



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



Alumni Toolkit Fact Checker

Some prospective applicants have preconceived views about the University of Cambridge and what applying to and studying here might be like. Here we list 20 of the more regularly encountered opinions, and how you can address them.

1. The application process is complicated.

False. Students apply online via UCAS in the same way as for other universities. However, at Cambridge the process starts earlier to allow time for all the application information to be gathered and considered, and students are required to provide some additional details not covered by the UCAS application (eg A Level/IB Higher Level topics studied). There's a guide to the process on our website at www.cam.ac.uk/apply.

2. Some Colleges are better than others for specific subjects.

False. Regardless of their College, students on the same course are taught together in the University's academic faculties/departments – attending the same lectures, seminars and practicals, and sitting the same exams. The University (through its faculties/departments) determines course content, sets and marks exams, and awards degrees.

3. College choice should be made on the basis of historical admissions data.

False. Whilst we do publish admissions data every year, we recommend that students don't use this to choose a College as it won't increase their chance of receiving an offer. We provide advice on how (and how not) to choose a College on our website at www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacollege.



4. It's easier to get in if you make an open application.

False. Equally well-qualified UK/EU applicants have the same chance of success whether they submit an open application or apply to a preference College.

5. You need all A*s at GCSE to stand a chance of admission.

False. Although many of our applicants hold strong GCSE results, there are no GCSE/IGCSE requirements for entry to Cambridge, and we don't require a minimum number of A*s/As. GCSE/IGCSE results are looked at as a performance indicator, but within the context of the school/college where they were attained. One of the strengths of the Cambridge admissions system is its ability to assess all applicants individually (see also 8, below).

6. The more A Levels you do, the higher your chance of admission.

False. Each application is considered holistically and on a case-by-case basis. Most applicants are studying three or four A Levels, which is usually sufficient to show breadth of interests and ability to manage a range of differing academic tasks. We would rather students to develop broader and deeper knowledge of the subjects most relevant/closest to their chosen course, than accumulate additional A Levels and achieve lower results.





- 7. We operate legacy admissions (ie easier entry for family of alumni).**
False. Family ties play no part in the application process. We don't collect this information from our applicants. Admissions decisions are based solely on academic criteria – ability and potential (www.cam.ac.uk/admissionspolicy).
- 8. Your performance at interview is what will get you an offer.**
Not by itself. The interview is one part of our holistic admissions process. Admissions Tutors consider all of the information available – academic record, school/college reference, personal statement, any submitted work, performance in any written assessment, contextual data, performance at interview (if interviewed) – before making any decisions. No part of a student's application is considered in isolation (eg performance at interview alone doesn't determine the outcome of their application).
- 9. The interview will include totally random questions completely unrelated to your subject.**
False. The main focus of interviews is to explore an applicant's academic potential, motivation and suitability for their chosen course. Questions will be relevant to the course applied for and the information provided in the written elements of the application.
- 10. If you apply to Cambridge then other universities won't make you an offer.**
False. The process is 'blind' so an applicant's other university choices won't know that they have applied to Cambridge. Although a Cambridge choice could be inferred from the date of application (ie the earlier 15 October deadline) it would not be in any university's interests to disregard an application from a strong student.
- 11. Extra-curricular activities (eg excellence in sport or music) earn credit in the admissions process/improve chances of admission.**
False. Admission is based upon academic criteria alone (ability and potential). A student's participation (or not) in specific extra-curricular activities that aren't relevant to the course applied for won't be taken into account or affect their chances of being made an offer at Cambridge.
- 12. The University operates quotas.**
False. The University doesn't operate a quota system for specific groups of students (except in Medicine, which is subject to government number restrictions for both Home and overseas students). All applications are assessed on academic criteria – ability and potential.



- 13. Most students admitted by Cambridge come from private schools.**
False. In fact, the majority of UK students admitted to Cambridge come from state schools. We publish admissions statistics every year at www.cam.ac.uk/ugstatistics.
- 14. All students admitted to Cambridge come from London and the South East.**
False. Our students come from all parts of the UK. In the 2017 application cycle (for entry in October 2017, or deferred entry in October 2018), 53.7 per cent of UK students accepted came from areas outside London and the South East. See our admissions statistics for details of applications, offers and acceptances by region at www.cam.ac.uk/ugstatistics.
- 15. There are no or few black, minority and ethnic (BME) students at Cambridge.**
False. You can see for yourself by looking at our admissions statistics (www.cam.ac.uk/ugstatistics).
- 16. There are no or few students from low income households at Cambridge.**
False – and UK students from low income households are supported financially through the Cambridge Bursary Scheme (www.cam.ac.uk/cambridgebursary).
- 17. Cambridge is more expensive to study at than elsewhere.**
False. Cambridge can be a very cost effective place to study. The vast majority of undergraduates live in College-owned accommodation and students are only charged rent when they're in residence (contracts are usually for 27-39 weeks, rather than a full year). In addition, study costs are kept low because many of the books and IT facilities they need are available from the University or their College library; and it's easy to get around the city on foot or by bicycle. There's more information about costs at Cambridge online at www.cam.ac.uk/studentfinance and www.cam.ac.uk/uginternationalfees.
- 18. It's all work and no play.**
False. There's no doubt that Cambridge students work hard, but they also engage in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Undergraduates are encouraged to get involved socially and there are hundreds of clubs, groups and societies for them to choose from, so whatever their interests, there'll be plenty of others that share them. Information about what's currently on offer can be found on the University Students' Union (CUSU) website (www.cusu.co.uk/get-involved/societies) and College websites.
- 19. All Cambridge students excel at either sport, music or both.**
False. While some pursue their sports and/or music interests to a high level, many participate just for fun; and Cambridge students have a wide variety of other hobbies and interests (www.cusu.co.uk/get-involved/societies).
- 20. Cambridge is a small market town with very little to do.**
False. There's a huge amount to do in Cambridge including music, culture, theatre, sport, museums, shops, pubs and clubs. The city is home to two universities and more than 20,000 undergraduates so there's also plenty going on specifically for students. See more at www.cam.ac.uk/studentlife.

