridge.

This discussion will relate predominantly to your chosen subject and may include issues:

- Encompassed by your recent academic work
- Raised by your written application (eg wider reading, relevant work experience) or submitted work
- Connected to your chosen subject and very readily visible in the wider world
- To be asked to apply your existing knowledge to new situations by discussing problems that you have not previously studied.

Be assured that, where this occurs, sufficient information will be provided to you by the interviewers – either verbally or in written form – to enable you to make headway

Interviews may:

- Ask you to discuss your wider academic work
- Involve written, graphical or mathematical

problem-solving, where appropriate, as well as verbal discussion

And it is usual for interviews to:

- Allow you to ask questions

This usually occurs formally at the end of each interview; but you should feel free to ask for clarification at any point in the interview process if you feel you need it.

Finally, because Oxbridge interviews are based upon the discussion of complex issues, most involve a fair degree of:

- Prompting' on the part of the interviewers

Applicants who receive prompts at interview sometimes feel that this is a sign they are doing badly. However, prompting often indicates precisely the opposite: that an applicant is making real progress in discussion in the face of challenging problems. So, if you are prompted, don't worry!

PREPARING FOR INTERVIEW

Undoubtedly the best way to prepare for interview is to prepare well in general for your application. Accordingly, they hope that you have:

- Worked as hard as you could in school or college to ensure that your grades match your potential and that your reference is as positive as possible
- Thought very hard about your choice of subject/course and made sure you have chosen the right one for you
- Researched the Cambridge course for which you are applying thoroughly and checked that it is suitable for your particular interests and aptitudes
- Completed a good personal statement that tells them about your relationship with your chosen subject and how you have explored it beyond the bounds of your school or college curriculum

Beyond this:

If you are requested to submit written work, make sure you submit the best work you have completed during the ordinary course of your studies in an area of your subject that you are interested in and would be willing to talk about at interview. When selecting work to submit, be advised by your teachers or lecturers; but remember that your best work is likely to be your most recent

Inform yourself widely about your chosen subject. You could do this by:

- Reading beyond the bounds of your curriculum. This might include reading relevant newspaper and magazine articles
- Making full use of the library or IT facilities at your school or college
- Tuning in to any relevant radio or television programmes
- Engaging in relevant extra-curricular activities, where appropriate
- Where appropriate (ie where you are applying for a course that has professional or vocational implications – such as Medicine), you might complete relevant work experience

Some applicants worry that they will be disadvantaged if they have not received 'interview training'. This is not something to be concerned about. Oxbridge do not believe that it is possible to 'coach' applicants for interviews – their experience is strongly to the contrary and that coaching in fact is usually counter-productive, as coached applicants tend to fall back on prepared speeches and, in contrast, seem uneasy when discussing questions that are new to them.

However, as Oxbridge interviews by their very nature involve an academic discussion with someone you've never, or only briefly, met before, you may find it reassuring or confidence-building to have a practice interview with someone you don't know well. You will be given this opportunity at Haydon.

Beyond that, it is probably a good idea to practice discussion and analysis – by talking informally to your teachers/lecturers, your family or your friends about questions that interest you.

Try to explain clearly to them what you think about particular issues, and why you think it. This can be useful practice because most questions in Oxbridge interviews are what we might term 'what/why' questions.

In other words, we'll ask you:

- What you think of an issue, or what you make of a problem
- Why you think that way and so explain or justify your position

INTERVIEW TIPS

Some general advice on interview technique is worth communicating:

Their decisions are based upon wide and careful consideration of all the information available to them. Individual and small-scale aspects of your application or interviews are very unlikely in themselves to lessen your chances – in other

words, if you feel you could have answered an individual question better, remember that the answer you have given will almost certainly not be crucial.

Aim to arrive in plenty of time and make sure that you know where you are going

If you haven't understood a question or don't know an answer, don't be afraid to say so – you're very unlikely to be 'marked down' for this

If you need to take your time thinking about your response to a question, feel free to do so

We are looking for content, not style – so don't worry if at times your answers are hesitant

Be willing to explore issues discursively in your answers – in other words, explain your thinking

If you feel you've handled a particular question badly, don't worry about it – put it out of your mind and concentrate on the next one

If interviewed by a panel, address your answer to a particular question predominantly, but not exclusively, to the person asking the question

Keep a copy of your application form, and any other material you have submitted, and cast an eye over it in advance of your interviews

Wear something you feel comfortable in and, as interviews usually happen in the middle of winter, warm!

VIDEOS

Oxford and Cambridge have created some interview videos.

It is recommended that you watch them.

Cambridge general interview video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=dUwN6GI-0EQ>

Cambridge Law (Trinity College) Interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npEcenV-Y08>

Oxford University general interview video:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/interviews?wssl=1>

Medical School Interviews

The Medical Portal has huge amounts of information. I have collated it here for you to save time. I would recommend you look at the website for practice questions.

If you get an interview for a place at Medical School, well done! You have done an awesome job and should be incredibly proud of yourself. Getting a Medical school interview is one of the hardest things to do and it is very important you get it right. All of the medical schools are good, none are better than any other although Oxford and Cambridge are probably the most difficult to get into.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW?

Not all types of medical school interview are the same. There are three distinct categories:

- Traditional Interviews
- Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs)
- Oxbridge Interviews

TRADITIONAL INTERVIEWS

Traditional medicine interviews can be quite intimidating: it's just you and a panel.

Despite a recent shift towards Multi Mini Interviews (MMI), many universities still rely on the traditional interview format. And even in MMI circuits, the traditional skills set still plays a vital part.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON QUESTIONS AT TRADITIONAL MEDICINE INTERVIEWS?

Here are the ten most commonly occurring themes that feature in traditional medical school interviews.

1. Background and motivation for studying medicine
2. Depth and breadth of interest
3. Knowledge of the medical school and

- curriculum
4. NHS 'Hot Topics'
5. Creativity and imagination
6. Ethics
7. Empathy
8. Personal insight
9. Team working
10. Work experience

HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR TRADITIONAL MEDICINE INTERVIEWS?

It is recommended the following four-step preparation method for traditional Medicine interviews:

1. Select one of the themes above
2. Note down 3-4 examples for that theme
3. Try to apply to practice questions on that theme
4. Compare and contrast with guide answer

Do not prepare full answers to recite, or you will sound robotic. Instead, focus on the theme in a flexible way.

The Medical Portal have collated medical interview questions along with the NHS hot topics: <https://www.themedicportal.com/e-learning/interview/>

MMI INTERVIEWS

A Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) is a type of interview used by an increasing number of medical schools. Since it is a fairly new format, it can catch a lot of students off guard, as well as posing a challenge for teachers who are unsure how to prepare their pupils.

Instead of sitting opposite a panel of interviewers, you'll be taking part in a series of exchanges that test your ability to make ethical judgements and solve problems.

MMI interviews consist of several short practical assessments, usually less than 10 minutes each. You'll be presented with a scenario before each mini interview, so you will have a bit of time to prepare an answer.

Then you'll either be asked a question by an interviewer, or have to engage in a role-play scenario with an actor whilst an interviewer watches.

Here are the key things you need to know about MMIs:

- MMI interviews will probably take about 2 hours
- Each mini interview will usually take no longer than 10 minutes
- Most universities will have around 10 MMI 'stations'

WHAT KIND OF STATIONS CAN I EXPECT AT MY MMI INTERVIEW?

MMI interviews could take a variety of forms. It varies from school to school – and you can see some guidance on this in the table above. You might face some of the following:

- You will be presented with a set of instructions that describe a situation involving an ethical scenario, which you will then be asked to discuss or try and solve
- You will be given a scenario involving an actor — for example, you might have to break some bad news to them or gather specific information
- You may be given a task involving teamwork with other applicants
- There might be a station where you are asked a traditional interview question or given a reading comprehension exercise
- You are given a sheet of data and asked to provide analysis of it

WHAT DO ADMISSION STAFF LOOK FOR DURING MMI INTERVIEWS?

MMI interviews are about showing your interviewer what you're capable of doing, rather than just telling them.

Interviewers want to know that you've got what it takes to be a medical practitioner — not just the grades and know-how, but the right attitude and skills as well.

They will be testing your ability to make ethical and informed decisions, as well as your critical thinking and communication skills. They will also be interested in your knowledge of current healthcare and social issues

If you've got this far, it's likely that you already possess these qualities and will make a great doctor one day. The trick is to try and develop your ability to formulate logical, well thought-out responses within a short time frame.

HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR MY MMI INTERVIEW?

MMI interviews can be daunting, especially for students who are used to working hard for exams and traditional interviews.

The right kind of preparation will make all the difference. Here is a list of things you can do to make sure that you shine at your interview:

- Know what to expect. Find out everything you can about the MMI process at the medical school at which you are interviewing.
- Use your work experience. Lean on the experience logged in your personal portfolio and use specific examples when giving a response.
- Make sure you understand key ethical concepts relating to medicine, like the 4 pillars and patient confidentiality.
- Know what it takes to be a good doctor. Make a list of qualities and practice demonstrating them in your responses.
- Keep up to date with medical news, and check out our NHS Hot Topics 2017 page. Questions may be inspired by stories or debates in the media.
- Practice giving 8-minute presentations in response to common MMI questions. This will help with time management on the day.

HOW CAN I STAND OUT AT MY MMI INTERVIEW?

As well as being well prepared, bear in mind these tips on how to approach your MMI on the day:

Do:

- Be confident. You've got every reason to be!
- Be sensitive and compassionate. MMIs are designed to test your communication skills.
- Listen carefully to the question. Your interviewer will often provide cues or prompts designed to direct you, and give you key bits of information.
- Ask if you need clarification, rather than trying to answer a question you haven't fully understood.

Don't:

- Second-guess the answer. There are often no right answers – it's your explanation that they're interested in.
- Be tempted to prepare answers in advance. It's much better to carefully think through the question or scenario you're presented with.

SOME EXAMPLE MMI INTERVIEW SCENARIOS

Here are some to get you started:

Station 1: An actor plays the role of your elderly neighbour. You have just accidentally run over your neighbour's cat whilst reversing your car. You have 5 minutes to break the bad news to her.

This role-play tests insight, integrity, communication skills and empathy.

Station 2: You are given details of 15 individuals, including their age, sex and occupation. A nuclear attack is imminent and you are only allowed to save 5 of them from destruction. Which ones and why?

A prioritisation exercise. The emphasis is on problem solving and rational thinking under pressure.

Station 3: Without using your hands, explain how to tie shoe laces.

Tests verbal communication skills, the ability to

break down the task into a series of small steps and your ability to check that the interlocutor is understanding what you are saying.

OXBRIDGE MEDICAL INTERVIEWS

These are traditional panel interviews but are taken in an office or room resembling a living room. The aim is to reflect a 'Tutorial' or 'Supervision' as much as possible.

WHAT ARE COMMON QUESTIONS AT OXBRIDGE MEDICAL INTERVIEWS?

It is notoriously hard to predict exactly what will be asked, the type of questions and the approach to answering them is easier to anticipate.

Frequently, you will be faced with a scenario where you have to apply scientific reasoning to an unfamiliar problem. Here are a few real examples from recent years to get you thinking:

- How do birds survive at high altitude?
- Identify this bone [presents a bone]
- Draw a scientific representation of a balloon flying around the room

The answer to these types of questions is unlikely to be short or immediate. But, hopefully, you will have some ideas which you can talk through and develop.

Remember, the ratio of scientists to doctors who will be interviewing you is skewed towards scientists. You will get a lot less of the 'why medicine' type questions.

HOW DO I ANSWER QUESTIONS AT OXBRIDGE INTERVIEWS?

Bearing in mind the above, you should try to:

- Talk through your ideas
- Outline your thought process
- Take a step-by-step approach
- Initiate discussions
- Prepare for tricky questions
- Avoid shutting down in the face of uncertainty

Be open, be confident — and try to enjoy the intellectual challenge!

Dentistry School Interviews

After sending off your completed UCAS application, hopefully you will receive invitations to at least one Dentistry interview at your chosen Dental Schools!

Whilst getting an interview is a great achievement, you want to maximise your chances of getting an offer following your Dentistry interview.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DENTISTRY INTERVIEW?

How Dental Schools interview candidates vary, this depends on their preference for interviewing. There are two categories for Dental Interviews:

- Traditional/Panel Interviews
- Multiple Mini Interviews (MMI)

It is definitely a good idea to know what both of these Dentistry interview styles entails. See Medical School information about the differences between the interview techniques.

WHAT SORT OF QUESTIONS COULD YOU BE ASKED?

Be sure to prepare for the more 'traditional' style Dentistry interview questions – regardless of whether you have an MMI or panel interview in store.

IS MANUAL DEXTERITY ASSESSED AT A DENTISTRY INTERVIEW?

This varies depending on the Dental School, and you may not have thought about this until you sent off your UCAS application! Usually, if manual dexterity is assessed at interview, there will be an indication of this in the interview invitation. It's a good idea to think about any personal examples of manual dexterity prior to your interview, as you might have an opportunity to speak about them, or

bring them out to show your interviewers!

Here are some useful ways to practice manual dexterity:

- Model making
- Sewing such as cross stitch
- Carving teeth out of wax
- Painting
- Pottery
- Cake decorating
- Playing a musical instrument

If you complete any work experience at a Dental laboratory and are given the chance to make something relevant to Dentistry, bring that along to your interview.

LIST OF UK DENTISTRY SCHOOLS

ENGLAND

- Queen Mary, University of London
- Birmingham University
- Bristol University
- University of Central Lancashire
- King's College London
- Leeds University
- Liverpool University
- Manchester University
- Newcastle University
- Exeter Plymouth University
- Sheffield University
- University College London

SCOTLAND

- Aberdeen University
- Dundee University
- Edinburgh University
- Glasgow University

IRELAND

- Queen's University Belfast

WALES

- Cardiff University

VETERINARY SCHOOL INTERVIEWS

The vast majority of Veterinary Medicine applicants will be interviewed. An invitation to interview is a positive indication that a Vet School has seen a lot that they like about your application; the interview is a good opportunity to expand on the points that you have already made and to tell admissions tutors some more about your suitability for the course.

WHAT IS THE FORMAT OF A VETERINARY MEDICINE INTERVIEW?

As with the medical interviews, the two interview styles are a traditional panel interview and a MMI. Please see the Medicine interview to see the difference.

WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS WILL I BE ASKED?

In a panel interview, a likely opener will be a question about your reasons for choosing veterinary medicine or about why you have applied to that particular university. Admissions tutors will often lead with something quite predictable to break the ice while a student is still settling into the unfamiliar environment; however you should still take this question very seriously. The fact that you have had the opportunity to prepare an answer means that you must deliver something thoughtful and well-reasoned. Make sure that you practice your answer to this question, ideally in front of a few different people to get their feedback on whether you are coming across as you want to.

Although there is not a definitive list of questions that students will be asked on a panel interview, there are a few topics that are likely to come up. Aside from your motivation about being a vet, admissions tutors want to make sure that you have the ability. This might be assessed through them asking about your A level studies, what you have done to pursue your academic interests outside of

the classroom or discussing your EPQ if you mention one in your application. Interviewers will also be looking to learn more about your work experience – it is very likely you will discuss this. Remember that your interviewer already knows what it is like in a veterinary surgery or on a farm; they do not want to hear an overly descriptive account of the processes and procedures you witnessed. What they are very interested in, on the other hand, is your reaction to that experience. They want to know what you saw that you found particularly thought-provoking, what you learned, what you were surprised by, what you enjoyed, what you were upset by – and why. Current affairs or politics are likely to be mentioned in one way or another as your interviewers want to know that you have a genuine interest in the field, demonstrated by the fact that you are well-informed on topical issues.

Edinburgh University, for example, use the following MMI stations:

- Work Experience
- Career Exploration and Awareness of being a Professional
- Scientific Data Interpretation
- Awareness of Animal Welfare
- Moral and Ethical Dilemma
- Practical Manual Task
- Numeracy (pen/paper only. No calculators or electronic devices permitted)

HOW CAN I PREPARE?

MOCK INTERVIEWS

Most students will never have experienced such a formal interview situation prior to their first university interview. One of the best ways to prepare is to familiarise yourself with what to expect: this will help you to focus on the interview itself without the additional distraction of trying to acclimatise. In order to do this, read the letter from the university carefully and take note of all the details about your interview so you can picture what it will be like. Then,

Our school will organise an interview for you so take advantage of this if you can. Alternatively you could create your own 'interview' scenario with family or friends. If you do the latter it is important to take it seriously and not just get the giggles or fall 'out of role' in order to get the most out of the experience. Have them pre-prepare questions and grill you for half an hour, giving you some constructive criticism at the end.

Make sure your volunteers don't shy away from asking you difficult questions or pressing you to expand on a point you have made: the harder they are on you, the more you will learn from the experience.

QUESTION-ANSWERING: CONFIDENCE AND TECHNIQUE

Practising your question-answering is very important and you can do this with others or alone. Search for a list of frequently asked questions in a Vet Med interview and try to answer them. Do this aloud and if possible record yourself, then listen back to what you have said to see how you come across. You need to speak clearly and fluently; often when we are nervous we speak quickly and our points are not clear or are 'lost' in an unnecessarily verbose response or among 'fillers' (noises we make when we are thinking: er; um, like). When you play back your responses, listen carefully to whether any of these things apply to you and make a conscious effort to overcome them next time you are practising. It is not easy to change the way that we speak but if you take your time, concentrate and persevere you will improve.

Knowing that you have prepared will help you to feel more confident, which will come across to an interviewer. It also means that when you are inevitably asked a question that you did not expect, you will have the tools to thoughtfully approach it and give a fulsome and articulate response rather than panicking and not performing to the best of your ability.

QUESTION-ANSWERING: SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE

Another aspect of preparation is actually being able to answer the questions! For this, you

will need to keep abreast of relevant current affairs. Read a good-quality newspaper and keep cuttings (or website bookmarks/print outs) of anything relevant to jog your memory later down the line. There is a section of BBC News dedicated to science and the environment that is worth keeping your eye on and you can also find out more from the British Veterinary Association. If you do see an item reported, find out Defra's response for the government's official stance. If there is something relevant to the veterinary industry currently in the news, or that has been in the news in the recent past, it is very likely that this will be discussed at interview. The other serious candidates will be aware of this news item and will be able to debate it so it is vital that you can, too.

Another sphere of knowledge that it is important to be confident in discussing are your A level studies. You might be asked what you are doing at school, what you like/dislike about your subjects or whether you have done any additional reading (ideally you will have done). Subscribe to publications such as the New Scientist or flick through these in the library and note down anything that interests you. You might also be asked something more practical at interview, such as to perform a calculation about the concentration of medication to prescribe to an animal so be ready for this also (GCSE-level Maths knowledge will do, seeing as the subject prerequisites for Vet Med are Biology and Chemistry). Make sure you revise what you have done at school as part of your preparation for interview.

Attending an interview will inevitably be a daunting experience. Hopefully, with some hard work and careful preparation you will be able to turn this into a positive and impress university admissions tutors to win a coveted vet school place.

Here is a link to a video for you to watch:
Bristol Veterinary School - student experience:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKiPPaMzgFo>

MEDICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These are some possible questions you may be asked. You can adapt them for all three applications (Medics, Vets and Dentists).

QUESTIONS ABOUT EDUCATION

- Why did you choose your A-levels?
 - How have you tried to achieve breadth in your A-Levels?
 - How have your A-Levels prepared you for a medical career?
 - How have the jobs, volunteer opportunities, or super-curricular experiences that you have had better prepared you for the responsibilities of being a physician?
 - How do you envision using your medical education?
 -
- What kind of experiences have you had working with sick people? Have these experiences taught you anything that you didn't know beforehand?
 - Do you have any family members or role models who are physicians?
 - What family members, friends, or other individuals have been influential in your decision to pursue a medical career?
 - If you could invite four people from the past to dinner, who would they be, and why would you invite them? What would you talk about?
 - Does your academic record reflect any major challenges? If so, what are they and why did they

QUESTIONS ABOUT CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY

- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- What travels have you taken and what exposure to other cultures have you had?
- Thinking of examples from your recent past, how would you assess your empathy and compassion?
- As a pre-med, what skills have you learned to help manage your time and relieve stress?
- If you could be granted three wishes for making the world/society/ your community a better place, what would they be and why (or, If you were given a million dollars to achieve three goals, what would you work on and why)?
- What do you do for fun?
- What is "success" in your opinion? After 20 years as a physician, what kind of "success" would you hope to have achieved? Please explain
- What qualities do you look for in a physician? Can you provide an example of a physician who embodies any of these

MEDICINE-RELATED QUESTIONS

- What excites you about medicine in general?
- What do you know about the current trends in our nation's healthcare system?
- What do you believe to be some of the most pressing health issues today? Why?
- What do you feel are the negative or restrictive aspects of medicine from a professional standpoint?
- If you had to choose between clinical and academic medicine as a profession, which would you pick? What do you feel you might lose by being forced to choose?

SOCIETY RELATED QUESTIONS

- What do you feel are the social responsibilities of a physician?
- What do you consider an important/the most important social problem facing Britain today and why?
- How do you think the NHS cuts affect physicians, patients, and society?
- In what manner and to what degree do you stay in touch with current events?

SOCIETY RELATED QUESTIONS CONTINUED

- What books, films, or other media come to mind as having been particularly important to your sciences/non-sciences education?
- Can you think of any examples in our society when healthcare is a right? When is it a privilege? When is it not clear?

QUESTIONS ABOUT ETHICS

- Are you aware of any current controversies in the area of medical ethics? List and discuss some of these.
- Have you personally encountered any moral dilemmas to date? Of what nature?
- How do you feel about euthanasia or medically assisted suicide?
- What different feelings and issues might you experience with a terminally ill patient, as opposed to other patients?
- How would you feel about treating a patient who has tested positive for HIV?
- What are some of the ethical issues that our society considers in regard to teenage pregnancy?
- Would you get out of your car to help a victim after observing an accident?
- What do you think of affirmative action?
- What are your thoughts on euthanasia?
- You observe a fellow medical student cheating on an examination. What would you do?
- How would you tell a patient just diagnosed with cancer that he has only a few weeks to live?
- A 20-year-old gay male comes to you to be treated for a STD. During the conversation he mentions that he has been tested for HIV several times and would like to be tested again to see if he is still uninfected. How would you handle this situation?
- How would you express your concern for a child who needs an amputation?
- You have two patients who have been admitted after a serious accident. Both require immediate attention in order to survive. One patient is 20 years old; the other is 60 years old. Which life would you save?

QUESTIONS ABOUT MEDICAL SCHOOL

- What special qualities do you feel you possess that set you apart from other medical school candidates? What makes you unique or different as a medical school candidate?
- What kind of medical schools are you applying to, and why?
- Pick any specific medical school to which you are applying, and tell the interviewer about it. What makes this school particularly desirable to you?
- What general and specific skills would you hope an ideal medical school experience would give you? How might your ideal school achieve that result?

RANDOM QUESTIONS

- At what point is a person dead?
- How would you describe a human to a person from Mars?
- How would you measure the weight of your own head?
- How would you poison someone without the police finding out?
- How would you simulate altitude in your living room?
- If you were a grapefruit would you rather be seedless or non seedless?
- Should someone sell their kidney?
- Tell me about drowning
- What do you like most about the brain?
- What do you think of assisted suicide?
- What interests you most in current medical advances?
- What problems exist in the NHS?
- What role does ethics play in medicine?
- When are people dead?
- Why does your heart rate increase when you exercise?
- Why is it a disadvantage for humans to have two legs?
- Would you give a 60 year old woman IVF treatment?

GENERAL CRITICAL THINKING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE IS GIVEN BY OXBRIDGE INTERVIEWERS:

WOULD IT MATTER IF TIGERS BECAME EXTINCT?

The question is not about hoping students will display their expert knowledge of tigers. Most applicants would instinctively answer 'Yes...', but it is the 'because that interests me, and can help to distinguish critical thinkers. I might follow up this question by asking if it would matter if less glamorous creatures – like fungi – went extinct.

IF YOU COULD SAVE EITHER THE RAINFORESTS OR THE CORAL REEFS, WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

I'd expect students to be able to use their general knowledge plus their common sense to come up with an answer – no detailed knowledge is required. Students might be asked about the importance of natural features, such as biodiversity and rare species, and human interests, such as the fuel and food, ecotourism and medicines we get from rainforests or reefs. Finally there are impacts to consider from climate change, soil erosion, pollution, logging, biofuel replacement, overfishing etc. The final answer doesn't matter – both reefs and rainforests must be managed sustainably to balance conservation and human needs

WHY MIGHT IT BE USEFUL FOR AN ENGLISH STUDENT TO READ THE TWILIGHT SERIES?

There are several reasons I might ask this one. It's useful in an interview to find some texts the candidate has read recently and the twilight books are easily accessible and popular. Also, candidates tend to concentrate on texts they have been taught in school and I want to get them to talk about whatever they have read independently, so I can see how they think rather than what they have been taught. A good English student engages in literary analysis of every book they read. The question has led to some interesting discussions about narrative voice, genre and audience.

IF THE PUNISHMENT FOR PARKING ON DOUBLE YELLOW LINES WERE DEATH, AND THEREFORE NOBODY DID IT, WOULD THAT BE A JUST AND EFFECTIVE LAW?

Candidates are not meant to give a right or wrong answer to this question. They need to demonstrate that they have recognised the various issues that arise. The candidate who distinguishes between 'just' and 'effective' does best. The issues are different once the distinction is made. A just law might not be effective, or vice versa. The issues of how proportionate the punishment is to the crime refer to the justness of the law. The answer to its effectiveness is already in the question – 'and therefore nobody did it'

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR SOMEONE TO 'TAKE' ANOTHER'S CAR?

There is no right answer to this question. For example, can you take a car without driving it, or even without moving it? The focus is on the candidate's reasoning – how he or she formulates an initial definition and who he or she then applies and refines that initial definition in response to hypothetical examples provided by the interviewers. One example might be: I am walking along the street when it starts to rain. I open the door of an unlocked car and sit there for 15 minutes until the rain passes. Have I 'taken' the car? The aim of the interview is to give the candidate a chance to show his or her application, reasoning ability and communication skills.

IN A WORLD WHERE ENGLISH IS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE, WHY LEARN FRENCH?

Given the nature of the Modern Languages course, I would be interested in responses about the French language as a 'window' into French culture / literature / history, knowledge of which is valuable in itself and essential to understanding today's world etc. But I would also be happy to see candidates investigate some of the assumptions underlying the question: Is English a global language? What about Mandarin Chinese, Spanish etc? Can we not in fact still consider French a global language? And so on.

IF I WERE TO VISIT THE AREA WHERE YOU LIVE, WHAT WOULD I BE INTERESTED IN?

The question gives candidates an opportunity to apply concepts from their AL geography course to their home area. They might discuss urban planning and regeneration, ethnic segregation and migration, or issues of environmental management. The question probes whether they are able to apply 'geographical thinking' to the everyday landscapes around them. It reveals the extent to which they have a curiosity about the world around them. By asking specifically about their home area the question eliminates any advantage gained by those who are more widely travelled and have more experience of a variety of geographical contexts.

WHAT IS LANGUAGE?

Students sometimes say they like studying Spanish, for example, because they 'love the language' In order to get a student thinking critically and analytically, the question would get them to consider what constitutes the language they enjoy – is it defined by particular features or by function (what it does)? How does form relate to meaning? And so on.

WHY DOES YOUR HEART RATE INCREASE WHEN YOU EXERCISE?

The simple answer, which all students can provide, is because you need to deliver more oxygen and nutrients to muscles and remove metabolic products. But follow-up questions would probe whether the student appreciates that there must be a way for the body to know it needs to raise the heart rate and possible ways for achieving this. Answers might include sensing lowered oxygen or raised carbon dioxide levels. In fact, gas levels might not change much, so students are further asked to propose other signals and ways in which those possibilities could be tested. This probes selection criteria such as problem solving and critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, enthusiasm and curiosity and the ability to listen.

HOW WOULD YOU DESIGN A GRAVITY DAM FOR HOLDING BACK WATER?

The candidate first has to determine the forces acting on the dam before considering the stability of the wall under the action of those forces. Candidates will probably recognise that the water could push the dam over. The candidate would then be expected to construct simple mathematical expressions that predict when this would occur. Some may also discuss failure by sliding, issues of structural design, the effects of water seeping under the dam, and so on. The candidate will not have covered all the material at school so guidance is provided to assess how quickly new ideas are absorbed. The question also probes the candidate's ability to apply physics and maths to new situations and can test interest in and enthusiasm for the engineered world.

WHY DO HUMAN BEINGS HAVE TWO EYES?

This question may result from a more general discussion about the human senses. It can develop in a number of different directions, partly depending upon the knowledge and expertise of the interviewee. For example, two eyes are important for three-dimensional (3D) vision. Why is it that we can still see in 3D when only looking through one eye? What determines the optimum position and distance between the two eyes? Why is it that we see a stable view of the world even though we are constantly moving our head? How can an understanding of mathematics, physics and biology help us explain 3D vision? The discussion may develop into a consideration of the different senses and the role they play in us interacting in our environment, including interacting with other people, and the nature of perceptual experience.

WHY DO A CAT'S EYES APPEAR TO 'GLOW' IN THE DARK?

This question builds on commonly held knowledge and on material covered in Biology at school about visual processes. The question assesses criteria such as scientific curiosity (has the applicant ever wondered this themselves? Have they formulated any theories?) and scientific reasoning, based on information provided by the interviewer as the interview progresses. After establishing that the applicant understands that light is detected by photoreceptors in the eye (and exploring and explaining this concept if it is a new one), the discussion would consider how the glow might be advantageous to the cat, seeing whether the applicant can appreciate that it may help the animal to see in the dark. Possible explanations for the glow would be discussed with an expectation that applicants might recognise that the light could be generated within the eye or alternatively that light entering the eye is in some way reflected back out. Having established the second possibility as more being more plausible, the interviewer would probe to see whether the candidate recognises the significance of giving photoreceptors two chances to capture light as rays pass into and then out of the eye and why at night this might enhance vision.

IS VIOLENCE ALWAYS POLITICAL? DOES 'POLITICAL' MEAN SOMETHING DIFFERENT IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS?

This pair of questions allows the interviewer to deal with historical material from any period the candidate is studying or knows about from more general reading. It could also be answered extremely well from contemporary or current affairs knowledge. The aim of the question is to get the candidate to challenge some received notions about what constitutes politics, and to think about how political history might be studied away from the usual kings, parliaments etc. A good candidate would, with assistance, begin to construct categories of when violence looks more and less political. A very good candidate would, with assistance, begin to construct a useful definition of 'political', but this is challenging. The main aim would not be to solve these problems, but to use them to find some new interest in a subject that the candidate already knows something about.

HOW HOT DOES THE AIR HAVE TO BE IN A HOT AIR BALLOON IF I WANTED TO USE IT TO LIFT AN ELEPHANT?

When I actually used this question in interviews, no-one actually got as far as an actual 'X degrees C' answer in the ten minutes or so we allowed for it, nor did we expect them to. We use this sort of question to try to find how applicants think about problems, and how they might operate within a tutorial. We make this clear to interviewees before even giving them questions of this type. Things we are looking for include how readily they can see into the core of a problem (what's the essential physics in this? – what concepts and equations might be useful?); how they respond to hints and suggestions from us (can they take a hint or two and run with it, or do they have to be dragged through every step?); their approach to basic concepts (how does a hot air balloon work, anyway? What else operates like one?); estimates (typical size of balloon, weight of elephant) and sorting out what's important (what about the weight of the balloon itself?); and how they use 'rough maths' to get a quick idea of the likely sort of answer, using sensible approximations in working through formulae, and keeping track of units.

SHOULD POETRY BE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND?

This question arose out of discussion of a few poems that a candidate said he had read, and we were talking through how these poems were conveying meaning (through things such as tone and the imagery they used). We wanted to push the candidate into more conceptual thinking to test his intellectual curiosity and how he would handle moving from familiar particulars (the poems he knew) to less familiar ways of approaching them. What's important for candidates to realise is that we don't expect a single correct answer to such a question; it's a starting point for a new direction of discussion: what sorts of 'difficulties' might we have in mind? Are these specific to poetry or do they also feature in other types of writing? And so on. What most interests us is that candidates are willing to venture down a new path, however uncertain this may feel: to have a go and show that they have the potential to develop their

thinking further – and thus thrive on the sort of course we offer. Literature forms an important part of a Modern Languages degree at Oxford, but we know that most candidates won't have studied literature formally before in the language for which they're applying. What we want to know isn't that they've read a certain number of texts to prove their interest, but that they have the aptitude for studying texts: that they're able to think carefully and imaginatively about whatever they've had chance to read (poems, prose, drama) that's interested them, in any language.

I'M HAVING TROUBLE WITH THE MEANING OF THREE WORDS: LIE, DECEIVE, MISLEAD. THEY SEEM TO MEAN SOMETHING A BIT SIMILAR, BUT NOT EXACTLY THE SAME. HELP ME TO SORT THEM OUT FROM EACH OTHER.

When I used this question, candidates adopted a number of strategies. One was to provide definitions of each of them - which turned out to be less easy than one might think without using the other words in the definition. Or they could be contrasted in pairs, or, like a good dictionary, examples might be given of sentences where they are used. No particular strategy was 'correct', and a variety of interesting discussions developed. A few candidates were inclined to think that it might be possible to lie without intending to; most reckoned that one could unintentionally mislead. A fertile line of discussion centred on misleading someone by telling them the truth. When Lucy tries to console Mr Tumnus, the faun, in Narnia, she tells him that he is 'the nicest faun I've ever met'. Which does sound comforting. She's only ever met one faun, though - him - so he's also the nastiest faun she's ever met. If he had felt comforted by her remark, would he have been deceived? And, in saying something true, had she deceived him, or had he deceived himself? Questions of this sort help us to test a candidate's capacity to draw nuanced distinctions between concepts, and to revise and challenge their own first moves in the light of different sentences containing the key words. Discussion may well lead into areas which could crop up during a degree in philosophy, including questions in ethics, the philosophy of mind and of language. It's not, though, a test of 'philosophical knowledge', and the content of the discussion begins from words which candidates should have a good familiarity with. Until asked this question, they would probably think that they knew their meanings pretty well. Those for whom English isn't a first language might be thought to be at a disadvantage, but they often do strikingly well at such questions, better indeed than native speakers. There may well be reasons for this, which could form the basis of a different interview question.

WHAT IS 'NORMAL' FOR HUMANS?

We're keen to point out to potential psychology applicants that primarily psychology is the study of normal human beings and behaviour; in part this is because of a suspicion that potential undergraduates are attracted to psychology to help them study forms of human life they find strange (neuroses, psychoses, parents). There are various ways that this question might be approached, but some approach that distinguishes the normal from the statistical average is a good start. Issues such as whether normality is to be judged by 'biological' factors that might be held to be common to humans, or whether it's normal within a particular culture or at a particular period of history, might also be worth addressing. We are mainly looking for a line of thinking which could be developed and challenged. Once candidates show a defensible position regarding what might serve as the basis of normality, we extend the discussion to (for example) the relation between abnormality and eccentricity

WHY DO SOME HABITATS SUPPORT HIGHER BIODIVERSITY THAN OTHERS?

This question encourages students to think about what high-diversity habitats such as rainforests and coral reefs have in common. In many cases, patterns or correlations can help us to identify the underlying mechanisms. For example, a student might point out that both rainforests and coral reefs are found in hot countries and near the equator. The best answers will attempt to unravel exactly what it is about being hot or near the equator that might allow numerous types of plant and animal to arise, persist and coexist. Do new species evolve more frequently there, or go extinct less frequently? Once students have come up with a plausible theory, I'd follow up by asking them how they would go about testing their idea. What sort of data would they need?

University League Table 2018

Based on Entry Standards, Subject Satisfaction,
Research Quality, Graduate Prospects
(From the Complete University Guide
- independently trusted)

Ranking	University Name	Overall Score
1st	Cambridge	1000
2nd	Oxford	998
3rd	St Andrews	962
4th	London School of Economics	952
5th	Imperial College London	925
6th	Durham	920
7th	University College London	909
8th	Warwick	896
9th	Lancaster	889
10th	Loughborough	883
11th	Bath	868
12th	East Anglia	853
13th	Surrey	851
14th	Exeter	850
15th	Leeds	850
16th	Birmingham	836
17th	Bristol	834
18th	Nottingham	825
19th	Sussex	818
20th	York	814
21st	King's College London	811
22nd	Manchester	808
23rd	Edinburgh	805
24th	Newcastle	805
25th	Kent	803
26th	Southampton	792
27th	Reading	791
28th	Glasgow	790
29th	Heriot-Watt	786
30th	Leicester	786

Please note that you should look at the course as well as the university. The University League Tables rank UK universities nationally and in 70 subject tables. Look at the website and order each table on the measure that matters to you, compare universities, read university profiles and search for courses. They rank 13 specialist colleges and conservatoires separately in the Arts, Drama & Music League Table.

Recent Alumni who secured
offers from Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry
and Veterinary Courses

Oxbridge Offers

2018



Daniel Jenkins

Predicted AAAA EPQ: A*

Received an offer to read Engineering at Cambridge



Amir Ahmed

Predicted AAAA

Received an offer to read Medicine at Oxford



Emilia Lawer

Predicted AAAA

Received an offer to read Veterinary Medicine at Cam-

2017



Grace Algar

Achieved AAB EPQ:A

Received an offer to read Classical Studies at Oxford
(unfortunately, Grace didn't get the grades but went on to a
Russell Group university)



Jason Georgiou

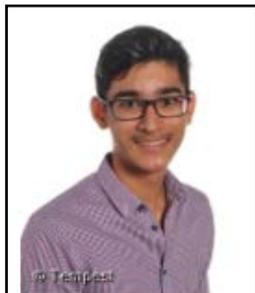
Achieved A*A*A* EPQ:A

Received an offer to read Chemical Engineering at
Cambridge.

Including Medicine, Veterinary and Dentistry applicants

Non Oxbridge Medicine/ Dentistry/Veterinary Offers

2018



Shivam Chauhan

Predicted AAAA

Received an offer to read Medicine at Nottingham



Zeena Shah

Predicted AAB

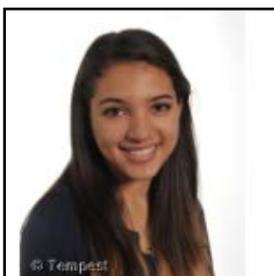
Received an offer to read Medicine at Anglia Ruskin



Callum Sleath

Predicted ABB

Received an offer to read Dentistry at Sheffield



Chloe James

Predicted AAA

Received an offer to read Veterinary Medicine at Sheffield

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