

## Oxford and Cambridge Entry

### Aim High

- The Aim High programme attempts to identify students who will benefit from the support which these universities can provide and are potential candidates for them
- Support for researching HE options, stretching and challenging able students beyond the A level syllabus form part of this programme.
- BUT it is **not** essential to have been in any Aim High group to make an application to any university, including Oxford or Cambridge

### Oxford Entry

- Pre-interview tests in various subjects are taken in College including individual subject tests (e.g., **History English Maths Computer Science PPE Geography** etc – many of which focus on the TSA Thinking Skills test). In addition **BMAT** tests are also sat in Godalming College but registered and paid for individually.
- The **LNAT** test for the Law degree is taken with Pearson Vue in local testing centres.
- Likely to request examples of completed work
- Interview week including possible pool
- Offers will vary from A\*A\*A to AAA at A level – Oxford would not consider less - **faculties and subjects vary and individual courses all need to be checked on the Oxford website**
- Expect A grades in all AS subjects and very high GCSEs
- **NB Very few courses at Oxford do not have a test – this must be checked.**

### Cambridge Entry

- Offers are typically A\*A\*A to A\*AA at A level – and will not offer on less
- Additional information form completed online
- Tests
  - **BMAT** test for Medicine
  - Independent **Cambridge Law Test**
  - Other tests at interview – e.g., Thinking Skills Assessment (**TSA**)
  - **STEP** also required for Maths
  - **New tests** beginning for 2017 entry for a wide range of subjects. You will need to check online to see both
    - Taken before interview and
    - Taken at interview
- **NB – again very few courses now have no test.**
- Possible examples of completed work
- Interviews spread through December
- Possible pool to mid/late January
- Possible minimum of 85-90% in AS modules and exams
- Very high GCSE scores (but checked against school)
- Veterinary Medicine and other medical students will be expected to have high BMAT scores, Law applicants high LNAT scores, and testing in general - at interview (e.g., the TSA) or after will be rigorous

### Looking for:

- **Enthusiasm** for chosen subject
- **Knowledge** of chosen subject
- Intellectual **interest** and **initiative**
- The **confidence** and capacity to respond to demands of tutorial/supervision systems
- Evidence of **forethought** and **research**
- Relevant work experience where necessary
- They want a “**self-motivated learner**” – someone keen enough to be able to show this degree of motivation – **ENTHUSIASM!**

### Some essential websites for Oxbridge Candidates

- [www.ox.ac.uk](http://www.ox.ac.uk) – Oxford University
- [www.cam.ac.uk](http://www.cam.ac.uk) – Cambridge University
- [www.lnat.ac.uk](http://www.lnat.ac.uk) – for potential law students
- [www.admissionstesting.org/](http://www.admissionstesting.org/) – for potential BMAT and TSA entries
- [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) – for all applicants
- [www.godalming.ac.uk](http://www.godalming.ac.uk) (especially the Godalming Online site)

Try to become as familiar as you can with the necessary websites – my email [dak@godalming.ac.uk](mailto:dak@godalming.ac.uk)

### Applicants will need

- An appropriate range of choices
- A carefully completed application
- A persuasive personal statement
- A very early application

## To prepare:

- **Read** – critically and beyond your syllabus requirements
- Consider subject and university / college **choice**, including “minority” subjects
- Begin drafting a **personal statement**
- Practice **tests** and pace your practice
- **Visit** - go to Open Days or other events
- Look at summer schools, taster days, lectures, etc. - **super-curricular** activities
- Find possible **work experience** (especially for Law, Teaching, Medicine, etc.)
- Carefully consider **choices** for your second year at college (including EPQ, Further Maths, additional languages, etc)

## Some Questions Asked by Students

### Can I apply to both Oxford and Cambridge at the same time?

No – only one application to one of these universities in any given year is allowed.

### Do I have to have all A\* at GCSE?

Not necessarily. GCSE performance is assessed against your school's overall success rate. If there are problems in GCSE then this needs to be explained in your personal statement and/or the reference. Most important is progress over this course. You need to show academic success and progress.

### Do I need 4 A levels?

Except for Maths (when including Further Maths) generally not. But other universities (see University of London) may require more than three. This could change – even between individual colleges.

### Do I have to get 90+% in every module?

High scores help – but they will be aware that modules can occasionally “go wrong”. There could be a problem if they all do – and you will be competing against students for whom they have not. 90% applies to the highest demand subjects – especially Medicine and Law. However, exam and test scores are often given as reasons for rejection, and linear exams offer more of a problem.

### Do they mind retakes?

They would rather you got it right first time. But a retake could show that you set yourself high standards. Again, remember the competition is fierce.

**TAKE ALL OF YOUR EXAMS, including AS, VERY SERIOUSLY**- these are their evidence for your ability.

### What about BTECs?

Both Oxford and Cambridge have said that the assessment pattern of BTEC (coursework based) does not match their own. BTECs have not helped applicants from here as part of their overall profile.

### Did I have to go on the Epsom Trip to stay on track?

Absolutely not. This year aims to show you how the system works and how to prepare if you need to make an early application. The Epsom Trip may be useful, particularly if deciding between related disciplines or to chat with students and admissions tutors. An example: If considering Medicine – and Medicine alone – then an Open Day would be of more use. The principal focus of this trip is choice between subjects, and there are many other Open Days and trips of specific use.

### Does the DofE scheme help?

Not here specifically, unless it can be used in the personal statement to demonstrate other things – e.g., the ability to cope

*under pressure (useful in Medicine, less so in English Literature). The Personal Statement needs evidence of your capability. But, your other universities are likely to value such activities and this will only be one of five choices.*

### Is a gap year a good idea?

This depends on you, not the university. Oxford and Cambridge prefer deferred entry candidates to apply in the year for which they are applying. Maths is probably the only **completely off-limits** subject for a gap year. Gap years can be of immense benefit for you to grow as a person. It's not (or should not be) all about ticking boxes on a university application.

### Are some Colleges easier to get into than others?

What may be a less popular college becomes an easier one another year (especially among candidates who spend too much time reading statistics!). However, it is true that some tutors and colleges show more sympathy towards widening participation. Consider entry routes. Is the college that does not ask for an extra essay or test likely to be the least popular? And might not the test/essay give an **extra chance** to prove your worth? Both universities claim that pooling systems should mean that every candidate has an equal chance of entry – and many do not end up in their first choice. Oxford's pooling system differs from Cambridge's and is quicker, but no pooling system is perfect. Finally the colleges which appear on the postcards are likely to be the ones that the international students know.

### Should I apply for an easier course and then transfer?

A terrible idea – the tutors who interview will be able to tell pretty quickly whether or not you are a serious candidate for their course. However, why not give consideration to so-called minority subjects? Such departments will also take account of the issue that your personal statement may not match their subject choice.

### Do Oxford and Cambridge cost more than other universities?

It has always been a boast of both Oxford and Cambridge that it can be as cheap or cheaper to live there as an undergraduate than other universities. This is helped by, for example,

- Textbooks available from college and university libraries
- Social life in the college
- Endowments and travel grants which may be available

However, the cost of living in hall, whilst relatively economical, may not be cheap (though they will only charge for term time).

As with all universities, it is quite possible to get into debt quickly. You will need to budget effectively anywhere.

