

## Oxford and Cambridge: could this be for you?

Expecting A/A\* grades at A-level?

Achieved all/mainly A/A\* grades at GCSE?

Love studying?

Passionate about your subject and wanting to research it further?

- You would be taught by world leading experts!
- As well as lectures, seminars and practicals, you would receive personal tuition through the supervision/tutorial system.
- Excellent career prospects- highly sought after by employers.
- Short terms and accommodation in college or college accommodation for all three years at a subsidised rent – this can be a very cost effective choice.
- Extensive bursary schemes that support you financially.
- Some colleges offer funding for books, computer and sports equipment.
- A great social life - work hard, play hard!
- Extra-curricular opportunities for involvement in a massive range of activities.
- Students from all backgrounds and all types of school are successful.
- Excellent welfare and support systems that help lead to extremely low drop out rates.
- Superb learning resources and libraries.
- Beautiful places to live, wonderful buildings!

Explore their websites!

## Oxbridge Preparation at Eaton Bank

It is essential that you begin your preparation in Year 12 and the school has many years of experience in helping you to do that. We have an outstanding track record of helping students to achieve their places.

Search the Undergraduate Admissions areas of the websites of both universities; you will find a huge amount of help and advice.

**As part of the Honours Programme you will have the opportunity to visit the Universities' Open Days and stay overnight in college at both Oxford and Cambridge. Both universities also hold College open days which you might wish to attend.** Take the opportunity to meet with Directors of Studies and Admission Tutors. You may find that the same people subsequently interview you so make sure that you have read the prospectus and course details before you go. You will then be able to ask intelligent questions!

In addition, there are other residential events at both Oxford and Cambridge for which you may choose to apply:

### **University of Cambridge**

Sutton Trust Summer Schools for pupils in UK state maintained summer schools are subject specific. Booking usually opens in the January of your Upper Sixth Year. You need to keep checking the Cambridge website on this link;

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/year12summerschools/>

You will find information about how to apply and video clips of students on previous courses. This is an excellent way to find out more about studying in Cambridge, is something useful to put on your personal statement and more importantly your experience on this course will help to make you more comfortable if and when you go to Cambridge for an interview.

The university also offers “Challenge Days” for Year 10 and Year 12 students. Booking is handled by the school. The Challenge Days are designed for students who are academically at the top of their cohort. This means that they ask all participants to have achieved a minimum of five A/A\* grades in their GCSEs. The university promises that the events will involve a high level of academic challenge and sessions will be delivered in a lecture or seminar format. Students with a suitable academic profile will be encouraged to attend.

### **University of Oxford**

Similarly Sutton Trust and UNIQ summer schools are held at Oxford. Here is what the university says about the courses. “Many of the topics will be taken directly from first-year undergraduate syllabuses to give you an accurate understanding of what study is like at the University of Oxford. Throughout the week there will be workshops on the application process, UCAS, interviews and much more. Evenings are spent socialising with new found friends through a wide range of activities.” Booking normally opens in January and you will find information on this link:

<http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/uniq>

Keep checking to see when booking goes live and look out for posters in the common room. The application period is very short. Entry for the UNIQ courses is competitive and you will need to do the best possible application. We can help you with this. Students who successfully gain places on the UNIQ courses have a very high statistical chance of being offered a place on an Oxford degree course.

All the comments above about the benefits of the Cambridge residential courses apply equally to Oxford.

## **Events closer to home**

The school is keen to ensure that all students have the tools to find out about Higher Education and students attend the Manchester Higher Education Exhibition which normally takes place in March of Year 12. This gives you the opportunity to talk to staff from many universities including Oxford and Cambridge and is a useful way to narrow your thinking about courses and places.

You will also have the chance to attend the Oxford and Cambridge conference held annually in March at Haydock Park. This gives you the opportunity to choose a number of talks in subjects you think are likely to be of interest and will help you to inform yourself about the content of the courses and the admissions procedures.

It is common for other “one off” information or enrichment events to take place. We will always make sure that you are aware of such opportunities.

## **Building your application**

Oxbridge Admissions Tutors are looking for the students they believe have the most academic potential, are best suited to the course in question, and who will benefit most from what is on offer, whatever their background. They are also looking for an indication of your ability to think critically and independently, your willingness to argue logically but to keep an open mind to new ideas too.

Read more at:

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/whycambridge/who.html>

These qualities must therefore be the main focus of your personal statement. Other universities may well be interested in your positions of responsibility, charitable work, musical and sporting prowess, but Oxford and Cambridge’s interest in these is more about whether you are able to juggle your time commitments so that you still achieve at the highest level academically while continuing with your extra-curricular activities. They may see this as demonstrating your potential to succeed.

Look for the opportunity to build your application by attending courses relevant to your subject. Some will be notified to you by school but you might also want to look at the website of Villiers Park Educational Trust;

[www.villierspark.org.uk](http://www.villierspark.org.uk)

Villiers Park runs some excellent courses designed to prepare students for study at top universities. Fees are payable for attendance at the courses but if you are particularly interested in attending and cannot afford the cost, do come to talk to us; sometimes there might be bursaries or sponsorship opportunities that we are aware of.

Consider whether there is any possibility of undertaking relevant work experience. This is essential for vets and medics, highly desirable for law students and may strengthen your application in many other subjects.

You also need to be able to demonstrate that you are an educated person up to date with current affairs and able to talk confidently on a wide range of topics. Read broadsheet newspapers and listen to current affairs programmes and documentaries on the television and radio.

## **Mentors**

If you think it would be helpful we are able to arrange for current students at both Oxford and Cambridge, including ex Eaton Bank students, to meet with you here in school and to mentor you. They might not be able to give you advice about your specific subject choices but may be able to put you in touch with others who would be able to talk to you and can tell you about life at Oxbridge and debunk any myths. Oxford and Cambridge are for bright students everywhere. They will talk to you so that you feel confident about the interview process and are also happy to be in e-mail contact with you as you build your application. They will share their own personal statements with you and will be happy to comment on your own draft.

## **The summer before you apply**

We will sit down with you and give you detailed advice on what you need to be doing to bolster your application. It may be that you need to do more reading, visit some museums, or perhaps develop a specific interest in a narrow area related to your subject. The summer term is the time to identify weaknesses in your application leaving you time over the holidays to rectify them.

## **Making the Application**

We will discuss your subject choice with you and will ensure that you are challenged and supported to produce your best possible personal statement. We will ensure that you are able to put the strongest case forward for your own admission. Your reference will be crafted so that it meets the advice given to schools by Oxford and Cambridge. You need to help yourself by achieving the best marks of which you are capable in your AS Levels!

You will have to declare your marks as well as your grades as part of your Cambridge application and Oxford will invite but not require you to state your marks.

## **Supplemental Application Questionnaire**

At Cambridge, after your application has been received you will be sent a Supplemental Application Questionnaire (SAQ) by e-mail. This asks for additional information including the size of your A Level classes! You will also be asked to complete a second shorter personal statement explaining why you want to go to Cambridge, something you cannot say in your general UCAS personal statement. You should show this to Miss Williams who will make sure that you have sold yourself as well as possible. You have around one week to deal with this.

## **Application Tests**

Your subject may require you to register for and take one or more of the university entry tests, such as LNAT for law students or BMAT or UKCAT for would be medical students. The university websites tell you whether any extra tests are needed for your subject. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have registered appropriately for the tests and you need to go to the Examinations Office to confirm the arrangements for sitting the tests. The school will be there to support you and to talk through with you any problems you encountered when attempting practice tests.

## **Submitting essays**

For some courses, mainly in the arts and social sciences, you'll be asked to send an essay that you've written as part of your school course. Discuss with the relevant subject teacher which piece of work you should submit before you send it off. You should make a photocopy of it so you can read over the essay before your interview.

## **The interview**

You will need to make sure that you have thoroughly trawled the websites of both Oxford and Cambridge where you will find both podcasts and videos of mock interviews. You should re-read your personal statement and make sure that you will be confident answering questions on any part of it. Your Oxbridge interviewers might surprise you with their familiarity with your statement! For example, if you claim to have read a particular book, be prepared to discuss it. If you have read it, you can expect that the interviewers will have too!

You should expect to be asked searching questions which explore the depth of your understanding in your subject. In addition, some departments may give you materials to study for an hour or so prior to discussing them in the interview. You may also be required to undertake ad hoc written tests in college.

It is a good idea to do a bit of research on the internet to find out the specific subject expertise of the teaching staff in your subject at the college to which you have applied. This may give you a pointer as to what might be discussed at your interview or it may help you to plan good questions to ask.

Your Cambridge interview will generally be only at one college. If you are applying to Oxford it is usual for you to need to stay in Oxford for several days as it is likely that more than one college will interview you.

### **Mock Interviews**

We will organise mock interviews for you, these are likely to include both general and subject specific interviews. These could include interviews outside school with relevant experts. We will make the arrangements but it will normally be your responsibility to get yourself to these interviews. Your interviewers will always provide you with feedback.

### **Come and talk to us!**

Miss Williams is always available to discuss your aspirations with you and will set aside as much time as you need to make sure that you are on the right track, referring you as appropriate to other members of staff who will also be able to help.