

Admissions Oxbridge



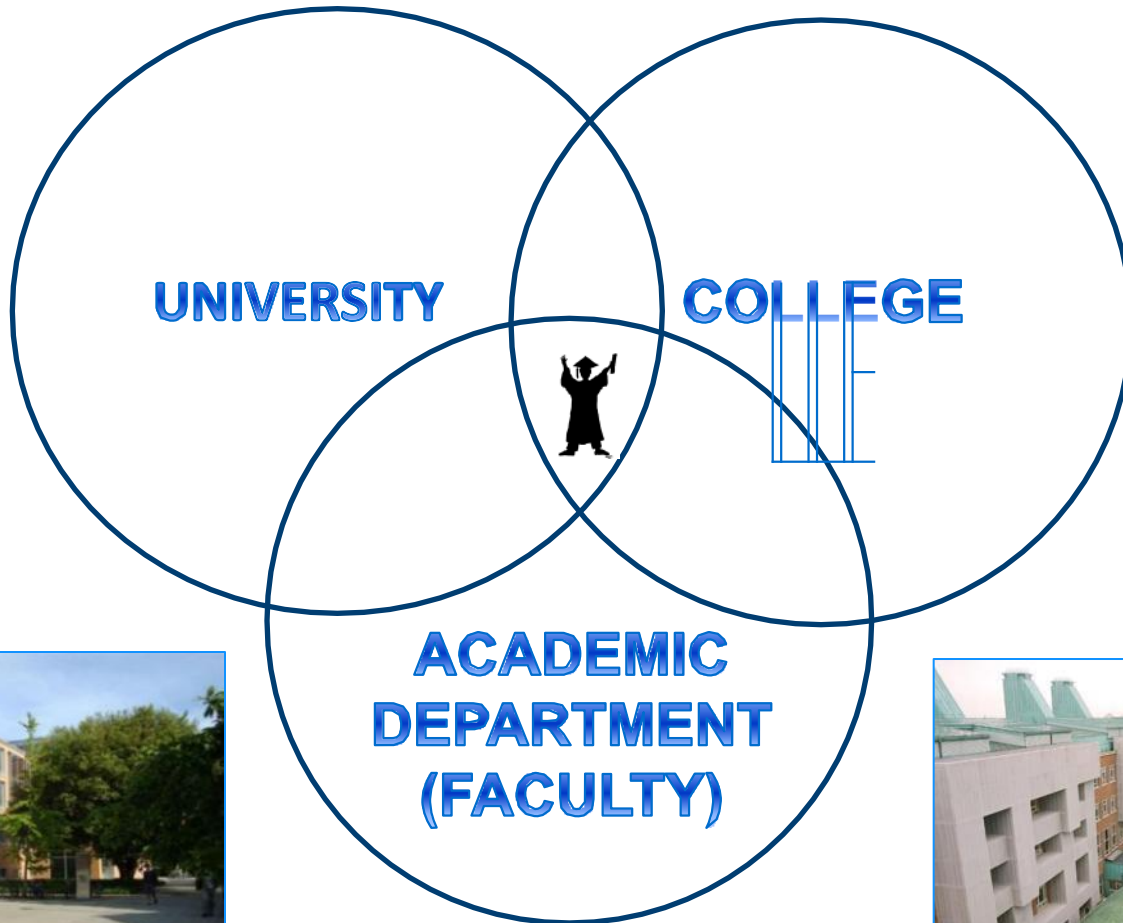
Miss Sharples
Head of University and Post School Guidance

Why Oxford or Cambridge?



- Range of courses
- World-class teaching – lectures, seminars/classes, practicals
- Small-group teaching – tutorials/supervisions
- Excellent facilities and resources
- Academic, pastoral and financial support
- Wide range of extra-curricular options
- Excellent graduate opportunities, irrespective of degree discipline

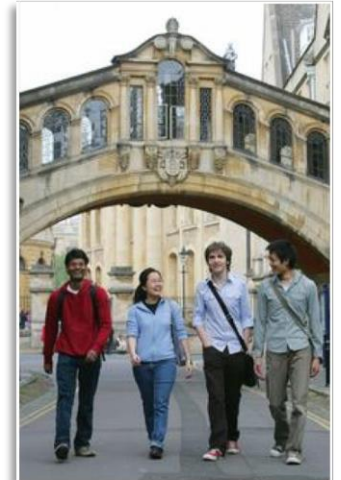
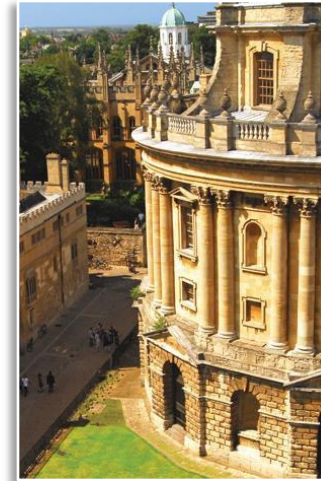
Oxford and Cambridge are both COLLEGIATE Universities



Universities and departments

As a student, you're a member of the University, a department and a College.

- Course content
- Lectures, seminars, practicals and projects
- Assessments and exams
- Award degrees
- Careers advice



Colleges

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

- It admits students
- Offers academic and pastoral care
- Provides accommodation, dining and recreation
- Organises small-group teaching
- Provides facilities for academic study

When considering Colleges, think about where you'd like to live – open application if you don't mind.



Teaching & learning

Lectures



Seminars



Practicals (Labs)



Independent study



Time in the library



Supervisions (Oxford and Cambridge)



Academic life - Cambridge

- Largely theoretical (rather than vocational) degrees
- Very intensive 8-week terms
- Focus on independent study and learning
- Unique supervision teaching
- Assessment largely through exams



What are they looking for?

✓ **Academic ability and potential**

✓ **Subject requirements**



✓ **Genuine subject interest**
– motivation and enthusiasm



✓ **Suitability for chosen course**



✗ **Particular school types**

✗ **Particular backgrounds**

✗ **Irrelevant extra-curricular activities**

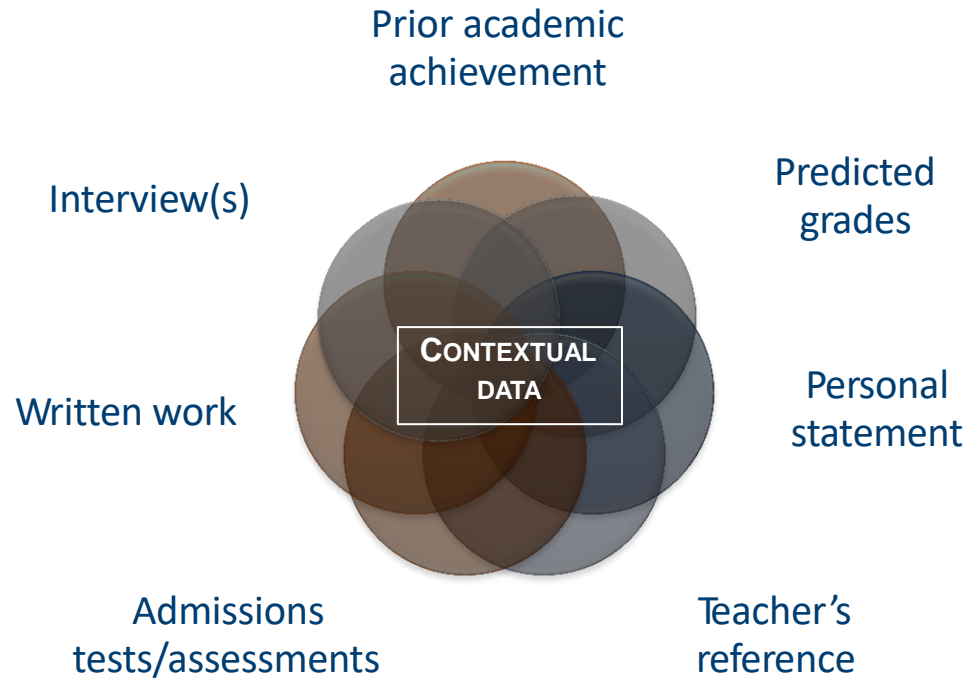
A Cambridge or Oxford 'type' ?

- Forget the stereotypes
- Do not obsess about College choice
- Scholarly habits – reading, thinking, analysis
- Ensure subject 'fit'
- The right course is crucial
- Exam record is crucial

Identifying: Questions for you to consider?

- Am I thinking and reading outside and beyond the curriculum requirements?
- Am I fully engaged with the subject I am applying for?
- Am I interested in looking more deeply into the subject?
- Have I made the right subject choices at A level?
- Do I have sufficient knowledge and skill?
- Can I think clearly and analytically?
- Am I flexible enough in my thinking to respond to new ideas and evidence?

What information do Cambridge & Oxford use?



What is crucial for application success?

- **Right** subject
- **Excellent** examination record
- Read and think – **critically and analytically**
- **Embed** learning and **revision**

Application statistics

University of Cambridge – 2015 cycle

A Level Grades	Applications	Offers	Accepts
A*A*A*	3,317	1,780	1,612
A*A*A	2,280	739	616
A*AA	1,909	398	314

What to do in Year 12

- Visit universities
- Make well informed subject choice -
- Research subject – same named courses can be different at each university
- Look at entry requirements closely
- Demonstrate academic interest
- Consider College/open application
- Research application process, dates and deadlines



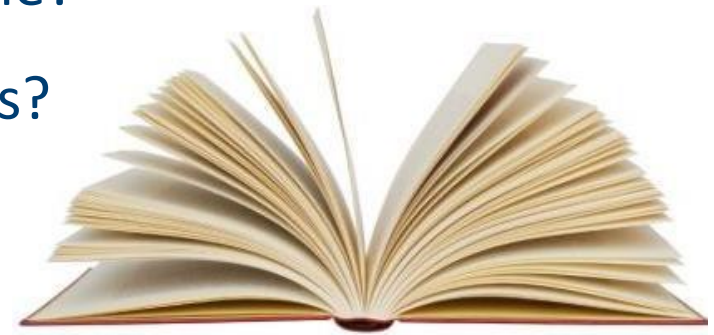
What can you do?

- Discussion groups – critical thinking and discussion skills
- Access to a highly motivated and achieving peer group who share your interests – societies at school
- Directed reading with journals and books of interest beyond the syllabus
- Explore online resources highlighting relevant articles, events and news stories
- Dissertation/extended writing/ the EPQ/writing for the Millhillian/History Magazine/Science Magazine – or start your own!
- Apply for summer schools, masterclasses and taster days

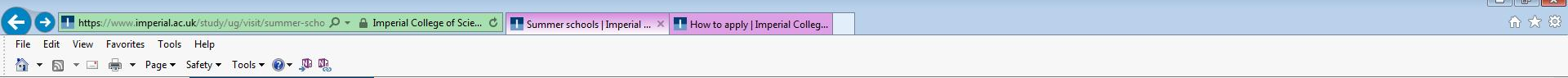


Stretch yourself – wider/deeper reading

- Additional directed reading is crucial to informed choices and application success – potential applicants should keep a reading journal
- Demonstrate an interest outside confines of syllabus
- Reading must be critical and analytical
 - What is the argument in the book/article?
 - What is the supporting evidence? Flaws?
 - What does the applicant think?



Undergraduate Summer Schools



Imperial College London



Student innovations on display as Enterprise Week arrives at Imperial



Predictive policing research gets a boost from £3m grant



Building the future at Imperial College Advanced Hackspace

More News >

Study | Research & Innovation | Be Inspired | About

Visit | What's on | Give | A-Z | Information for | Search

Undergraduate

Courses | Why Imperial? | Accommodation | Campus life | Living in London | Applying | Fees and funding | Request a prospectus | Open days and visits | Parents

Open days and visits

- Undergraduate open days
- Summer schools**
- Under-18 summer schools
- Undergraduate summer schools
- How to find us
- Where to stay
- Other ways to meet us
- Contact us

Home / Study / Undergraduate / Open days and visits / Summer schools

Summer schools



Under-18 summer schools

Summer schools for students who are still at school/college.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR SUMMER SCHOOLS FOR UNDER 18S >



Undergraduate summer schools

Summer schools for existing undergraduate students.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR SUMMER SCHOOLS FOR UNDERGRADUATES >



Postgraduate summer schools

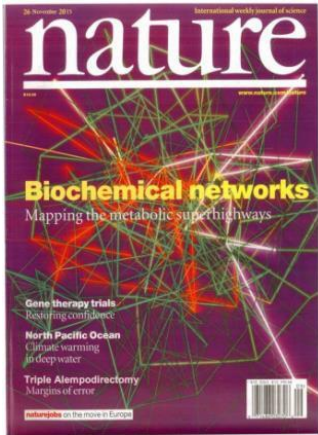
Summer schools for existing postgraduate students.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR SUMMER SCHOOLS FOR POSTGRADUATES >

https://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/ug/visit/summer-schools/undergraduate-summer-schools/



Stretching yourself – skills development



I-want-to-study-engineering.org



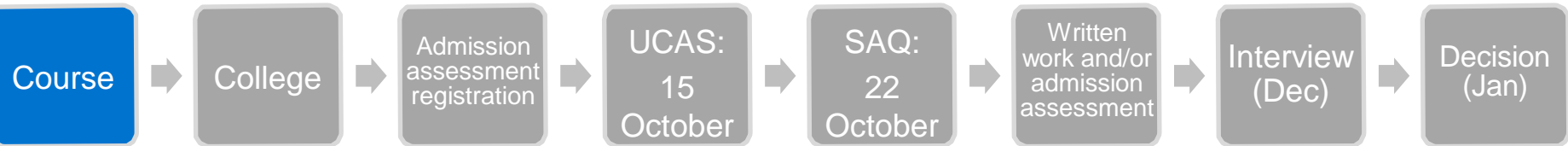
Physics. You work it out.



Year 13

- Finalise academic personal statement & application
- Practice written assessment format under timed conditions
- Practice challenging academic conversations which will stretch your knowledge
- Re-read personal statement before interview
- Make Cambridge/Oxford aware of any extenuating circumstances
- Adhere to dates and deadlines!

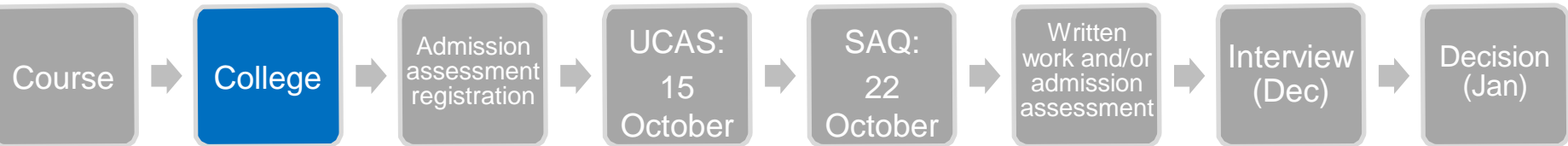
The application process: Choosing a course



- Think about what you enjoy
- Look at course details
- Research and explore



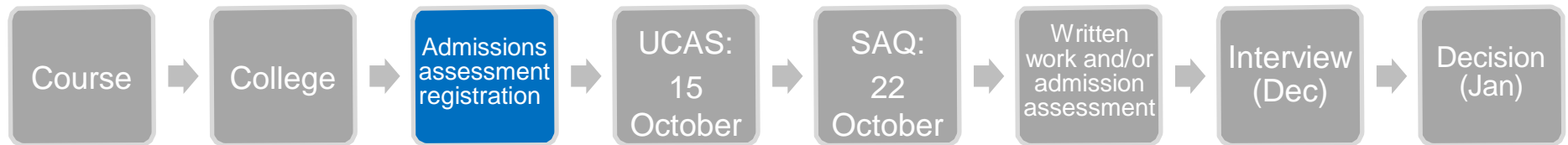
Choosing a College – where would you like to live?



- 29 undergraduate Colleges
- Differ in terms of:
 - accommodation
 - appearance
 - facilities
 - size (number of students)
- Instinct
- Open application



Pre-interview assessment registration



- **BMAT registration deadline**
1 October 2016
- **Registration deadline for others**
15 October 2017
- **Assessments taken**
2 November 2017

Pre-interview written assessments

- Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic
- Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
- Chemical Engineering
- Economics
- Engineering
- English (ELAT)
- Geography
- History
- History and Modern Languages
- History and Politics
- Human, Social, and Political Sciences
- Medicine (BMAT)
- Natural Sciences
- Psychological and Behavioural Sciences
- Veterinary Medicine (not BMAT – now NSAA)

Why use admissions assessments?

- Differentiate between well-qualified candidates
- A common set of data with which to compare applicants to a specific course
- To stretch and challenge applicants
- Assess the aptitude and potential of candidates
- If appropriate, assess subject knowledge and understanding

www.cam.ac.uk/assessment

Admissions assessments: How can applicants prepare?

- Type of test/assessment
 - Knowledge or aptitude/skills?
- Type of questions
 - MCQ? Short answer? Long answer? Essay?
- Practice using sample/past papers
 - Under timed conditions



Information used in selection

Oxford & Cambridge consider every application individually, taking all aspects into account:

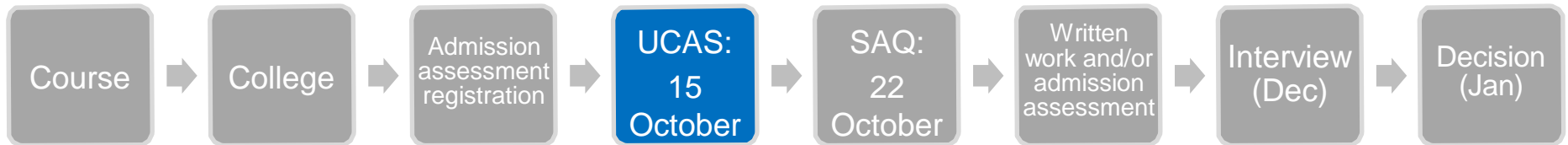
- Academic record
- Personal statement
- Teacher's reference
- Admissions assessment results (where required)
- Written work (where required)
- Contextual data
- Interview (if interviewed)

No part of an application is considered in isolation – all available information is looked at together before decisions are made.

	Offers for Cambridge
A Levels	A*AA for Arts/Humanities (except Economics) A*A*A for Sciences

	Offers for other Competitive Courses/Universities
A Levels	A*AA for Arts/Humanities A*A*A for Sciences

UCAS application



Completed online – application deadline 15 October

Personal statement

- Be honest and write with integrity
- Cover your interest in your course, relevant subjects you have studied, super-curricular exploration
- Extra-curricular activities **not** relevant to the course applied for aren't taken into account in our considerations

For example

‘I am fascinated by the fundamental questions Philosophy asks, such as what actually exists, or what principles determine how we act. Many of the aspects I find interesting in other subjects are essentially philosophical concerns relating to the premises of those topics. Doing a mixture of arts and sciences has given me the opportunity to explore a breadth of philosophical issues, ranging from the implications of evolution to concepts of beauty.’

As opposed to

‘I had never understood the point of studying the school’s curriculum as I could never relate these topics to normal life. Not until I heard from someone that medicine is the ultimate science that I started looking into the subject. Hardly had I read books and articles about it than I realized medicine is the most pragmatic among thousands of subjects in the world.’

References

- Areas of particular strength
- Relating to the relevant subject selection criteria is helpful
- How strong a candidate is relative to peers
(e.g. *‘one of the top three students in a very strong cohort’* or *‘the best historian I have taught during my career’*).
- Contextual achievement
- Additional information only required if change of circumstances post-application

In particular

- The most helpful references:
 - are consistent and specific, indicating where an applicant lies in relation to his/her peers
 - emphasise the academic and the subject-related
 - tell us about organisation and focus
- Back the genuinely exceptional to the hilt but be realistic
- Trust us to read between the lines
- Ensure a 'fit' between what you say and the grades achieved and what the student tells us

Extenuating Circumstances Scheme

To be used where an applicant's education has been significantly disrupted or disadvantaged through health or personal problems, disability or difficulties with schooling e.g.

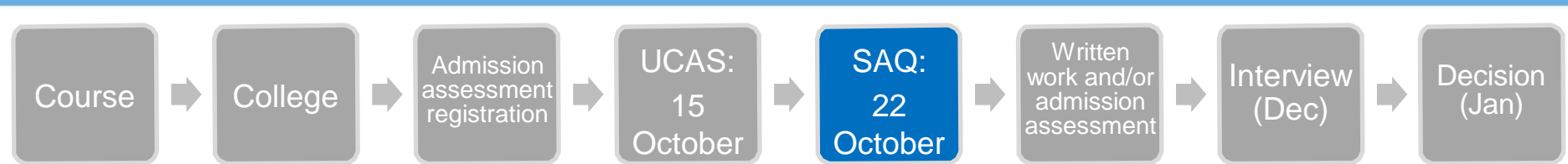
- a serious, acute or chronic medical condition (especially since the age of 14) which caused significant educational disruption
- significant caring responsibilities, or recent bereavement or serious illness within close family
- serious disruption to educational provision at school/college
- other circumstances where serious disruption has occurred – schools/colleges are welcome to contact a College admissions office to discuss an applicant's particular circumstances

Contextual data

- 80%+ of our home applicants are interviewed
- Decisions are based on academic record and individual context.
- Flags:
 - Care
 - 2 x Postcode data, both linked to OFFA Targets
 - Extenuating Circumstances Form (ECF)
 - GCSE school performance
 - Cambridge/Oxford success

This data is used to fairly assess disadvantaged candidates, not to discriminate against those who have not experienced disadvantage.

Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ)



- Used to collect information not in the UCAS application but useful when assessing applicants, including:

- topics covered in AS/A Level (or equivalent) courses
- optional Cambridge-specific personal statement

1 Photograph ✓ 2 Application type ✓ 3 Personal details 4 Course details 5 Education 6 Qualifications 7 Additional information 8 Submit Log out

Personal Details (2 of 2)

* 3.3 Please list your Country or Countries of Ordinary Residence since 1 September 2006:
[UK]

* 3.4 If you are living outside Europe will you be available for an interview in Cambridge? Yes No N/A

3.5 If there are any dates during the interview period in which it will be very difficult for you to attend an interview, please explain when and why. (Answer max. 300 characters including spaces)
Count: 4 Characters
[None]

* Indicates a compulsory question Section completed?

Previous Page Next Page Save Review My Answers Help text (PDF)

Help Text

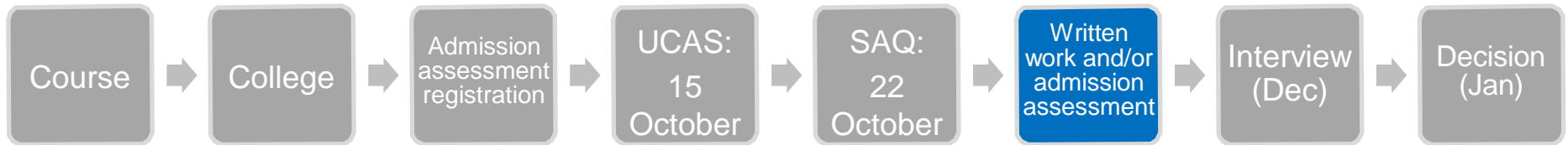
Question 3.3 Country of Ordinary Residence is where you normally live (not solely for the purposes of education).

Question 3.5 Interviews usually take place during the first three weeks of December. Applicants are advised to avoid making any unbreakable commitments during this period. Please list any dates during this period when you would be unable to attend an interview. Acceptable reasons for being unable to attend on a given date include religious observances or longstanding hospital appointments. School concert rehearsals or sports matches are not acceptable reasons.

Section completed: When you have completed this section, please check this tick-box. This will change the status of the section 3 button in the navigation bar above once you move to another section. This is to help you keep track of your progress. You will still be able to change any of your answers until you submit your SAQ.

- Ensures consistent information about all our applicants
- Completed online, in multiple sessions if you want

Written work and at-interview assessments



At-interview written assessments:

- no need to register in advance
- taken when you're in Cambridge for interview (if interviewed)

Written work:

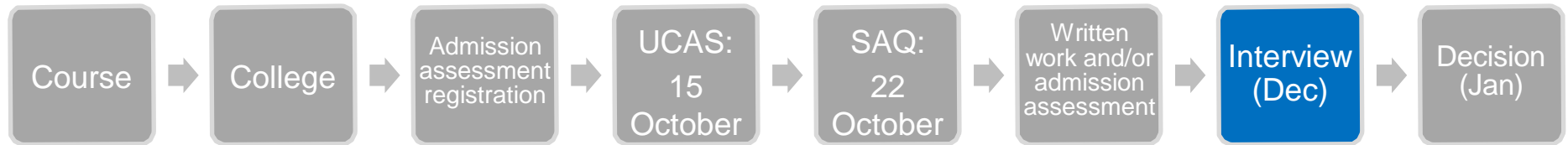
- for a number of our courses you may be asked to submit one or two examples of your written work from a relevant A Level course

At-interview written assessments

- Archaeology
- Architecture
- Classics
- Computer Science
- Education
- History and Modern Languages
- History of Art
- Land Economy
- Law
- Linguistics
- Modern and Medieval Languages
- Philosophy
- Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion

Mathematics/Music – assessment tasks at interview

Interviews



- Usually first three weeks of December
- One, two or three interviews
- Each 20-40 minutes
- Conducted by academics
- Predominantly academic and subject-focused



No trick questions and not the ‘final hurdle’

Why interview?

- How do applicants who look very similar on paper differ from one another?
- Are the applicant's aptitudes and interests suitable for the course to which they have applied?
- Does the applicant have the potential to study their chosen subject at a high level?
- Can the applicant think independently, flexibly and critically and assimilate new ideas or apply existing concepts to challenging new questions?
- Does the 'supervision' style of learning suit the applicant?
- Does the applicant display vocation/professional commitment (where appropriate)?

Interviews: What are Admissions Tutors looking for?

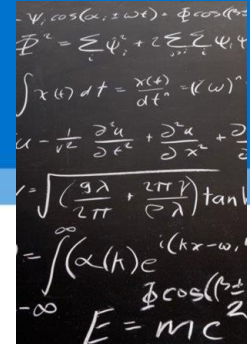
- Academic ability and potential to be successful
- Self-motivation, commitment and serious interest in the chosen course
- Ability to think independently and critically
- Use of existing knowledge to assess new problems
- Work through difficult issues in dialogue

Interviews: What they are NOT

- Full of trick questions with obscure answers
- A public speaking or debating contest
- A test of how applicants speak, dress, sit, or shake hands
- A cultural or social test of what type of person they are
- Scripted and identical for all applicants

Beware scare stories and rumours!

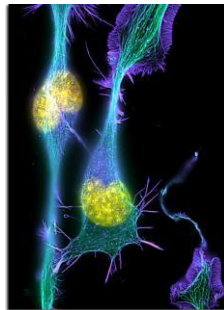
Interviews: what to expect



SUBJECT-SPECIFIC INTERVIEW

Discussion based on academic interests mentioned in personal statement

Challenging questions relating to A-level courses



Application of existing knowledge to new situations

Assess knowledge and understanding of subject and flexibility of thought

Sciences: problems to work through

Arts: perhaps a text to discuss

Sciences: a specimen to discuss

Discussion of any submitted essays

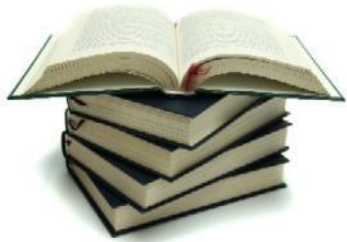
Sample teaching session – like a supervision

Interviews: what to expect

GENERAL ACADEMIC INTERVIEW

NOTE: some Colleges/subjects do not have a more general interview

Wider academic interests and reading



May not be with someone who teaches subject applied for

...but may include further subject-based discussion

Why this course?

Discussion of your personal statement

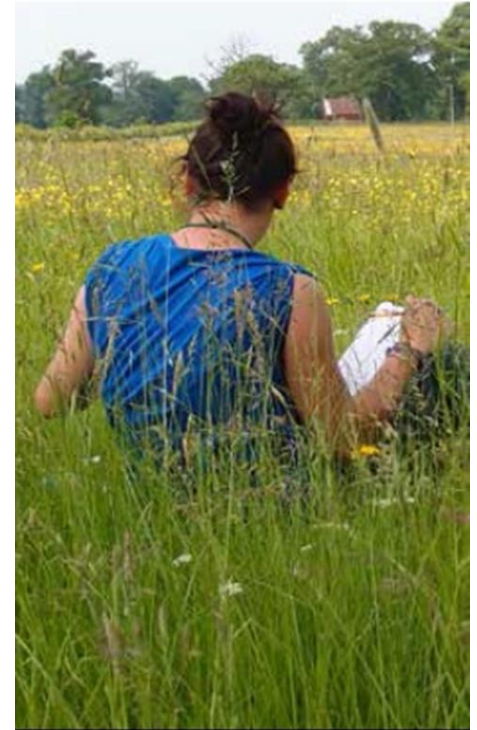
The future (if career plans mentioned or application for deferred entry)



IT IS STILL AN ACADEMIC INTERVIEW, DESIGNED TO TEST ACADEMIC POTENTIAL

Advance preparation for interview

- Recent academic work
- Wider reading, relevant activities or work experience
- The subject in the wider world
- Any questions they may have
- Encourage critical thinking
- Use many sources of information
- Know their personal statement
- Practice



Useful resources

- Admissions websites



- Interview videos



- Past/specimen test/assessment papers

Preparation just before interview

- Make sure the student knows where they need to be and when
- Look at the UCAS form and written work (potential sources of questions)
- Look at department information on website
- Try to be ready to think on their feet, and think through problems logically
- Be as relaxed as possible



On the day

Encourage students to:

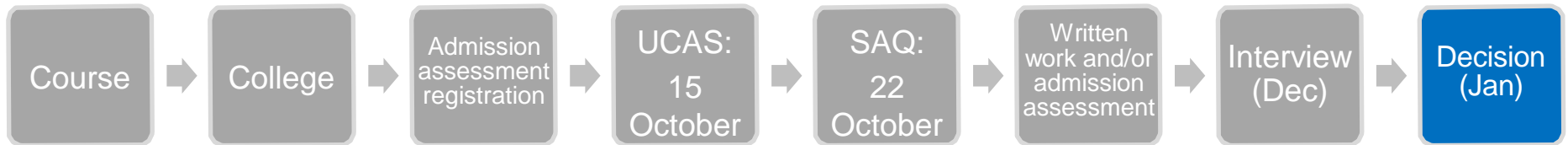
- Listen and take time to think
- Try to answer with clarity and focus
- Be willing to explain their thinking
- Concentrate on the current question
- Ask questions if they need to
- What matters is content **not** style
- Self-reflect



Moderation and the Pool(s)

- Spreadsheets allow for consideration of the gathered field
- Intensive December discussion
- Extensive transfers of students in January
- Further limited transfers in August

Application outcome



The Colleges are responsible for all undergraduate admissions decisions, and notify students of the outcome of their application in January

1. You may be made an offer

- May be from the College you applied/was allocated to, or from a different College as a result of your application being ‘pooled’
- Conditional/unconditional

2. You may be unsuccessful

- Don’t be deterred from applying by the prospect of not being successful – we can only offer places to those who apply!

Successful Applications

Key points for success

- Strong exam results
- Choice of subject
- Wider reading
- Revision in advance of interview

Common pitfalls

- Wrong degree subject chosen
- Unsuitable A-level choices, too many subjects in Year 12 or low grades
- Inconsistent reference
- Lack of wider reading and critical engagement
- Lack of revision before interview
- Rehearsed answers at interview, lack of clarity or flexibility of thought