Welcome

Dear Colleague

At Cambridge, we remain determined that the many changes affecting the sector (curriculum reform, changes to student finance, and increased budgetary pressures on schools among others) don’t affect our capacity to identify, encourage and admit young people with the academic ability and potential to thrive at this University.

We appreciate having your help and advice, and that of your colleagues, both to help us understand how you have adapted your educational delivery, and to work with us to persuade your students that higher education remains a worthwhile investment of their time, energy and resources.

Together, we’re making progress: more than 65 per cent of UK students at Cambridge are now from maintained-sector schools, and admittance of those from under-represented groups has also grown. However, we do need your assistance in encouraging those who may not already have considered Cambridge as an option, to make sure that our undergraduate body reflects the spread of talent across the UK population, and that they know they will thrive here.

Having been Cambridge’s Director of Admissions for four years now, I’ve really valued my interactions with teachers, both individually and at various meetings and conferences, and very much hope that this dialogue continues. Please do get in touch with me directly at the email address below.

Dr Sam Lucy
Director of Admissions for the Cambridge Colleges
directorofadmissions@admin.cam.ac.uk

Please note
This guide covers application and admission procedures for UK applicants for 2021 entry, and the information contained is intended to be used in conjunction with that found in the Undergraduate Prospectus and on the Undergraduate Study website (www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk). Information for international/overseas applicants (including those from the Channel Islands and Isle of Man) can be found on the website.

Schools and colleges
Throughout this guide, we use the term school to describe all educational establishments offering education up to and including FE. This includes colleges and sixth forms.
Working with Schools and Colleges

We’re committed to working alongside schools and colleges to make sure all suitably qualified students, no matter what their background, have all the information they need to apply to Cambridge. We run a range of schemes and events designed to help you access this information and support your students in their journey to our University.

College Area Links Scheme
The Area Links Scheme connects every area of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to a specific Cambridge College.
The Scheme was established to build effective relationships with schools and colleges across the UK by:
• providing specific/defined contact points so that schools have a direct way of staying in touch with the collegiate University
• enabling the Cambridge Colleges to develop knowledge of specific regions and understanding of the local education environments
If you’d like some information about the University or to arrange a visit, your link College is keen to hear from you!
Each College runs its own programme of activities for the schools in their link regions. For example, Admissions Tutors and Schools Liaison Officers may visit schools, run masterclasses and/or organise visits to Cambridge.
Find out which College is linked to your area online at: www.cam.ac.uk/arealinks.

Subject enrichment
The University’s HE+ website (www.myheplus.com) provides resources for students in Years 12 and 13 to explore their subject(s) of interest beyond their current curriculum.
The University also offers a number of public events suitable for students in younger year groups. Details of these can be accessed at: www.cam.ac.uk/public-engagement.

Events
The Cambridge Admissions Office (CAO) staff organise/attend various events throughout the UK each year to encourage students to consider the University of Cambridge, including:
• school visits and HE fairs
• Oxford and Cambridge Student Conferences for Year 12 students and teachers
• Subject Masterclasses for Year 12 students
• Cambridge Open Days on 2 and 3 July 2020, for Year 12 students
• residential events
• The Subject Matters events for Year 10+ students
• ‘Realise’ events for students aged 11-18 who are or have previously been in care and estranged students
See p24-5 and find more information online at: www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/events.

Open days
In addition to the University-wide Cambridge Open Days (2 and 3 July 2020) some departments and many Colleges offer open days and events throughout the year. Find details and dates on the website at: www.cam.ac.uk/opendays.

Cambridge University Students’ Union (CUSU)
CUSU outreach activities include the student-led Target Scheme, through which Cambridge undergraduates visit state schools across the country to give information about the University from a current student’s perspective.
In addition, CUSU organises a popular residential Shadowing Scheme and manages the Alternative Prospectus website (www.applytocambridge.com, which includes the ‘Ask a Student’ facility for each course and College), as well as running various other initiatives. For more information, contact the CUSU Access Officer (see p24).

Events for teachers and HE advisers
You’re welcome to attend most of our open days and events with your students. However, the CAO and several Colleges also organise some events specifically for teachers and HE advisers. See the website (www.cam.ac.uk/teachers) for further information.

Not sure who to contact?
To find out more about how we can work with you, contact your link College (www.cam.ac.uk/arealinks) or speak to the Cambridge Admissions Office (admissions@cam.ac.uk).
Why Cambridge?

No. 1

90%
of our graduates from 2015 to 2017 were in employment or further study six months after graduating.

3 years
Cambridge guarantees most students College-owned accommodation for at least three years (see below).

Top 10
Cambridge is one of the top ten universities most often targeted by Britain’s leading graduate employers (The Graduate Market in 2019).

150
150 open days and events in Cambridge each year (see p1).

109
affiliates of the University have been awarded the Nobel Prize since 1904.

Academic excellence
The University of Cambridge is one of the world’s greatest universities, consistently rated among the top higher education institutions in national and international league tables. We provide a challenging, flexible and individual learning experience. Our teaching staff include many national and world subject leaders, so students have the exciting opportunity to be taught by experts in their field.

Flexible learning
Many of our degree courses (formally referred to at Cambridge as Triposes) encompass several subjects, with some options available across several courses where the subjects overlap. Our courses are generally broad in the first year, before becoming increasingly focused in later years (see p7). This allows students to explore their subject and confirm their strengths and interests before specialising.

The collegiate structure
Cambridge is a collegiate university that comprises various faculties and departments in different academic subjects, and a number of Colleges (see p8). Therefore, as well as being a member of the University and an academic faculty/department, students also belong to a smaller College community.

The collegiate system offers a huge amount of individual pastoral and academic support for each student (see p22) and provides places for them to live, study and socialise (though students in all Colleges take the same course and examinations, and are awarded degrees by the University).

More personal tuition
In addition to lectures, practicals and seminars, students receive regular small-group tuition (most often for between one and three students). This more personal tuition, known as ‘supervision’, allows students to explore course material in much greater depth, investigate new approaches, receive regular feedback and clarify anything they’re unsure of.

Outstanding support
To help our students succeed we provide expert teachers and lecturers, excellent library and computing facilities, superb labs and lots of support. Our extensive welfare and support systems ensure that students’ individual needs can be recognised and met. As a result, we have consistently high student retention rates, with the latest figures indicating that 98.2 per cent of students continue or complete their undergraduate degree at the University (compared to 91 per cent nationally).¹

Accommodation guarantee
The Cambridge Colleges guarantee accommodation to single undergraduates without children for three years (many also provide for fourth-year students), and students are only charged rent when they’re in residence – contracts are typically for 27-39 weeks, rather than a full year.

¹ Higher Education Statistics Agency; all UK domiciled full-time first degree entrants (March 2019).
Excellent facilities and resources

Study costs are kept low because we’re fortunate to have excellent computing and library facilities (in addition to the resources at the University Library, many departments and all Colleges have a library and provide computing facilities). Transport costs in the city are usually minimal as it’s easy to get around on foot or by bicycle.

Substantial financial support

The University and Colleges are committed to the principle that no suitably qualified Home fee status student² should be deterred from applying to Cambridge by their financial circumstances, and that no publicly funded Home fee status student should have to leave because of financial difficulties.

Therefore, an extensive programme of financial support – including non-repayable Cambridge Bursaries³ – is offered to help our students to meet the costs of their Cambridge education, regardless of background (www.cam.ac.uk/studentfinance).

Everyone is welcomed

We welcome students from every background and the diversity of our student body is valued and celebrated by all. We encourage our students to get involved socially and they certainly do, as our hundreds of student-run clubs and societies demonstrate. Whatever your students’ interests, there’ll be plenty of others here that share them (see also p23).

Excellent career prospects

Cambridge graduates from all disciplines go into a very wide range of occupations. They’re highly employable and greatly sought after thanks to the key transferable skills they develop and hone here (www.careers.cam.ac.uk). This is evident in our having one of the highest rates of graduates entering graduate-level employment or further study in the UK.⁴

² Non-UK EU nationals should regularly check online for updates regarding fee status and financial arrangements for 2021 entry onwards (www.cam.ac.uk/eu).
³ Elements of the Cambridge Bursary Scheme (such as eligibility criteria and bursary value) are currently being reviewed – please check online for updates, including arrangements for non-UK EU nationals (www.cam.ac.uk/cambridgebursary).
⁴ Less than four per cent of our graduates from 2015 to 2017 (the national figure in 2017 was five per cent) were still seeking employment or further study six months after graduation (Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey).
Applying to Cambridge

Students apply to Cambridge online through UCAS. However, at Cambridge the process starts earlier than it does at most other universities to allow time for all the application information to be gathered and considered. Most undergraduate courses can be applied to up until 15 January, but at Cambridge, our deadline for all courses is 15 October. Students who are interested in applying should start their research as early as possible so they have plenty of time to prepare their application.

In addition, students are required to provide some further information not covered by the UCAS application. The six steps below outline the application process (with further detail given on the following pages).

We also encourage prospective applicants to try to visit the University at some point so they can see for themselves what it’s like to study here. There are around 150 open days and events in Cambridge each year. See p1 for details.

1. Course

Students should start researching our courses so they can decide what might be right for them. See p6-7 and www.cam.ac.uk/courses.

2. College

Encourage students to consider where they’d like to live when they’re here – applicants indicate in their UCAS application if they have a preference College or are making an ‘open’ application. See p8-9 and www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacollege.

3. Apply

UCAS applications¹ need to be submitted online by 15 October.² The Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ) is submitted by students shortly afterwards. See p10 and www.cam.ac.uk/apply

¹ An additional application must also be submitted by students living or attending school/college outside the EU at the time of application, applying for the Graduate Course in Medicine, and/or applying for an Organ Scholarship. Please note that it’s not possible to apply to both the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford in the same year.

² Other application deadlines apply for those wishing to be considered for interview in particular overseas countries (www.cam.ac.uk/uginternational), and for some applicants aged 21 or over (www.cam.ac.uk/mature).
4. Written assessment

Most applicants are required to take a written assessment, either before they are interviewed, or at interview should they be invited to attend. See p18-9 and www.cam.ac.uk/assessment.

5. Interview

Interviews are usually conducted in December. See p20-1 and www.cam.ac.uk/interviews.

Undergraduate admissions

The University of Cambridge and its Colleges are committed to offering admission to students of the highest academic ability and potential, irrespective of social, racial, religious and financial considerations. Two further aims of our Admissions Policy are:

- **aspiration** – to encourage applications from groups that are, at present, under-represented at Cambridge
- **fairness** – to ensure that each applicant is individually assessed, without partiality or bias, in accordance with the policy on equal opportunities; and to ensure that, as far as possible, an applicant’s chance of admission to Cambridge doesn’t depend on College choice

Once students are admitted, we ensure that they’re given the academic, personal and (where appropriate) financial support necessary for successful completion of their course at Cambridge.

Further information

[www.cam.ac.uk/admissionspolicy](http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissionspolicy)

6. Decision

Applicants will be advised of our decision before the end of January 2021. See p10.

Will my students’ applications be disadvantaged because they attend a state/private school?

No. Admission is based solely on academic ability and potential – we don’t discriminate for or against applicants because of the type of school they attend (see information about our Admissions Policy, left).
Choosing a course

Post-16 subject choices

The A Level/IB subject choices made in Year 11 (or equivalent) can have a significant effect on a student’s higher education options.

Many Cambridge courses require prior knowledge of certain subjects and the Colleges expect such subjects to be passed, normally with an A or A* grade at A Level/grade 6 or 7 at Higher Level of the IB (or equivalent).

Students who have decided on a university course should look at the course requirements before finalising their A Level/IB Higher Level subject choices to check their suitability for entry and whether their combination offers the most suitable preparation for their chosen course (www.cam.ac.uk/courses).

Those students who are unsure about the course they’d like to study should note that there are certain subjects that are essential for a number of courses at Cambridge. Therefore, choosing one or more of these can help keep their options open.

Further advice about subjects and subject combinations that provide a more effective preparation for study at Cambridge can be found in our Subject Matters leaflet, available on our website (www.cam.ac.uk/ugpublications).

Degree course choices

Our Admissions Tutors are looking for the students who they believe have the greatest academic ability and potential, are best suited to the course applied for and who’ll most benefit from the teaching and learning environment offered at Cambridge. Therefore, when considering their degree course choice(s) there are some questions you can encourage your students to think about to make sure they are choosing the right course for them.

• What are their interests and motivations?
  Students should consider what they most enjoy learning about – this may be particular topics within subjects currently being studied and/or something from their wider interests. It’s crucial that they have a genuine personal interest in their subject to be motivated and successful at university.
  • Have they considered less obvious choices?
    Encourage your students to be open-minded and avoid limiting themselves to the more ‘obvious’ or familiar sounding courses. For example, students interested in history, literature and language may like to consider courses that incorporate all these areas, such as Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic; Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Classics; History and Modern Languages; Linguistics; and Modern and Medieval Languages, as well as English and History (see also Our courses, opposite).
  • What would they like to do when they graduate?
    While a small number of professions do require specific qualifications, most employers don’t specify particular degree subjects, so students shouldn’t make assumptions about their career prospects. For example, you don't need an undergraduate degree in Accountancy and Finance to become an accountant. Students with a particular career in mind should research any requirements they'd need to fulfil (eg accreditation and/or professional qualifications), and what people currently in that profession studied at university and their subsequent career path – they may be surprised at the range they discover.

Further information

Further information

www.cam.ac.uk/courses
Our courses
Many of the courses at Cambridge encompass several subjects, with some options available in a number of courses where the subjects overlap. This offers students a high level of flexibility – those with a clear sense of the subject they wish to pursue can start to specialise early on. However, students who are less certain are able to explore the wider subject area before deciding what to focus on.

More than 65 subjects are offered within our undergraduate courses. The course list and a subject search facility can be found on our Undergraduate Study website (www.cam.ac.uk/courses).

Changing course
Owing to the scope and flexibility available, most students stay on the same degree course. However, it may be possible for students to change course if their College agrees that any change is in their educational interests.

What’s the University’s attitude towards deferred entry?
Around six per cent of students accepted to Cambridge take a gap year. This year out can be a useful time to improve skills, earn money, travel and generally gain maturity. Please note:

• a number of Colleges encourage Engineering applicants to take a year out to gain industrial experience
• most Colleges generally prefer Mathematics applicants not to take a year out, but to apply for immediate entry
• it’s not possible to defer entry to the Graduate Course in Medicine

Students intending to defer entry should indicate this in their UCAS application and be prepared to talk about their proposed plans at interview.

Is there an age requirement for entry to Cambridge?
The vast majority of undergraduates are 18 or older when they begin their course here. A student who’ll be 21 or over when they start is classified as a mature student.

All students need to demonstrate that they have the maturity and personal skills to cope with university level study, and that they will be able to gain full benefit from their chosen course.

Applicants who’ll be under 18 on admission should seek advice from a College Admissions Tutor as early as possible to discuss their application. If they’re considering Medicine, they should also read the information online regarding age requirements for this course.
Choosing a College

At Cambridge, as well as being a member of the University, students are also a member of a College. If a student decides to apply to the University, they’ll need to consider their College choice. In the ‘Choices’ section of their UCAS application they can either indicate if they have a preference College or are making an ‘open’ application (see opposite).

A student’s College is their base for the time they’re at Cambridge – where they live, eat, do a lot of socialising, receive academic support, and where they often have their supervisions.

Does College choice matter?

The Colleges are more alike than they are different and students quickly settle in whichever they attend, so applicants shouldn’t agonise over which College to choose (see also information about the ‘pool’ system, p11).

The differences that do exist primarily lie in the ambiance. It’s the University (not the Colleges) which determines course content (see right) and students from all Colleges studying the same course attend the same lectures/practicals and sit the same examinations together.

For equally well-qualified students, making an open application or selecting a preference College makes no difference to their chances of being made an offer.

How do students choose a College?

Some Colleges don’t take students in all subjects so applicants should check availability for their course first (listed in the course and College information). Otherwise, we suggest students think of choosing a College in terms of choosing where they’d like to live.

Students might find it helpful to consider:

- their age – three Colleges are exclusively for students aged 21 or over (mature students)
- their gender – two Colleges consider applications from female students only
- size – number of students
- appearance and type of accommodation (eg on-site or College-owned houses)
- particular facilities (eg for certain sports, performing arts etc)
- personal instinct/preference – where the student thinks they’d feel most ‘at home’

Information about the different Colleges can be found in the Undergraduate Prospectus and on Colleges’ own websites. Students may also find it helpful to visit a few Colleges, either by attending an open day or arranging a separate visit (www.cam.ac.uk/opendays).

A collegiate university:

who does what?

The key functions for which the University (through its faculties/departments) and Colleges are responsible are outlined below, to show how they fit together.

The University:
- determines course content
- organises lectures, seminars, practicals and projects
- sets and marks examinations
- awards degrees

The Colleges:
- admit undergraduate students
- organise small-group teaching (supervisions)
- provide accommodation, places to eat and recreational facilities
- are responsible for academic and pastoral support
Open applications
If a student doesn’t have a College preference, they can choose to make an open application instead.

After the closing date, each open application is allocated by a computer program to a College which happens, in that year, to have received fewer applications per place in that subject than the average number across all Colleges.

Once allocated, open applications are treated exactly the same as any other – interviewers aren’t told whether an applicant made an open application or stated a preference College, and candidates won’t be asked about their choice at interview. The success rate for equally well-qualified applicants making open applications is the same as for those applying to a preference College.

Before submitting an open application, students should be sure that they’ll be content whatever the outcome of the allocation, as it can’t be changed once it’s submitted.

A few extra notes
• Your students can also find advice about how not to choose a College (eg based on application statistics, specialisms of College Fellows) on our website.
• If a student has unusual qualifications or particular requirements, rather than making an open application it’s advisable to apply to a specific College having sought advice at an early stage.
• Students can only submit one application to the University in a year, either choosing a preference College or an open application, and once the UCAS application has been submitted this choice can’t be changed.
• Students from the same school are welcome to apply to the same Cambridge College.

Further information
www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacollege

Will students need to apply to a particular College for their chosen course?
Students can apply to any College that offers the course they want to study. Regardless of their College, students on the same course are taught together by the University’s academic faculties/departments; attending the same lectures, seminars and practicals and sitting the same exams. The key functions that the University and Colleges are responsible for are outlined opposite.
UCAS application

To apply to the University, students must submit a UCAS application online, listing Cambridge as one of their options in the ‘Choices’ section (Institution code CAM C05) as well as a College (UCAS campus) code or ‘9’ if they’re making an open application.

To ensure that there’s sufficient time for all applicants to be assessed equally and fairly, the deadline for applying to Cambridge for most students is **15 October¹**.

In addition to a UCAS application, students must submit another application if they’re:

- living or attending school outside the EU at the time of application
- applying for the Graduate Course in Medicine
- applying for an Organ Scholarship ([www.cam.ac.uk/musicawards](http://www.cam.ac.uk/musicawards))

If there are extenuating circumstances such as health or personal problems, disability or difficulties with schooling, the school referee should also complete and submit the Extenuating Circumstances Form by 22 October (see p12).

Please also note the separate registration deadlines for pre-interview written assessments (see p18-9).

Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ)

To ensure complete and consistent information about applicants, all students will be asked via email to complete a Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ) online following receipt of their UCAS application.²

The SAQ enables us to collect information that’s not part of the UCAS application for use when assessing applications. For example, topics covered as part of A Level/IB Higher Level (or equivalent) courses – information that helps interviewers decide which questions to ask. Students may need to check some of this information with their school in advance to prepare for completing the SAQ.

To make a valid application to the University of Cambridge, applicants must submit their SAQ by the deadline set. In the majority of cases this will be 22 October.³ You can find more information about the SAQ on our website at: [www.cam.ac.uk/saq](http://www.cam.ac.uk/saq).

Application outcome

**Applicants may be made an offer.**

This might be from the College the applicant applied/was allocated to, or from a different College as a result of their application being ‘pooled’ (see opposite). If they’ve already gained all the qualifications required, they may be made an unconditional offer. If they’re still studying, an offer will usually be conditional and dependent on them achieving particular grades in those qualifications. We do not make unconditional offers to students who have not already achieved the qualifications required for entry onto their chosen course.

**Applicants may be unsuccessful.**

On average, we receive around six applications for each place (see below), so every year we have to turn down many students with good grade predictions whom we’d like to have taken. Disappointing though this may be, we hope that all applicants find the process a useful experience and valuable preparation for their other university choices. We hope students won’t be deterred from applying by the prospect of not being successful – we can only offer places to those who apply.

What’s the typical success rate?

**Overall, around one in six applicants is made an offer.**

For entry in October 2018 and deferred entry in October 2019, 18,378 applications were received for approximately 3,465 undergraduate places. Of those accepted, 96.6 per cent achieved A*AA or better at A Level (or equivalent), counting only their best three A Levels and excluding General Studies and Critical Thinking. A further 4,128 applicants with the equivalent of A*AA or better were unsuccessful.

Updated figures for 2019 entry or deferred entry in 2020 will be added to the website at: [www.cam.ac.uk/ugstatistics](http://www.cam.ac.uk/ugstatistics) once available.

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¹ Other deadlines may apply for applicants wishing to be considered for interview in particular overseas countries ([www.cam.ac.uk/uginternational](http://www.cam.ac.uk/uginternational)), and some mature students ([www.cam.ac.uk/mature](http://www.cam.ac.uk/mature)).

² Students must regularly check both the inbox and ‘spam/junk’ folder of the email account they give in their UCAS application as they’ll be contacted by the University and/or UCAS by email at various stages of their application.

³ If a different deadline applies, the applicant’s College will notify them of the date. If a student is in any doubt about the deadline by which they must complete the SAQ, they should contact the College as soon as possible to check.
Does the University take part in Clearing or Adjustment?

The University of Cambridge doesn’t enter Clearing. However, we anticipate that places may be available for some students through Adjustment. You can find out more information about Adjustment at www.cam.ac.uk/adjustment.

Feedback on decisions

All undergraduate admissions decisions are the responsibility of the Cambridge Colleges. As a matter of course, many Colleges provide written feedback to schools after interviews have taken place, and all Colleges are happy to discuss the outcome of applications by letter after the cycle closes in January, providing the applicant has given us permission to do so. This is a requirement of the Data Protection Act, and applicants will normally be asked for their consent in a pre-interview questionnaire. We prefer to send feedback to teachers/referees, rather than directly to students, and teachers should decide what information it is appropriate to pass on.

Further information

www.cam.ac.uk/admissionspolicy

The pool system

The pool system is designed to ensure that the best applicants are offered places, no matter which College they applied or were allocated to. If a College is over-subscribed in a particular course, strong applicants are put into the ‘winter pool’ for other Colleges to consider. All Colleges can consider pooled applicants and Directors of Studies in each subject meet during the admissions period to discuss the overall standard of applications so that they can see how their own College’s applicants compare – Colleges would rather admit a strong applicant from the pool than a weaker applicant who applied directly/was allocated to them.

As a result of being placed in the winter pool, some applicants may be asked to attend another interview at a different College, usually in January. Alternatively, they may be offered a place at another College without further interview; or they may be unsuccessful, in which case they’ll be notified by their original College.

Normally, around one in four applicants is pooled and, of these, around one in five receives an offer of a place from a College other than the one they applied/were allocated to (1,005 for 2019 entry and deferred entry in October 2020).

A second smaller pool (of offer holders who narrowly miss the conditions of their original offer) takes place in August after examination results are released and places can be confirmed. This again helps to ensure that the best applicants secure places.
Selection

Admission to Cambridge is highly competitive and staff are required to make very difficult decisions when choosing between students.

Applicants are assessed on their academic ability, their suitability for the chosen course and their potential to benefit from and flourish in the Cambridge learning environment.

What we’re looking for

There’s no blueprint for an ideal Cambridge student. However, there are certain academic qualities that Admissions Tutors look for.

- **Ability and potential** – in addition to an applicant’s academic record, selectors are assessing their potential for study here (how well they can explore and discuss ideas and opinions, whether they’re capable of logical and independent thought, and whether they show intellectual flexibility and willingness to engage with new ideas).

- **Motivation and suitability for the chosen course** – applicants should show enthusiasm for their chosen course, and the desire and potential to go beyond what’s required for their studies. This could be demonstrated, for example, by the exploration of their subject beyond the school curriculum and by wider reading (see also p17).

- **Commitment and self-discipline** – successful applicants are self-motivated, self-disciplined and academically committed. This could be shown, for instance, by good time management in the balance of their various academic and personal commitments.

Information we use to assess applications

We want to give applicants as many opportunities as possible to demonstrate their strengths and potential. Therefore, each application is considered individually and holistically, using all information available (as outlined below and on the pages that follow):

- academic record
- school reference
- personal statement
- any written work submitted
- performance in any written assessment
- contextual data
- performance at interview

Extenuating circumstances

The Extenuating Circumstances Form (ECF) has been designed to ensure that the Cambridge Colleges have the information they require to accurately assess any applicant who has experienced particular personal or educational disadvantage.

The information provided on the form will help Admissions Tutors by giving context against which they can judge the applicant’s academic record (whether the student has excelled in spite of, or been hindered due to their personal/educational circumstances), and provide information that’s useful when assessing performance at interview. The ECF should be used where an applicant has experienced health or personal problems, disability or difficulties with schooling, for example:

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

The student should apply in the usual way. The ECF (available online and from College admissions offices) should normally be completed and submitted by the applicant’s school for receipt by 22 October.

In those rare cases where the applicant’s school is unaware of the full circumstances, a doctor or social worker may complete and validate the form on the applicant’s behalf.

Further information

[www.cam.ac.uk/teachers](http://www.cam.ac.uk/teachers)
Academic record

Successful applicants are amongst the most able students in their school in the subjects most closely related to their chosen university course. See the relevant course entry on our website (www.cam.ac.uk/courses) and College websites for subject requirements.

All Colleges may modify offers to take account of individual circumstances. As such, some applicants may be set less or more challenging offers than those listed, and some offers may specify grades to be achieved in particular subjects.

One of the strengths of the Cambridge admissions system is its ability to assess all applicants individually.

Transcripts

Students who haven’t taken six or more GCSEs/IGCSEs or five or more Scottish National Qualifications in the last three years are usually required to submit a transcript outlining details of their qualifications as part of their application. For most applicants, this will need to be submitted by 22 October, however, an earlier deadline may apply in certain circumstances. See online (www.cam.ac.uk/transcripts) or contact a College admissions office for guidance.

GCSEs/IGCSEs

• There are no GCSE/IGCSE requirements for entry to Cambridge.

• While many applicants’ academic records include strong GCSE/IGCSE results, this isn’t always the case and we don’t require a minimum number of As/A*s at GCSE/IGCSE (7 is considered equivalent to an A in the new grading structure, and 8 and 9 equivalent to A*).

• GCSE/IGCSE results are looked at as a performance indicator within the context of the performance of the school where they were attained.

• Where a student has made a particularly significant improvement since the start of Year 12 (or equivalent), we would expect the school reference to include reasons for earlier underperformance and the changes that have facilitated their subsequent progress.

AS and A Levels

AS Levels

• Students taking any modular AS Levels will be required to provide details of their Uniform Mark Scheme (UMS) performance in the SAQ.

• For students taking any linear AS Levels, if they’ve taken any internal Year 12 assessments it could be helpful for relevant details (including performance against their subject cohort) to be given in the school reference.

A Levels

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’d rather applicants develop broader and deeper knowledge of the subjects most relevant/closest to their chosen course than accumulate additional A Levels.

• For 2021 entry, the typical conditional A Level offer will be A*AA or A*A*A depending on the course – please refer to the relevant course information online (www.cam.ac.uk/courses) and on individual College websites.

• Applicants may be required to achieve A* in a particular subject(s), depending on individual circumstances.

• We usually expect that students taking A Levels in science subjects will complete the practical assessment.

Further Mathematics

• A Level Further Mathematics is an essential requirement for Mathematics.

• If your school isn’t able to provide teaching for Further Mathematics, the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme (www.amsp.org.uk) may be able to help.

Extended Project

We welcome the Extended Project and would encourage applicants to undertake one as it will help to develop independent study and research skills valuable for higher education. However, we recognise that not all students have equal opportunity to access them and so completion of an Extended Project will not normally be a requirement of any offer made.

Continued overleaf
International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB)
• Typical offers require 40-42 points out of 45, with 776 in the Higher Level subjects (see admissions research at: www.cam.ac.uk/teachers).
• Applicants may be required to achieve 7 in a particular subject(s), depending on individual circumstances.

Scottish qualifications
• Courses with a typical A Level offer of A*AA generally require A1, A2, A2; and for courses with a typical A Level offer of A*A*A, offers are usually A1, A1, A2.
• In some cases, two Advanced Highers and an additional Higher may be acceptable. Applicants should contact the College to which they intend to apply for advice.
• Three Advanced Highers are expected within the Scottish Baccalaureate.

Welsh qualifications
• For students taking the Welsh Baccalaureate, offers are conditional on three A Level subjects (see guidance on p13) studied as options for the Advanced Diploma. The Skills Challenge may be taken into consideration in assessment for admission but would not normally be included as part of an offer.
• Students taking modular A Levels are required to provide details of these and their UMS in the SAQ.

Irish Leaving Certificate
• Offers are based on achievement in Higher Level subjects, with H1 in the subjects most relevant to the course.
• Courses with a typical A Level offer of A*AA generally require H1, H1, H2, H2, H2; and for courses with a typical A Level offer of A*A*A, Leaving Certificate offers are usually H1, H1, H1, H2, H2.

Sixth Term Examination Papers in Mathematics (STEP)
• STEP Mathematics is used to assess applicants’ aptitude for studying mathematical subjects at Cambridge.
• Colleges include a STEP requirement as part of almost all conditional offers for Mathematics.
• Some Colleges include a STEP requirement in conditional offers for other courses which require strong maths ability.
• The STEP content is based on core A Level/IB Higher Level/Scottish Advanced Higher (or equivalent) Mathematics material and so requires no further knowledge – questions are designed to test qualities such as insight, originality, and the ability to use standard techniques in unusual ways and situations.
• Further details and links to resources – including the free online STEP support programme – are available at: www.cam.ac.uk/step.

Cambridge Pre-U Diploma
• Offers are set on an individual basis but are likely to require the achievement of Distinction level grades (D2 or D3) in Principal Subjects.

Access to HE Diploma
• Attainment of the Access to HE Diploma with Distinctions in all relevant subject units can be acceptable preparation for most arts subjects and Psychological and Behavioural Sciences (PBS) at Cambridge.
• An Access to HE Diploma alone isn’t sufficient preparation to study a science subject (excluding PBS) or Economics at Cambridge.
• Some courses may have additional academic requirements (www.cam.ac.uk/mature).
• In all cases, students should contact a College admissions office for advice.
Advanced Diplomas
• The Principal Learning components of the Advanced Diploma in Engineering are accepted for Engineering, and the Advanced Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies is accepted for Geography and Natural Sciences (Biological). Conditions apply in all cases (see the website for details).

Vocational qualifications
• VCE and Applied A Levels, GNVQs and BTECs don’t provide an appropriate preparation for most Cambridge courses, where the emphasis is more academic than vocational. However, certain combinations of A Levels and vocational qualifications may be acceptable for some courses.
• Potential applicants taking these qualifications should seek advice from a College Admissions Tutor as early as possible.

Applicants studying a mix of qualifications
Applicants taking a combination of qualifications drawn from different examination systems, for instance a mixture of Scottish Advanced Highers and A Levels, are considered providing that the individual qualifications are acceptable and any subject requirements are met.

Conditional offers are made on a case-by-case basis but will normally be in line with typical offers made when qualifications are taken on their own.

Other qualifications
Whatever system students are being educated in, Cambridge requires top grades in the highest level qualifications available for school students. Typical offers for a range of other examination systems can be found on our website.

Further information
★ www.cam.ac.uk/entrancerequirements

What’s the University’s position on exam resits?
Applications from students resitting entire qualifications will only be considered when there were significant extenuating circumstances during the initial teaching or examination period. Extenuating circumstances in relation to resits should be provided via the Extenuating Circumstances Form (see p12). For those in a modular rather than linear examination system, a student’s application is unlikely to be adversely affected by resitting one or two modules; any intention to resit such modules should be indicated in the SAQ. Arrangements for mature applicants may differ. Please see www.cam.ac.uk/mature.

Please note that written exams are the main form of assessment used for Cambridge courses. Most students will be examined at the end of each year. The University does not offer resits as part of its normal examining process.

What’s the University’s position on qualifications taken early?
Although the University is in favour of stretching and challenging learners, this shouldn’t be at the expense of levels of achievement and we discourage students from being entered for public examinations early unless top grades will be obtained.

In addition, where students are successfully taking qualifications early, we’d still want to see evidence that they can cope with a workload equivalent to three A Levels taken simultaneously; and offers are normally made on the qualifications taken in Year 13 (or equivalent).

There are also potential disadvantages to taking qualifications early in subjects where the knowledge and understanding will be required at university. Students who haven’t studied a key subject in a structured way in the year before they arrive at university can find that their knowledge has atrophied.
School/college reference

The reference is helpful because it tells us about an applicant’s abilities and potential. Admissions Tutors look for indications that a student’s academic strengths are well suited both to the course and to the style of study at the University.

Comments from subject specialists that show evidence of an applicant’s intellectual flexibility and curiosity, analytic ability, logical reasoning and the ability to learn quickly are most useful.

Most of our applicants are predicted top grades and words such as ‘outstanding’ appear in many references. Instead, it’s helpful if remarks about academic performance and potential are made as specific as possible.

The following can be particularly informative:

- evidence of a willingness to explore and discuss ideas outside the confines of the subject specification, if applying for a subject studied at school
- evidence of steps taken to find out about the subject, for a non-school subject
- comments from subject teachers indicating a rank order in class (such as ‘top of 20’ or ‘in the top four of 23’) or a comparison with current/previous applicants (e.g. ‘one of our top 10 university applicants this year’)
- updated information about an applicant’s progress or personal circumstances, providing it’s received before the December interview period
- reasons for underperformance in qualifications, if applicable
- any health or personal circumstances that might affect performance at interview
- where relevant, information about the school’s individual approach to qualification reform

Separate Cambridge reference

A separate Cambridge reference isn’t needed as we receive a copy of your UCAS reference. However, if you wish to make any Cambridge-specific comments please direct these to the Admissions Tutor at the College to which the student applied or to the Cambridge Admissions Office (see p24) in the case of open applicants. Please ensure that the applicant’s name, course and UCAS Personal ID are clearly stated.

References for applicants taking an Access course

When writing references for applicants studying towards an Access to HE Diploma or similar qualification, please give as much information as possible about assessment procedures and the grading system for the course, as well as details about the applicant’s performance so far. We’re aware that this can be difficult, as some students may have only just started their courses.

If applicable, please make it clear that the student is on a one-year course and give as much information as you can about their academic achievement. Admissions Tutors may also find it useful for you to write a second reference at a later date.
Personal statement

Personal statements allow students to tell us about their subject interest(s), and the process of writing a personal statement can often help a student better understand their academic interests and intellectual motivations.

What a personal statement should contain

Students are advised to follow the UCAS advice about what to include (www.ucas.com/personalstatement).

At Cambridge, all admissions decisions are based solely on academic criteria (ability and potential). Therefore, in their personal statement, we’re looking for applicants to:

• explain their reasons for wanting to study the subject at university
• demonstrate enthusiasm for and commitment to their chosen course
• express any particular interests within the field
• outline how they’ve pursued their subject interest in their own time

Such information is often used as a basis for discussion at interview.

Extra-curricular activities

Our admissions decisions are based on academic criteria (ability and potential) and we expect to see evidence of students’ wider engagement with areas of academic interest, such as reading and other explorations relevant to the course for which they’ve applied.

Extra-curricular activities which are of no relevance to the course will not increase a student’s chances of receiving an offer. If, however, particular extra-curricular activities have enabled a student to develop transferable skills, such as organisation or time management, then these can be included in their personal statement. Such activities might include significant caring responsibilities or paid employment, which can help us fully contextualise an application, as well as sport, physical activity, music, drama and volunteering.

Cambridge-specific comments

Applicants can make additional comments particularly relevant to their Cambridge application in their SAQ (eg to highlight particular features of the Cambridge course that attracted them).

This additional personal statement is optional. Applicants won’t be disadvantaged if they have nothing to add in this section of the SAQ and shouldn’t repeat information provided in their UCAS personal statement here as we’ll already have received a copy of this.

Submitted work

Applicants may be asked to submit examples of their written work from a relevant A Level/IB (or equivalent) course (as submitted to and marked by the teacher), particularly for arts and social sciences subjects. A discussion of this may then form part of the interview.

Details of the Colleges that typically ask for written work can be found in the relevant course entry on our website. However, if this is required the College will advise the student about what sort of work this should be, where it should be sent and the deadline for its submission (usually by mid-November). If an applicant has any queries, they should contact their College’s Admissions Office as soon as possible for clarification.

Schools are asked to complete a cover sheet confirming that it’s the applicant’s own work and detailing the circumstances in which it was written. We recommend that students submit work they’ll be happy discussing during an interview, and that they keep copies of anything they send so they can re-read it in preparation.
Written assessment

Most applicants are required to take a course-specific written assessment, either pre-interview or at interview. These are designed to supplement the information in their application and provide a gauge of their existing abilities – to assess skills (such as writing and language skills) and, where appropriate, levels of current knowledge and understanding relevant to the course applied for. See the course information online (www.cam.ac.uk/courses) for details of the associated written assessment. Please note that a student’s written assessment performance is not considered in isolation, but taken into account alongside the other elements of their application (see p12).

Pre-interview written assessments

For 2021 entry, the courses listed in the box opposite require applicants to take a pre-interview written assessment. These are organised by Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing and taken at an authorised centre local to the applicant. For most, this will be their school or college.

Schools that already offer the Biomedical Admission Test (BMAT) and/or University of Oxford’s pre-interview tests will automatically be registered to offer the Cambridge pre-interview written assessments as well. Schools that aren’t authorised for the BMAT and Oxford tests must apply to Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing to become an authorised centre and offer the Cambridge pre-interview assessments (www.admissionstestingservice.org/administering-our-tests). There’s no charge to schools to become an authorised centre or to offer the Cambridge assessments. The approval process can take several weeks and must be completed by 30 September 2020.

Applicants who won’t be able to take their pre-interview assessment at their school must find an open authorised centre instead. Details are available online at: www.admissionstestingservice.org/find-a-centre.

Applicants have to be registered online (separately from their UCAS application) in advance to take the relevant pre-interview assessment. In most cases the assessment centre must register applicants, students cannot register themselves.¹ For 2021 entry, students must be registered by the appropriate deadline given in the box opposite. The pre-interview assessments will be taken on 4 November 2020. The September BMAT assessment will take place on 5 September 2020.

Please note:

• with the exception of the BMAT, there’s no entry fee for the pre-interview written assessments but some open assessment centres may charge candidates an administration fee – UK/EU students concerned about the cost of the BMAT should see the advice about financial support (www.admissionstestingservice.org/bmat)
• in addition to any course-specific pre- or at-interview assessment, some Colleges require applicants for some courses to take an additional College-set assessment at interview. See individual College websites for details
• apart from assessments for Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, applicants to mature Colleges aren’t required to take any pre-interview assessments – for courses with a pre-interview assessment, they take an at-interview written assessment instead

In order to register students for a pre-interview written assessment, applicants must provide the following pieces of information to their assessment centre:

• UCAS Personal ID
• name as it will appear on their UCAS application
• gender
• date of birth
• details of any access requirements/arrangements
• the university/institution (and Cambridge College or open application) they’re applying to
• the course (including UCAS course code) they’re applying for

Successful registration generates a candidate number (a letter followed by five digits), which should be forwarded to the applicant as confirmation – they may be required to provide their candidate number as part of their application, and will need it on the day of the assessment.

¹ Students taking the BMAT in September must register themselves online; students taking the November BMAT or any other pre-interview assessment must be registered by their assessment centre.
² Students must only take the BMAT once, see details at: www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/medicine.
Pre-interview written assessment registration deadlines

9 August 2020 – Biomedical Admission Test (BMAT):²
• Medicine (Standard Course)

1 October 2020 – October BMAT:²
• Medicine (Standard Course)

15 October 2020
• Chemical Engineering
• Computer Science
• Economics
• Engineering
• English
• Land Economy
• Natural Sciences
• Veterinary Medicine

Candidates with additional/access requirements will need to be registered by the modified paper deadline (30 September 2020).

Assessment centres are advised to register their candidates well in advance. If an applicant isn’t registered by the relevant deadline they won’t be able to take the appropriate pre-interview written assessment, which will mean their application to the University of Cambridge won’t be valid.

At-interview written assessments

For courses requiring an at-interview written assessment, these are taken when applicants are in Cambridge for interview.

Interviews usually take place during the first three weeks of December (see p20). Most applicants take any at-interview assessment on the same day as their interview(s).

For 2021 entry, applicants to all Colleges for the following courses are required to take an at-interview written assessment:
• Archaeology
• Architecture
• Classics
• History and Modern Languages – arrangements TBC
• History of Art
• Law
• Linguistics
• Modern and Medieval Languages
• Philosophy
• Theology, Religion, and Philosophy of Religion

For 2021 entry, students applying to the following courses may be required to take a written assessment at interview at some Colleges:
• Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic
• Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
• Education
• Geography
• History
• History and Politics
• Human, Social, and Political Sciences
• Mathematics
• Music
• Psychological and Behavioural Sciences

The assessments for these courses (where required) may vary by College. Please see individual College websites for details of which Colleges require applicants to take an at-interview assessment and the expected format of that assessment.

There are no charges associated with taking any at-interview written assessments in Cambridge, and students don’t need to be registered for them. Details will be included in the letters inviting applicants to interview.

Further information

www.cam.ac.uk/assessment

Continued overleaf
Contextual data

In order to assemble a more complete picture of the educational and social circumstances that underpin students’ applications and performance in our assessments, we also use several types of contextual data (where available):

• rates of progression to HE in an applicant’s local area
• the socio-economic characteristics of an applicant’s local area
• whether an applicant has spent time in care at some point (declared in the UCAS application)
• GCSE and A Level (or equivalent) performance of an applicant’s school
• recent school history of entry to Cambridge or Oxford
• eligibility for free school meals
• any information provided in the Extenuating Circumstances Form (where submitted, see p12)

This information allows us to assess applicants more holistically and may result in applications being ‘flagged’ to receive particularly careful attention. However, academic achievement and potential remain central to all admissions decisions – flagged applicants won’t necessarily be called for interview, be made an offer or be made a lower offer.

Further information

www.cam.ac.uk/contextualdata

Interviews

The majority of applicants are invited to attend an interview. In previous years, this has been around 75 per cent of UK/EU applicants on average overall (though the percentage varies between courses).

When the interviews take place

Most interviews take place in the first three weeks of December and students are strongly advised not to make any unbreakable commitments for this period.

Interview arrangements

The exact form and length of interviews vary from College to College and between subjects, but typically applicants have two interviews of 20-45 minutes each.

Colleges send out detailed interview information and advice to applicants, explaining where to go, the format, and what will be expected of them, including arrangements for any written assessment (if relevant).

Applicants may be asked to stay overnight, in which case they’ll not normally be expected to pay for accommodation or meals. Please note that some applicants may be eligible for financial support for travel to interviews (see the website for further details).

What the interviewers are looking for

The main focus of interviews is to explore applicants’ academic potential, motivation and suitability for their chosen course. Questions are designed to assess applicants’:

• problem-solving abilities
• assimilation of new ideas and information
• intellectual flexibility and analytical reasoning

Interviews help selectors to gauge how an applicant would respond to the teaching methods used at Cambridge, while also giving the applicant the opportunity to experience this style of teaching.

It’s important for applicants to realise that interviewers won’t be trying to ‘catch them out’, but will be challenging them to think for themselves and to show how they can apply their existing knowledge and skills laterally to less familiar problems, in a manner comparable to that required by the supervision system.

It’s also important for students to understand that their performance at interview alone doesn’t determine their application outcome. Admissions decisions are made holistically, using all available information (see p12).
Helping students prepare for interviews

Interviews are discussion-based, and predominantly academic and subject-related, so applicants will be asked questions relevant to the course they’ve applied for and about the information provided in the written elements of their application. Therefore, you can help students prepare for their interviews by encouraging them to talk with insight and enthusiasm about their subject and wider interests.

A mock interview given by a teacher or someone the student doesn’t know can be helpful to give them the experience of expressing their ideas and opinions to a stranger in response to unknown questions.

However, students aren’t expected to have ready-prepared answers – over-rehearsed answers can be counterproductive if students are preoccupied with recalling set speeches rather than listening to the interviewers’ questions and responding accordingly.

Students should be encouraged to read more deeply in areas of their A Level/IB Higher Level (or equivalent) subjects that they find particularly interesting and about topical issues and developments connected to their chosen course.

Students must be prepared to think quite hard in their interviews but should also be reminded that often there aren’t right or wrong answers to the questions asked. It’s the process of reaching their answer that’s generally of most significance, rather than the answer itself.

Short films about what happens in and preparing for an interview, as well as further information about the interview process are available on our website.

Further information

Please note

We’re aware of private companies and individuals who offer, at a charge, information and advice on our admissions process, assessments and interviews.

We DO NOT support or encourage any of these commercial enterprises. None of these companies/individuals has access to any information that’s not already available free of charge to all schools, colleges and individual students from College admissions offices, the Cambridge Admissions Office or Cambridge University Students’ Union; and we’re unable to verify the accuracy of information these companies/individuals may provide.

Please contact the admissions office at any College or the Cambridge Admissions Office for more information.
Support and Settling In

Support
There’s an extensive welfare system in place at Cambridge. Throughout the University and Colleges there are numerous individuals and services that offer academic and personal support and guidance if and when students need them.

College welfare
Within their College, undergraduates have a Director of Studies (DoS) who looks after their academic welfare – e.g. advising them on subject and course choices, monitoring their progress, and helping with any queries or difficulties arising from their studies – and also have access to a Tutor who can advise on any personal or financial matters. In addition, Colleges have a variety of other staff, such as a nurse and/or counsellor, and Welfare Officer(s) on the College students’ union committee who can all offer advice and support.

University support
The University’s Counselling Service is a free and confidential service available to all students, and the University Students’ Union (CUSU) provides student-run welfare services as well (for instance, the professional and confidential Students’ Union Advice Service). The University’s Childcare Office offers guidance and advice to student parents.

Further information
www.studentwellbeing.admin.cam.ac.uk

Disabled students
The University’s Disability Resource Centre (DRC) provides information and support to disabled applicants. The DRC supports applicants, offer holders and students with:

- specific learning difficulties (SpLDs, e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia)
- mobility impairments (including people with upper limb disorder/WRULD)
- sensory impairments (e.g. hearing, visual)
- mental health difficulties (e.g. depression, anxiety disorder)
- long-term illnesses/medical conditions (e.g. cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, HIV, diabetes, epilepsy)
- Asperger syndrome, autism, and ADHD

Applicants and advisers/supporters are welcome to contact the DRC (see p24) to arrange visits and discuss support needs. The DRC also advises on College and department accessibility and facilities on offer (www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/building-access-guide).

Prospective applicants are advised to contact the DRC and a College admissions office as early as possible to discuss their application and particular circumstances. We also strongly recommend that they disclose their disability/disabilities and provide any relevant information in their UCAS application so that appropriate adjustments to the interview process can be made, if needed.

Further information
www.cam.ac.uk/disability

Care leavers and estranged students
The University and Colleges are committed to encouraging and supporting prospective applicants who are (or have previously spent time) in care and our care-leaver students. As well as the support that’s available to all students, care leavers are entitled to year-round College-owned accommodation (if they wish to stay in Cambridge during the vacations). Care-leaver students could also receive enhanced financial support (e.g. some may be eligible for a higher level of the Cambridge Bursary, which is non-repayable).

In order to ensure they get the support available to them as care leavers, students should indicate in their UCAS application that they’ve spent time in care. When they arrive in Cambridge, the Cambridge Admissions Office’s Widening Participation Team will get in touch with them to provide more information.

The University also provides support, including year-round accommodation and an enhanced bursary, to estranged students.

If you’re supporting a young person currently or previously in care or who is estranged from their family, and would like more information about visiting (including our Realise events) or studying at the University, please visit our website (www.cam.ac.uk/careleavers) or contact the Widening Participation Team (telephone: 01223 766872; email: realise@admin.cam.ac.uk).
Settling in

Arriving in Cambridge

Once offer holders meet the conditions of their offer, their College will start to contact them about arrangements for their arrival in Cambridge.

Undergraduates may also find it helpful to have a look at CUSU’s freshers’ website (www.freshers.cusu.co.uk), which covers many aspects of starting university.

Colleges and faculties/departments usually offer an induction/orientation programme in the first few days of students’ arrival to cover key information (eg finding their way around, facilities/resources etc) and to help them get to grips with their new environment.

Most Colleges assign ‘College parents’ (students in other years) to new undergraduates to help them settle in – in many cases, new students will be able to contact their ‘College parents’ in advance to ask any questions – and the elected officers of each Colleges’ students’ union (also called a JCR) will be on hand when they arrive.

Meeting people

One of the many benefits of a collegiate university is how easy it is to meet people. Students get to know others from different Colleges on their course who share their academic interests; through clubs, societies and sports they get to know people with similar recreational interests; and in their College they get to know students on different courses and in different years.

Because our student body is so diverse – coming from a wide range of backgrounds, and from all over the country and the world – all new undergraduates find plenty of others with shared experiences.

However, our students also embrace opportunities to develop friendships with others who have similar interests to their own (academically and/or recreationally) but who may be from entirely different backgrounds.

We encourage undergraduates to get involved socially – not only is an appropriate work-life balance essential for their wellbeing, it’s also important that they take advantage of all (not just academic) opportunities available here.

During freshers’ week, College JCRs offer activities for new undergraduates, and CUSU runs the Societies Fair so students can find out about the various groups and clubs available (www.cusu.co.uk/get-involved/societies).

Adjusting academically

All of our applicants are academically very able and we have every confidence that those we admit will thrive in the learning environment Cambridge offers.

However, it’s important that students understand that studying at university is quite different from school (eg pace of work, styles of teaching and learning, level and expectation of independent study etc). At Cambridge, during term time students are expected to spend an average of 42-46 hours a week on their academic studies (including teaching/contact time and independent study). They should be prepared for an initial adjustment period while they get to grips with the demands of their new timetable and workload.

This adjustment period is normal, and how long it takes naturally varies from student to student. At Cambridge there are plenty of people to support undergraduates while they settle in and throughout their degree (including lecturers and supervisors, as well as those already mentioned) and we encourage students to access this support if they have any queries or uncertainties.
Further Information, Advice and Resources

We’re committed to ensuring that all relevant information and guidance about applying to and studying at Cambridge is readily available to all, free of charge. If you have any other queries or require specific advice, please get in touch using the contact details below.

**Cambridge Admissions Office (CAO)**
The CAO can help with general enquiries about the application process and studying at Cambridge.

- 01223 333308
- admissions@cam.ac.uk
- [www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk](http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk)

**Cambridge University Students’ Union (CUSU)**
CUSU offers advice and guidance, as well as organising events and initiatives for prospective applicants.

- 01223 333313
- access@cusu.cam.ac.uk
- [www.cusu.cam.ac.uk](http://www.cusu.cam.ac.uk)
- [www.applytocambridge.com](http://www.applytocambridge.com)

**Disability Resource Centre (DRC)**
The DRC provides advice, information and support to applicants and current students with a disability, long-term health condition or specific learning difficulty (see p22).

- 01223 332301
- disability@admin.cam.ac.uk
- [www.cam.ac.uk/disability](http://www.cam.ac.uk/disability)

**Colleges**
See College websites for more information, and contact an Admissions Tutor for further advice about College admissions policies and other matters.

- [www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacollege](http://www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacollege)

**Online resources for you**

- **Undergraduate Study website – Teachers**
  - Keep up-to-date by subscribing to our free regular e-newsletter.
  - Download copies of this guide and other publications.
  - Area Links Scheme information and contacts.
  - Admissions research and findings.
- [www.cam.ac.uk/teachers](http://www.cam.ac.uk/teachers)

- **CAO website**
  - Behind the Headlines – information behind stories making the news.
  - Responses from Cambridge to issues that relate to admissions and/or impact the HE sector.
- [www.cao.cam.ac.uk/wp-portal](http://www.cao.cam.ac.uk/wp-portal)

- **Advancing Access website**
  - CPD resources and online events for teachers and advisers to help you support your students’ progression to university.
- [www.advancingaccess.ac.uk](http://www.advancingaccess.ac.uk)

**Online resources for you and your students**

- **Undergraduate Study website**
  - Details of our courses and Colleges.
  - A guide to applying – including dates and deadlines, information about interviews, and application statistics.
  - Open days and events.
  - Student finance.
  - Support and welfare.
- [www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk](http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk)

- **HE+ website**
  - Subject enrichment resources for Years 12 and 13 students considering research intensive universities.
  - Guides to university level study.
- [www.myheplus.com](http://www.myheplus.com)

- **Oxford and Cambridge Collaborative Outreach**
  - Event information, resources and webinars about applying to, and studying at Oxford or Cambridge.
- [www.oxfordandcambridgeoutreach.co.uk](http://www.oxfordandcambridgeoutreach.co.uk)

- **Student finance**
  - Information about government financial support.
- [www.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance)

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**Thinking ahead?**

- **August 2020** – Booking opens for Year 11 The Subject Matters events (Oct, Nov, Dec).
- **September 2020** – Booking opens for Year 12 Subject Masterclasses (Nov).
- **December 2020** – Booking opens for Year 12 Subject Masterclasses (Feb, Apr).
- **January 2021** – Booking opens for Oxford and Cambridge Student Conferences (Mar) and applications open for Year 12 Sutton Trust Summer Schools (Jul-Aug).
- **July 2021** – Cambridge Open Days.

Visit [www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/events](http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/events) for details.
Application Timetable 2020-21

March 2020
- 2021 entry Prospectus and Teachers’ Guide posted to all UK schools and colleges and available to download online.
- Cambridge Colleges’ and department open days (Mar-Oct).
- UCAS Conventions (Mar-Oct).

April 2020
- Booking opens for University-wide Cambridge Open Days (see p1).

August 2020
- 9 August – September BMAT registration deadline (see p18-9).
- Applications for CUSU Shadowing Scheme open (see p1).

October 2020
- 1 October – November BMAT registration deadline (see p18-9).
- 15 October – pre-interview assessments registration deadline and UCAS application deadline for Cambridge.
- 22 October – Cambridge SAQ deadline (see p10).

December 2020
- Most Cambridge interviews take place. Students are advised to keep this time free (p20).

February 2021
- Applications open for government student financial support.

March 2020
- 2 and 3 July – Cambridge Open Days for Year 12 students.

September 2020
- 5 September – September BMAT exam (see p18-9).

November 2020
- 4 November – pre-interview assessments, including November BMAT (see p18-9).

January 2021
- Applicants will be advised of our decision before the end of January.

August 2021
- Exam results and university confirmation.

October 2021
- Students start at university!