

**UNIVERSITY
APPLICATIONS
2010-11**

**ADVICE
for STUDENTS**

UCAS deadlines

Please put these dates in your diary

Dates

Tuesday, 22 June – Register with UCAS via Apply and start first draft of personal statement

Friday, 25 June - First draft of self-profile to your tutor

Wednesday, 1 September - Deadline for Oxford Choral Scholarship

Friday, 3 September - Updated draft of self-profile to your tutor.

Saturday, 4 September – Deadline for Cambridge Choral Scholarships

Friday, 10 September - Completed UCAS forms for Medics, Vets and Oxford and Cambridge applicants.

Monday, 20 September - All other completed UCAS forms to your tutor.

Thursday, 4 November - All candidates requiring written work to be sent to Oxford must have handed in the marked work and completed cover sheets to the Sixth Form Office by the end of the school day. The work will be sent to Colleges recorded delivery to arrive in Oxford in good time for the 10 November deadline. Any girl who misses the school deadline will be expected to post the work herself and bring the proof of posting slip to the Sixth Form Office. **It is important that candidates photocopy all marked work before it is sent and give a copy to the Sixth Form Office.**

Submission of work

Applicants to some courses at Oxford and Cambridge, and occasionally some other universities are asked to submit written work prior to interview. Girls are helped by their subject teachers to choose appropriate work and you should check what is required before the end of the summer term. Work for Oxford is sent by the Sixth Form Office to arrive in good time for the 10 November deadline provided it is received by 4 November. Work for Cambridge should be sent by the individual candidates because requirements and deadlines vary between colleges. It is the responsibility of pupils to ensure that marked work is photocopied before it is submitted to the Sixth Form Office.

Admissions tests

Applicants for some courses are required to take a test as part of the admissions procedure. Some tests take place in November, at school, while for others you will need to register yourself. Details are given overleaf. Girls will be given help in preparing for them.

UCAS PERSONAL STATEMENT

Write your Personal Statement in Microsoft Word using Times New Roman 12 point then paste it into Apply. You will have 47 lines/4000 characters and cannot use formatting (i.e. no bold, underline, italics etc). The Apply form has no spell-checks so proofread it very carefully before cutting and pasting into Apply. The Personal Statement should be at least 70% academic (about the subject, your A levels, your reading etc) and about 20 – 30% about your extra-curricular activities.

Use these paragraph headings to help you when you are preparing your personal statement. You should not use the headings in your draft versions.

Reasons for choosing the course.

Why you enjoy the subject.

Which particular aspects of the subject do you enjoy?

What do you look forward to exploring in greater depth? (Particular interests could be mentioned here - make sure they link with specific courses).

How did your work experience or other experience (e.g. Liberal Studies course, exchange visit, school journeys, work shadowing, lectures, courses etc) confirm your interest? What have you done ON YOUR OWN INITIATIVE which shows that you have a genuine interest in the subject or course?

What have you read that has inspired you to apply for this course? (You should mention 2 or 3 books with explanations – avoid a big list!)

Your AS subjects

How have you benefited? What have you gained? Talk about specific aspects of the course, and particular skills (for example have you carried out an independent research project, given a presentation etc?) Show evidence of areas where you have done more than is required. How have your A level subjects informed your choice of university course? What skills will you bring with you as a result of your A level combination?

GAP Year Plans (if you are intending to take one)

How will your GAP year benefit you? Explain how you will expect it to be an advantage to your University course.

Responsibilities in school

(Remember tutors may be looking for candidates who will enhance the University or College community as well as being an asset to the academic department). This may include posts of responsibility in school, clubs, societies, orchestra etc. Explain what skills the posts helped you to develop and how they will help you with your course.

Other activities, interests and achievements (sport, music, drama, voluntary work etc.)

Did you play in a team? Have you gained awards? Have you played in an orchestra, sung in a choir, taken part in house music competitions? Have you taken part in a theatrical production – in what capacity? Have you taken part in voluntary work?

It is important that you are truthful because your personal statement is often the basis of your interview and it would be unfortunate if you were closely questioned about an interest that you claim and about which you know little. However, it is important that you are not too modest! This statement is the first opportunity you have to let the admissions tutor know that the University would be very foolish to pass you over. UCAS now routinely check all Personal Statements for plagiarism, using specially designed software. It will notify you and the universities to which you have applied if this is discovered.

Think of your Personal Statement as an **academic self-reference**. It is your chance to differentiate yourself from lots of other candidates with similar qualifications.

Writing your personal statement: advice from UCAS

Your personal statement is the only part of your application where, as an applicant, you can tell the admissions tutors *all about yourself in your own words*. If you do it well, it should provide a complete snapshot of yourself:

- what makes you tick
- your enthusiasm
- your insight into, and your commitment to, your chosen study area

What are admissions tutors looking for?

In most cases they are looking for evidence of:

- independent study skills
- self-awareness
- the ability to think clearly (avoid over-emotional response)
- essay-writing, note-taking and research skills
- a realistic understanding of what the course entails
- sound numeracy and literacy
- time-management skills
- enthusiasm to learn and go beyond the syllabus
- motivation and commitment

DO:

- start strongly by exhibiting insight and enthusiasm for your chosen subject. It should be obvious from the very beginning of your statement for what subject area you are applying
- use a reflective approach: you should give evidence that you have seriously engaged with the fact that higher education is for you
- provide a *brief* outline of your career aspirations; if you have no idea what career you are aiming for, it is fine to say so, with reinforcement that it is your love for your subject that is motivating you to continue with it
- give reasons if applying for deferred entry
- be prepared to elaborate on your Personal Statement at interview (keep a copy and take it with you to interview. Don't make any claims that you can't substantiate!
- Be careful with spelling and grammar (avoid cliches/mixed tenses etc): start your personal statement as a word document and use the spell check, but remember that this won't pick up all errors.

DO NOT:

- try to be intellectually pretentious (e.g. by using lots of foreign expressions / obscure vocabulary)
- use text message language (Ur Texts RnoUse@Uni!). NB e-mail addresses and passwords should be **appropriate!**
- use colloquialisms (*'I so don't want to miss this opportunity*)
- indulge in plagiarism: UCAS uses a similarity detection service with a data bank of previous statements. If plagiarism is detected, you will receive an e-mail informing you of this, and so will all the universities / colleges on your application!
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- Mention specific universities/details of particular courses in the statement, each of your universities receives the same Personal Statement and they aren't supposed to know where else you have applied.
- Write about books you haven't read yet!

Applying to Oxford and Cambridge

If you are thinking of applying to Oxford or Cambridge you must discuss it with your tutor and your subject teachers. **Please let me know if you are considering applying to Oxford or Cambridge before the end of the summer term.**

Your UCAS form has to be submitted early in the Autumn Term if it includes an application to Oxford or Cambridge. Cambridge will require you to fill in an additional form online after they receive your UCAS form.

Entrance to Oxford and Cambridge for all courses is very competitive and the admissions tutors have a large number of candidates from which to choose. The decision is made on the basis of

- Your UCAS form – which will show your GCSE results and your AS results. The Admissions Tutors are looking for very high grades already achieved. For both Oxford and Cambridge, the average grades at GCSE for successful candidates are at 5/6 A*s and the rest As. At AS they are expecting A grades in all subjects, and Cambridge state that the average for their successful applicants is 90% in their 3 main AS subjects (270 /300, when an A grade is 240). Cambridge also requires you to give details of the marks you have gained on every AS module you have taken so far, whether or not you have chosen to certificate that subject.
- A test or tests at interview or taken before then. Some subjects at Oxford and Cambridge require you to sit a test (medicine and law) and Oxford asks applicants in History, English, Maths, Physics, PPE, Psychology, Physiology and Economics & Management to sit tests. See the notes on BMAT, LNAT, HAT, ELAT, MAT, PAT & TSA on the Admissions Tests page. You can find out whether you have to sit a test from the prospectus.
- Written work – many subjects require you to send up written work before your interview: **IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THIS IS COMPLETED AS PART OF YOUR A LEVEL COURSE, AND THAT IT IS OF AN APPROPRIATE STANDARD.**
- The interview itself.

Conditional offers usually require the achievement of very high grades (AAA –AAB at Oxford; at Cambridge the standard is likely to be A*AA) and you will have to demonstrate that you are capable of achieving this high standard if your application has a chance of being successful, for example by having high scores for your AS results. If you do not gain these, but still hope to achieve high grades at A2 and to apply for Oxford or Cambridge, it would be best to apply after your results, and also to make sure that you do everything you can to help support your application.

A useful website, compiled by Oxford and Cambridge students themselves, which offers many different insights into both the applications process and the courses themselves, from the student's viewpoint, is

www.oxbridge-admissions.info

Please take careful note of advice you are given. We never refuse to process an Oxford or Cambridge application, but we will advise you if we think you do not have a realistic chance of success.

Finally, but most importantly, think hard about WHY you want to go to Oxford or Cambridge, and why they might want to offer you a place – these two are connected. These universities are looking for the most able and most committed students, who will help them to keep up their reputations as centres of excellence in all subjects – and this is why so many able students want to go there. So you will need to be able to demonstrate both excellent achievement and the commitment to your own continued education which will convince the admissions tutors that you are going to be able to make the most of the academic opportunities which will be offered to you, and that you have sufficient independence and maturity to be able to motivate yourself.

So:

Do you really love the subject you are applying for?

Do you independently seek out opportunities to find out about aspects of the subject which are beyond what is needed for the exam?

Are you prepared to take as long as you need to achieve the best standard you can?

If you can honestly answer all these questions positively, and your teachers have told you that you have a realistic chance of achieving the necessary grades, then it is worth your while to apply – but bear in mind that there are many other excellent candidates, and that every year both universities reject thousands of candidates with all the right personal qualities and very high exam results.

You should also bear in mind that much of the above also applies to many other excellent and equally competitive universities and courses, so that you should be sure, when making your application, that you balance these highly competitive courses with others where the competition is a little less fierce. Your tutors, subject teachers and I are all here to give you advice on this.

CHORAL SCHOLARSHIPS

If you are considering applying for a choral scholarship at Oxford or Cambridge you must discuss this fully with the Music Department, your tutor and myself before the end of term. The deadlines for these applications are Wednesday, 1 September (Oxford) and Saturday, 4 September (Cambridge), and we need to write a reference to support your application immediately after the AS results, so you will need to be available then and at the end of the holiday to complete the process.

V. Askew
June 2010

Examples of information recently circulated concerning university entrance requirements

We at JAGS endeavour to keep as up to date as we can with changing university entrance requirements. Below are a few examples of specific requirements which have come to our attention. It is vital that girls take note of such information and liaise with their tutors and teachers to keep themselves up to date.

- Nottingham University - Medicine - Candidates must have 6 A grade GCSEs, including Chemistry, Biology and Physics – or dual award.
- Durham University – in previous years candidates for History needed a minimum of 8A* at GCSE.
- Birmingham University – Medicine - 8 A*s at GCSE and AAA at A level required – and this will not guarantee an offer, as the course is still very oversubscribed.
- Edinburgh University – candidates should be taking 3 full A2 subjects in Year 13 even if they have already gained an A2 in year 12.
- Cambridge University - general level required: at least 6 A* at GCSE and scores equivalent to at least 90/100 in AS modules. Candidates who are taking 4 subjects at A2 may be made an offer on all 4, typically A*AAB.
- Manchester University Law course - no candidates who have re-sat any AS or A2 modules will be considered.
- London School of Economics has a list of generally preferred subjects and of other subjects acceptable only in combination with 2 generally preferred subjects.
- Trinity College, Dublin requires a minimum of 4 full A levels (incl. A2) for entrance for any degree course.
- Leicester University - Critical Thinking is accepted as a 3rd subject by a number of subjects, including English and Engineering, which requires Maths, Physics and any other subject.
- Candidates aged under 18 at start of university course - since the advent of the new strict regulations for adults working with young people up to the age of 18 (CRB checks, codes of practice and such like) very few universities are willing to take responsibility for under-age students.
- Some universities are keen to know whether a candidate will be the first in their family to go to university. It would be useful if the school was made aware of this, if it applies to you.
- Admissions Tests have become part of the applications procedures for an increasing number of universities and for an increasing number of courses.

Admissions Tests

These have become part of the applications procedure for many universities. The following tests will be taken by students applying for 2010. Other tests may be confirmed later.

OXFORD TESTS

HAT – History Application Test (for Oxford History)

MAT - Aptitude Test (for Oxford Maths and Physics)

PAT - Physics Aptitude Test (for Oxford Physics)

These tests will take place in school on 3 November 2010. Other subjects will set tests to be taken at interview in December. Separate registration for these tests is not required. For further information, see Oxford University's Website:

www.admissions.ox.ac.uk

ELAT – this test will also take place in school on 3 November 2010. Candidates will need to be registered for this through school. For further information see the website: www.elat.org.uk

TSA (Thinking Skills Assessment) for Oxford Admissions

Students applying to the University of Oxford to study PPE, any combination of Physiology, Psychology and Philosophy or Economics & Management will be required to take a pre-interview admissions test this autumn. The TSA (University of Oxford) will be administered by Cambridge Assessment and will take place on 3 November 2010 at school, and candidates are registered for this test at school. Further information can be found at: www.admissionstest.cambridge.assessment.org.uk

CAMBRIDGE TESTS

A comprehensive list is available on

www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/apply/tests.html

Cambridge Law Test - new this year.

Nearly all Cambridge Colleges will require candidates for law to take this new test instead of the LNAT. The college will make the necessary arrangements. Further information is available on www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/cambridge-law-test.php

TSA (Thinking Skills Assessment) for Cambridge

A number of Colleges are using the TSA to assess applicants for Computer Science, Economics, Engineering, Land Economy, Natural Sciences and PPS. If you want further precise information for a particular College, you should contact that College's Admissions Office. Applicants need do nothing special about entering for the test, as Colleges will inform applicants of all admissions requirements. If it is to be taken, the TSA test itself will be administered at the College when the applicant attends for interview (except in the case of some overseas applicants – Colleges will inform these applicants of arrangements if the test is required).

Colleges will choose the form in which they will administer the test, pencil-and-paper or on-line. The test will in all cases be administered under examination conditions, with an invigilator present. Colleges will explain the procedure to candidates at the

time. Further information can be found on the website:

www.tsa.cambridge.assessment.org.uk

LNAT National Admission Test for Law

This test is administered by centres throughout the country. Candidates choose a centre in which to take the test. Information is available from the website. The test fee is £40 but this may change. Girls are helped to prepare for this test. Candidates apply online.

The following universities required applicants for Law to sit the National Law Admissions Test in 2009-10 but you must check the website for 2010-11 information.

[University of Birmingham](#)

[University of Cambridge](#)

University of Exeter

[King's College London](#)

[University of Nottingham](#)

[University College London](#)

[University of Bristol](#)

[Durham University](#)

[University of Glasgow](#)

[Manchester Metropolitan University](#)

[University of Oxford](#)

The LNAT website is www.lnat.ac.uk but **is not yet available for this year.**

BMAT – Biomedical Application Test

This test takes place in school on 3 November 2010. The test fee is advertised as £42.50 (but is subject to change). Candidates in receipt of full EMA may apply for BMAT fees to be reimbursed. Candidates are registered for this test in school. Girls are helped to prepare for this test

Used for:

Entry to Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Pharmacology, Physiology, and Biomedical Sciences

University of Cambridge Medical School (C05) course codes A100, A101, D100

Oxford University Medical School (O33) course codes A100, B100

Royal Veterinary College (R84) course codes D100, D101

University College London (U80) course code A100

Imperial College London (I50) course codes A100, B900, B901, BB29, BB2X

Entry method:

Via Cambridge Assessment - see the [BMAT Website](#)

Entry deadline:

30 September 2010

Test date:

3 November 2010

Other information:

BMAT Website – www.bmat.org.uk

UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT)

This test is used for entry into medicine and dentistry. The test fee is advertised as £60 before 31 August and £75 after that (but is subject to change). Bursaries are available for candidates in receipt of EMA. Candidates register online and take the test at a registered test site. It is a multiple choice computer based test. Girls are helped to prepare for this test, but must register themselves for it, before the deadline.

Used for: Entry to Medical and Dental Schools

Used by: Aberdeen, Barts & London School of Medicine & Dentistry, Brighton and Sussex, Cardiff, Dundee, Durham, East Anglia, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hull York, Keele, King's College London, Leeds, Leicester, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Exeter and Plymouth (Peninsula), Queen's University Belfast, St George's London, Sheffield, Southampton, St Andrew's.

Entry method: Online registration only, via www.ukcat.ac.uk

Entry deadline: 27 September 2010

Test dates: 6 July 2010 - 8 October 2010

Duration of test: 90 minutes

Other information: UKCAT website - www.ukcat.ac.uk

GAP Years

Many people decide to take a GAP year before University – If you are planning a GAP year your UCAS application may be done in two ways:

1) Deferred entry – UCAS form is completed in September 2010 for entry in September 2012. NB If you are planning to take a GAP year we will usually advise you not to apply now but to apply after your A level results. This will give you a much clearer picture of which universities you should choose to apply to, and the universities are more likely to make offers on the basis of actual rather than predicted results.

2) Application after the A level results (Mrs Askew is in school when the A level results are published and will help you with your application) **YOU GET AS MUCH HELP AFTER YOUR A LEVEL RESULTS AS YOU DO WHILE YOU ARE STILL AT SCHOOL.** In planning your Gap Year, you should therefore find out whether and when universities are likely to interview you, and make sure you are available at those times. It is possible to indicate on your UCAS form when you will be out of the country and unavailable for interview.

We will help you to plan your GAP year – the school has a great deal of information on various projects that you may like to undertake.

STUDENT FINANCE

The government website for student finance is www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

You should look at this to familiarise yourself with the system of loans, bursaries and grants for fees and living expenses. We will have a session early in the Spring Term to explain how the system works, and it is important that you apply in good time, to be sure of receiving your financial support before the beginning of the academic year. The deadlines in 2009-10 were April 23 for non-means tested loans, and June 25 for means-tested finance.

You will all need to apply through the student finance system, even if you are not applying for any form of loan, grant or bursary, as you need to register to be sure of paying fees at the UK resident rate.

The details of the amounts and deadlines for next year are not yet available on the website, but you can refer to this year's information for a rough idea of how it will look next year.