

MONMOUTH SCHOOL



APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY 2011-2012

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INTRODUCTION

This Guide will help you prepare your application to university or college. If you are not sure whether you want to go on to higher education, or if you are thinking about taking a Gap Year, there are obviously a number of other options open to you. However these are not the subject of this Guide so please talk to me, your Tutor, your Housemaster, or a member of the Careers Department about your plans.

Deciding on where to go to university and what to study, although exciting decisions can also be challenging ones. The choice is enormous and the competition for places at top universities is great, so if you take away only one piece of advice from this Guide, it should be to prepare well. You may already have an idea of what career you'd like to pursue or you may simply have an idea of what subjects you like and are good at. Either way, this Guide will give you advice on how to make your university application a successful one.

Each year some changes are made to the UCAS process, and wherever possible, the changes are noted in this Guide. However you should check the university websites for the most up to date statements.

You will begin your research in earnest once you return from study leave in the Summer Term and the 'UCAS Days' will provide you with an opportunity to focus on subject and university choices. At the end of these days the aim is for you to have a draft list of chosen courses and universities and the first draft of a Personal Statement.

There will be School visits to Bristol and Birmingham Universities on 30th June and also organised visits to Oxford and Cambridge Universities on 6th and 7th July respectively. In addition you may ask permission to go to one or two other Open Days during the term and you'll find lists of Open Days at www.opendays.com .

Finding the right course and university for you is extremely important and how successful you are at this will depend upon the amount of time and effort you give to the matter. On average, 22% of students drop out of university, and in almost all cases it is because they have made the wrong choice of course. Use your initiative and start thinking about these decisions now.

Finally, do remember that there are plenty of people in the School who are only too willing to give support and guidance. Good luck with your investigations.

H F Tatham
Head of Sixth Form
June 2011

IMPORTANT DATES IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION CALENDAR

15 th June 2011	Joint UCAS Day
21 st June 2011	Joint UCAS Day & Medical Applicants Preparation Day
27 th June 2011	MS UCAS Day & Joint Oxbridge Day
30 th June 2011	Joint visits to Birmingham & Bristol Universities
1 st July 2011	Joint Oxbridge Day
6 th July 2011	Joint Visit to University of Oxford
7 th July 2011	Joint Visit to University of Cambridge
18 th August 2011	AS Level Results
1 st September 2011	Deadline for Applications for Organ and Choral Scholarships (Oxford) and Organ Scholarships (Cambridge)
5 th September 2011	Final date for submission of Early Applicants' UCAS forms to Tutors (Oxbridge, Medicine, Veterinary Science and Dentistry)
12 th September 2011	Deadline for Applications for Choral Scholarships Cambridge
15th October 2011	Deadline for submission of Applications to <u>UCAS</u> for Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry & Veterinary Science
31 ST October 2011	Final date for submission of remaining UCAS forms to Tutors
2 rd November 2011	Admissions and Aptitude Tests
November 2011	Joint Practice Oxbridge Interviews
November/December	Practice Medical Interviews
15th January 2012	Deadline for submission of Applications to <u>UCAS</u> including some Art & Design Courses
24th March 2012	Deadline for submission of remaining Applications to <u>UCAS</u> for Art & Design Courses

WHICH SUBJECT

This is the first decision you must make, so if you are still unsure about subject choice take the Stamford Test at www.ucas.com and look at the ideas generator on the Coursediscover website www.coursediscover.co.uk. These are free questionnaires which generate ideas and come up with suggested courses.

1. **A vocational subject.** If you have already decided to become a doctor, an accountant, a lawyer or an architect, your subject choice may well be made for you. Degrees in these sorts of subjects are often referred to as vocational and allow you exemptions from some of the professional exams that you will have to pass to qualify as one of these professionals. However, even a vocational degree does not commit you to a particular career - many accountancy graduates find careers in finance and investment.
2. **A subject you have already studied.** You might decide to choose a subject that you have enjoyed at AS level and the advantage in this is that you can be fairly sure you are going to enjoy the subject once you get to university.
3. **A new subject.** If you are planning to study a 'new' subject that you have not studied at school, then you must research the subject well and do plenty of background reading, to be as sure as you can be that you will like the subject once at university. Talk to university departments and, if possible, go along to Taster Days.

Some subjects lend themselves to particular careers or group of careers, such as careers in the Media, Arts or Sciences and occupations are often grouped together because they have certain shared characteristics such as artistic bias. For example, careers in the Media or Arts require artistic (and other) talents and would lend themselves to studying an artistic subject at university such as Architecture, Architectural Studies, Art, Drama, Fine Art, Interior Design, Music, and Graphic Communication.

Your parents may well be anxious about your choice of subject, believing it to be too narrow, too "arty", too easy and not likely to lead to a "good" job. Remember that being a graduate gives you an advantage over non-graduates, as well as a higher earnings potential. This is true even in an economic downturn. The key thing is that you chose a subject that **you** are happy to study for those three (or more) years.

Employers nowadays are interested in **transferrable skills** such as analysis, evaluation, initiative, communication and presentation and you will acquire these at university whatever subject you chose. They are interested in academic ability, initiative, self-discipline and determination – all qualities that are needed to obtain a degree in any subject. Therefore don't imagine that some degrees are not marketable, that all professions require degrees in specific subjects, or indeed that a degree in a particular subject guarantees entry to a chosen career.

WHICH COURSE

Types of Courses

Once you have decided upon which subject to study, you should look at the way in which it is taught at each of the universities in which you are interested. Courses differ considerably in both approach and content and it is very important that you chose the course which best suits you. There are many different types of degree courses on offer these days, for example:

1. **Single Honours** – You graduate in one main subject. Usually in the second or third year of the course you are able to choose subject options, but the choice of available options will vary from university to university.
2. **Joint Honours** – You study two separate but equal subjects, which may or may not be related, for example Maths and Physics, History and Music and Business Studies and German. The amount of time spent on each subject is equal.
3. **Combined Honours** – You may study two or three subjects and these are usually taken within the same Faculty; examples would be Combined Sciences and Combined Social Sciences.
4. **Major/Minor Course** – You study two subjects, one usually over a longer period than the other. The split can be as much as 75%/25%. An example would be Law with French.
5. **Foundation Course** – Foundation Courses are usually offered by the new universities and Art & Design Colleges. They allow you to begin the study of a subject when your grades may not be good enough for degree entry level, but will allow you to progress to degree level. If you are uncertain about the subject, taking a Foundation Course can be a way of trying it out for a year, before committing to three years of a degree course.
6. **Sandwich Courses** – These courses combine periods of study with work related placements in industry, commerce or administration and can be hugely beneficial, especially in areas such as engineering.

Most courses in England and Wales take three years but some, such as Medicine, Veterinary Science, and Modern Languages take four or more, as do courses at Scottish universities. Sandwich courses take more than three and Foundation Courses take less. The relevance of the length of your course should be obvious – do you want to study for another three/four/five years and how will the decision affect your finances?

Scottish universities have a slightly different degree structure from English universities and you are not normally admitted into honours courses until the end of your second year. In your first two years you select three or four subjects from a wide range of possible courses, which may cover several distinct study areas. This gives you the opportunity to try out a number of different subjects before selecting your final honours courses. There are exceptions to this however, such as Medicine, Law and Divinity. There may be others, so check carefully.

What should you be looking for in a degree course?

Remember that one course is not necessarily better than another, it is simply different. The 'best course' is the course that suits you best so find out as much as possible about how it is taught. Start by reading the course's Entry Profile on the UCAS website (using Course Search and indicated by the letters "EP"). You may like to ask:

1. Is the course theoretical or practical?
2. Is the emphasis on lectures or tutorials?
3. How and when are you examined – e.g. at the end of each year, each term or at the end of the three years?
4. Do you specialise and how early on?
5. How wide is the range of options?
7. Do final examinations give any exemption from professional examinations?

Some courses, such as Medicine and Law, require attendance at lectures or tutorials for what amounts to a full working day. You then have to undertake further private study on your own and this may well put your stamina to the test. Others courses require attendance at relatively few lectures or tutorials, but you are expected to organise your own private study. These courses demand self-discipline and motivation.

Some departments offer a degree of academic monitoring which can go as far as a one-to-one tutorial; in others, larger group seminars may allow you to feel less closely watched. You really must assess your own temperament honestly and recognise the conditions under which you work well.

In Oxford and Cambridge the terms are shorter and study is based on the tutorial system. Although students do have lectures and classes in their subjects, there is greater emphasis on individual study and one-to-one or small group teaching. Cambridge tutorials are called supervisions and the degrees courses are called Triposes. The Tripos structure allows you more time to decide upon your area of interest, as you cover the subjects broadly in the first year and then become more specialised in the second and third years. Assessment methods also differ, so find out which you feel more suited to.

When you visit the university on an Open Day, make sure you ask as many questions of the Department as possible and find out as much as you can about the course.

Brian Heap's **Degree Course Offers** and **Choosing Your Degree Course and University** make very helpful reading and you can compare the different Entry Profiles for different courses on the UCAS website.

By the end of the UCAS Days you should have a draft short-list of courses for your UCAS Application and you can begin to compare the different institutions. Make good use of the School university trips and over the summer holidays, try to visit as many other universities as possible. Nothing else will inform your decision as well as first hand knowledge.

Universities have an average drop out rate of 22% and the main reason is unhappiness with the course. Don't let this apply to you.

WHICH UNIVERSITY

League Tables, such as the Guardian University Guide and the Sunday Times University Guide, are published every year and are a good place to start. However they are not the only guides and you should not see them as definitive, so use them in conjunction with other information. There are also student guides such as the Push Guide and the Virgin Guide which can make interesting and fun reading, but remember that one man's meat is another man's poison.

Many universities, particularly the ones at the top, like the League Tables, but a university may be very good at some things and less good at others. They all have their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, points in the League Tables are awarded for things which may be of no interest to you, such as research quality, employment and entry level standards, student/staff ratios, drop out rates and library and computer spending. Graduate employment results are also taken into account but, "the university does not find you a job: that's your responsibility!"¹

The following websites are helpful for independent comparisons on universities and courses www.qaa.ac.uk and also www.unistats.com.

When choosing a university you should consider a number of factors:

1. **Entry standards** - for both the university in general and for your course in particular. You should only apply to universities where you have a realistic chance of acceptance. Consult the UCAS Big Guide and Brian Heap's Degree Course Offers for full details of the entry grades normally required for admission to each course at each university. Take care to note however that these are a guideline and a large number of applicants in any given year can result in the raising of entry grades.

2. **Location** – Do you want to live away from home and if so, how far away? How much will it cost you to travel home? Do you want to be in a city or in a rural location? Do you row or surf and if so, be sure to pick a university near a river or a surfing beach.

3. **Size and facilities** - How sociable are you? Would you prefer the more intimate feel of a small university or college or would you prefer to live in a city, with access to all that this brings? Are there good leisure facilities and opportunities to carry on with your favourite sport, or take up a new one?

4. **Accommodation** – Is accommodation guaranteed in the first year (even if this is your insurance choice)? Is it guaranteed for longer? What are the Halls of Residence like? Would you prefer self-catering? It is almost always more expensive to rent in the private sector than from the university, in part because a private landlord will ask you to sign a lease for twelve months and not just for term time.

5. **Cost of Living** – It is more expensive to live in some parts of the country than in others, often being stated as, "North = cheap. South = expensive". So although your Tuition Fees may be broadly similar at your different chosen institutions, your living costs will vary. Be wary of the university which tells you that it is the cheapest in the country. You must do your own independent research. www.unistats.com will give you independent information and comparison between the different institutions.

6. **Employability of Graduates** – This may well be important to you in today's economic climate. What percentages of graduates from this university, and from

¹ Brian Heap: Choosing your Degree Course and University p 23.

your chosen course, get jobs? Be careful when comparing the statistics to ensure that the “jobs” referred to doesn’t include working in a café, but means graduate jobs.

Types of Universities

Every university has a distinct character of its own and there are over 300 to choose from. There is therefore something to suit every taste. Some are large, others are small. Some are in the centres of towns or cities whilst others are in the country or on the outskirts of town. There are campus universities such as Nottingham, collegiate universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, redbrick universities such as Sheffield, city universities such as Edinburgh, traditional universities like St Andrew’s and new universities such as Nottingham Trent.

In the course of your research you will come across the 20 Russell Group Universities. These universities have a particular status because the teaching and learning takes place within a culture of research excellence. Their aims include “the pursuit of excellence in teaching and research; providing an effective lobby for research and graduate study and promoting the value of rigorous academic undergraduate teaching programmes”.

The Russell Group is listed below. Note that excellent universities such as Durham, Exeter, and St Andrews are not in the group. Furthermore, Brunel is regarded as a leading institution for Design, Loughborough for Sports Science and Lancaster for Management. None of these universities is in the Russell Group. So be careful when consulting league tables. Reputation is one measure of quality but staff and course changes can affect this. The 1994 Group of universities is another group of well-regarded institutions, and many Monmothians apply successfully to these every year.

It can be dangerous to rely upon the accumulated wisdom (sometimes thinly disguised prejudice) of parents, teachers and friends. Everyone will have an opinion and it will almost certainly favour their own university.

There are universities to suit every taste; it is simply a question of deciding upon yours.

The Russell Group of Universities (20)

Birmingham	Bristol	Queen’s Belfast
Cambridge	Cardiff	Oxford
Edinburgh	Glasgow	Southampton
Imperial College London	King’s College London	Sheffield
Leeds	Liverpool	University College London
LSE	Manchester	Warwick
Newcastle	Nottingham	

The 1994 Group of Universities (18)

Bath	Birkbeck, London	Reading
Durham	East Anglia	St. Andrew’s
Essex	Exeter	SOAS
Goldsmiths, London	Royal Holloway, London	Surrey
Lancaster	Leicester	Sussex
Loughborough	Queen Mary, London	York

MONMOUTH SCHOOL HIGHER EDUCATION & CAREERS RESOURCES

Tutors, Housemasters, Heads of Department and your subject teachers are all willing to give you support with your application to university. In addition, the following members of staff specialise in some specific areas.

Mr H.F. Tatham	Head of Sixth Form	Oxbridge Applications Post A Level support UCAS Applications
Mr G. Dunn	Head of Careers & Work Experience Co-ordinator	Careers Briefings Work Experience
Mrs S.M. Wilson	Careers & HE Co-ordinator	Law Courses USA & Hong Kong Applications UCAS Applications
Mr D.C. Adams	Armed Forces Liaison	
Miss E.K.Barson	Head of Biology	Medicine, Dentistry & Veterinary Science
Dr K.A.Moseley	Head of Physics	Engineering

The Careers Library contains information on more than 160 universities and colleges as well as books and materials on how to choose a course and a university. It has information on student life, student finance and graduate opportunities.

The Careers Library is open every day from 8.30 until 5pm and you can drop by any time to use the resources. Mrs Wilson is in the Careers Office three days a week (days and times are on the door). At other times, should you need help or advice, you can email her at sm.wilson@monmouthschool.org During the UCAS Days you will have a further opportunity to familiarise yourself with some of the resources referred to in this guide.

UCAS: UNIVESRITIES & COLLEGES ADMISSIONS SERVICE

Overview

UCAS is the organisation responsible for managing applications to higher education courses in the United Kingdom. It is an independent charity working for students and universities and last year helped over 600 000 applicants apply to university and college. It aims to make the path to higher education as simple as possible and provides a wealth of information and advice at each stage of the process. It has an excellent website www.ucas.com including a section for parents, where you are guaranteed to find answers to most of your questions.

Once UCAS receives your application it then sends a copy to each of your chosen universities. None of the universities will know to which other institutions you have applied.

How quickly you receive a decision from the university will depend upon where and also when you applied. Timings can vary enormously, but once a university has made its decision it sends this to UCAS who will then notify you by email. You can use **Track** at www.ucas.com to find out the latest position on your choices.

Once you have received all of your decisions, UCAS will write to you explaining how to respond to the offers and informing you of the final date by which you must reply to offers. **You should not reply to offers until you have received all decisions and have attended any visits to which you have been invited, although the deadline given will not be negotiable!**

You will be able to hold **two** offers; one **firm** acceptance and one **insurance** acceptance. Because only two places can be kept, choosing which places to keep as firm and insurance can be difficult. This makes the initial selection of courses even more important. You must be realistic and your Tutor and subject teachers will be as honest and helpful as possible when giving advice about predicted grades, and helping in course selection. It is worth talking to your subject teachers about your predicted upper and lower grades after the AS exams or in the light of module results.

Do not expect to be given an offer just because your predicted grades are high enough. It is very difficult to obtain offers for some courses such as Medicine and English, and at some universities, such as Warwick, Bristol, Edinburgh and Durham.

Apply

University applications are made electronically through **Apply** on the UCAS website and can be completed over a number of sessions as the data is simply saved as it is entered. The system will tell you if you have made a mistake and it will also tell you if a section is incomplete. Drop down menus provide information which makes it easy and quick. The most common pitfall is forgetting your username, password or buzzword.

During the UCAS Days, at the end of the Summer Term, you will be given more information about the application process but briefly, the following steps will be involved:

1. Register and log in to Apply. **You must remember your username, password and buzzword or you will not be able to access your form the next time you log in.**
2. Complete your Application.

3. Print your Application and take a hard copy to your Tutor for checking.
4. Check and amend, with Tutor's guidance, then submit your Application to your referee. At this stage you cannot make further changes, so if you find you have made a mistake or want to make further changes, you must contact Mrs Wilson. If she is not in the Careers Office you can email her at sm.wilson@monmouthschool.org and ask to have your Application returned to you to make some changes.
5. Once all necessary changes have been made, the School reference will be added to your Application. This will have been written by your Tutor and is read to you by Mr Tatham before being sent to the Headmaster for approval. Once approved, it is added to your Application.
6. Your Application is sent by the School to UCAS and the UCAS Fee will be added to your School bill. UCAS then corresponds directly with you.

Track

This service allows you to check on the progress of your Application at any time. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and you can get details of decisions made and offers received. You also use Track to accept or decline offers.

Extra

If you find yourself without any offers you do not have to wait until Clearing is available in August, as Extra allows you to apply for further courses and universities. You should use the Course Search facility on the UCAS website to find out whether the course you are interested in has vacancies in Extra. If there are vacancies they will be marked with an "X". You can apply for several courses through Extra but only one at a time. Extra is available from late February until the end of June.

Adjustment Period

If you find yourself with better than expected grades on results day, the Adjustment Period allows you to look for places on courses with higher entry requirements than those for which you originally applied. You must register with UCAS for Adjustment and during the period you will not lose the offers that you are holding.

We have not had the benefit of seeing Adjustment work in practice for very long, however a number of things have become clear since its introduction. Availability of places during the Adjustment Period will depend upon the number of applicants and whether or not the university's policy is to hold back places. You are highly unlikely to find a place on a competitive course such as Medicine, Law or English at any of the top universities, as they simply have no need to hold places in reserve.

Clearing

If you do not get the grades you hope for and do not get a confirmed place then you still have the option of finding another course through Clearing. Each year Clearing helps thousands of students find courses and universities. You can only go into Clearing if:

- You have received no offers;
- You have not met the conditions of your two offers; or
- You have declined all your offers.

You cannot go into Clearing if you have already accepted an offer and have fulfilled the required conditions.

Lists of courses in Clearing are put onto the UCAS website around mid- August, so check for ones that interest you, research the location and content of the course and then contact the institution to ask if it will accept you. Be sure to have your Clearing number to hand when you contact them and remember that Admissions Tutors will want to speak to you personally, not to your parents or teachers. A few further tips:

- If possible, don't be away on holiday when the results come out – you need to be able to deal with Clearing and talk to universities.
- Don't panic and apply for any course that will accept you – you could soon regret this and it will not always be easy to rectify.
- Don't be impetuous in accepting an offer – ask for a day to consider if you are not sure.

UCAS has a dedicated Higher Education Customer Service Team which take enquiries from pupils. You can contact them on 0844 984 1111 or at hei_team@ucas.ac.uk

The UCAS Tariff

The Tariff is a points system which reports achievement for entry to university. It gives a numerical value to qualifications and establishes agreed equivalences between different types of qualifications, such as the International Baccalaureate and Scottish Highers.

The table below shows the main section of the Tariff which contains the qualifications most relevant to you. For a complete copy and explanation of the Tariff go to www.ucas.com/candq/tariff/index.

Points	GCE AS Level	GCE A Level	Points
140		A*	140
120		A	120
110			110
100		B	100
90			90
80		C	80
70			70
60	A	D	60
50	B		50
40	C	E	40
30	D		30
20	E		20

Universities may use the UCAS Tariff System as well as academic grades to measure achievement for entry levels. Some use either one or the other and some use a combination of both.

Some things to remember about the tariff:

- Points can be aggregated from different qualifications, e.g. GCE A Level and AS Level results.
- There is no limit to the number of points which can be accumulated, but you must remember not to double count exams in the same subject. So, points for Advanced Subsidiary (AS) qualifications cannot be included if you have been assessed in the same subject at A Level.
- Other qualifications (such as Key Skills and Instrumental Music exams) can accumulate points towards the final total.
- The A* grade at A Level attracts 140 points.

MAKING A SUCCESSFUL UCAS APPLICATION

Whether or not your Application is successful will depend upon a number of factors, not least the strength of the competition for places, something over which you have no control. However, there are a number of things which are within your control and it is on these areas that you should be concentrating in the coming months.

1. Completing the UCAS Form

You do have control over your own Application and the information that you put in it, so ensure that there are no mistakes in substance or in form. Your Application is your “sales brochure,” your opportunity to convince the Admissions Tutors that you are the person to whom they must offer the place. In many cases the Application is all that they will base their decision upon. Know what information is required on the form, and do the research necessary to find this information.

Remember the deadlines: particularly if you are applying for Oxford, Cambridge and Medicine (including Dentistry and Veterinary Science).

Deadlines:

- For Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science/Medicine and all courses at Oxford or Cambridge: **15th October**
- For everyone else (except some Art and Design courses): **15th January**
- For remaining Art and Design courses: **24th March**

Universities differ in the way they process applications. Most institutions make a certain number of offers as they receive the applications, but a few others wait until after the January deadline has passed before considering any of them. Most universities however use a combination of both methods. **Therefore it will put you at a significant advantage if you submit your application early.** Universities want to be convinced that you are really interested and committed to study their course and you may not be able to persuade them of this if you haven't got around to applying until 14th January. With this in mind, **the School sets an internal deadline of the end of the Michaelmas half-term for all applications to be complete and passed on to Tutors.** Failure to meet this deadline may well put you at a disadvantage to other applicants.

The following notes on some sections of the Application may help:

1. Personal Details: If you are a Boarder you are advised to use your home address as your correspondence address. If you choose to use the boarding house address, then be sure to inform UCAS of your address for July to October as they will be sending your final letter confirming your place and it is vital that you receive this. There is a section for Nominated Access which allows you to appoint someone to act for you if you are away, such as a parent. You will also need to select the Student Fee Code and for most of you this will be 02 as you will be applying for student finance.
2. Additional Information: You include here activities in preparation for Higher Education, such as summer schools, saturday university, taster courses and booster courses.

3. Choices: You have five choices unless your Application is for medical courses, in which case you can make four applications for medicine plus one for a related course. Be very careful to enter course information correctly or you may find yourself applying for the wrong course. If an admissions test is needed for a particular course, a message will appear to advise you.
4. Education: You enter the schools you have attended and the qualifications you have gained. You will need your GCSE exam certificates to fill out this section and must include passes and failures. It is essential that the details in this section are correct. You must list AS exams that you have taken as “pending” as these have not yet been certificated. Your A2s are also “pending” as these have still to be taken. If you have done well in your AS exams it would be beneficial to include any high module scores, so speak to your Tutor to ensure that these are included in your reference.
5. Employment: This is paid full-time or part-time employment but not voluntary work. If you have not had any paid work experience leave the section blank but you will have to mark it as complete.
6. Personal Statement: See below.
7. Reference: Your reference will be drafted by your Tutor with information from other members of staff who teach you or with whom you do extra-curricular activities. Your Tutor may ask you to provide other relevant background information, including a copy of the course Entry Profile.

2. The Personal Statement

Recognise that the Personal Statement is taken very seriously by Admissions Tutors. On most competitive courses you will be competing with candidates with equally impressive grades, predicted grades and glowing references, so your Personal Statement is what makes you an individual and helps you stand out from the crowd. Give yourself plenty of time to write it. It is impossible to provide a definitive formula for success, but here are a few important things to remember, both about form and content, as you begin your draft.

1. **Plan it.** Your Personal Statement should be approximately 70% focused on academic issues and, if you are applying to Oxford or Cambridge, it must be almost entirely focused on academic issues. You might find the following structure helpful, but whichever structure you chose, keep it simple.

Academic – 70% (90% Oxbridge)

What I want to study.

Why I want to study it. Include here motivation, understanding and desire to study this subject. Why I became interested.

How my current studies contributed to or influenced my choice.

Over and Above the A Level Syllabus, what else have I done, which demonstrates my interest in this subject. What have I read/watched/visited/taken part in? Any Work Experience?

Extra Curricular – 30% (10% Oxbridge)

Interests – Not only what they are, but how they have taught me other transferrable skills such as time management, compassion for others and the ability to work as part of a team.

2. **Use your own words.** You can find many examples of Personal Statements in books and on websites, but be extremely careful not to use others' examples. UCAS subjects all applications to a test for plagiarism, so if yours has been copied from somewhere, it will be spotted. In such a case, UCAS will inform the universities to which you have applied and it will be up to them to decide upon how to treat your application: it is unlikely to be favourably however!
3. **Read the Entry Profile for your chosen course.** You will find this on the UCAS website next to the course name, indicated by "EP". This is a description of the course, what it entails and what qualities and attributes you are expected to have to be suitable for this course. Refer to these attributes wherever possible and be sure to give a copy to your Tutor who will be writing your reference.
4. **Explain what subject and why you want to study it.** This may only take a few sentences, but careful thought and informed research is essential. This is particularly the case if you are applying for a subject that you have not studied at school. Watching CSI does not necessarily make you a strong candidate for Forensic Science. However, explaining that your studies in Biology and Chemistry have inspired you to want to use scientific tools to unlock questions of identity just might.

Explain how your current studies have influenced your choice and wherever possible, show how you have been motivated to find out more about the subject. You may have done this by going on Taster Days or Courses, reading books on the subject, attending lectures or working in certain places. If you have future career plans you may like to mention those.

5. **Extra curricular.** Some universities place greater emphasis than others on extra-curricular interests. However, in all cases, try to show how your interests have helped you develop other skills, such as time management, working as part of a team or commitment and caring for others. Try to convince them that you can offer the range of skills and experience that they are looking for, that you will thrive at university and that you will stay the course. Alongside your academic abilities you are a well-rounded individual, who will make the best of the opportunities that university has to offer.
6. **Be honest and natural.** Your Personal Statement is evidence of your writing style so make sure that it reads well. Avoid pompous language, and don't use "etc" – either say what these other things are, if they are worth mentioning, or leave them out altogether. Avoid repetition, waffle and clichés. As for humour, the general rule is that you should avoid it. Humour and quirkiness can sometimes be effective but it can be difficult to know where to draw the line and you may just come across as flippant. Admissions Tutors want to identify individuals, but they don't want to get the impression that you are not taking your application seriously.
7. **Sell yourself.** Be sure to mention notable high points or achievements, such as awards you have won (Maths Challenge/Olympiads) or events you have taken part in. If you can demonstrate how your achievements have made you a better

person, you will show the reader not just what you have done, but what you have learnt from the experience. Sell yourself but do not make claims about things you have not done, or refer to books that you have not read. This will only come back to haunt you.

8. **Check spelling and proof read.** Your spelling and grammar must be correct and you should not rely on spell check to do this for you. Proof reading for sense is also necessary.
9. **Seek Advice** but don't feel that you have to act on all of it. At the end of the day, it is your Personal Statement and you have to be happy with it. Imagine you are an Admissions Tutor and have just read 25 Personal Statements. Would yours stand out from the crowd?

3. What is the Admissions Tutor looking for?

Admissions Tutors are trying to assess your suitability for the course as well as looking for an indication that, were you to be offered a place, you would take it up. They have regard to:

1. **Academic achievement:** - GCSE and AS level results. They will look at the range of subjects studied and the length of time taken to obtain GCSE passes. For some highly competitive courses a minimum GCSE hurdle may be set for admission e.g. in Medicine this tends to be six or more A* grades at GCSE.
2. **Current academic progress:** - as indicated by your AS level results and predicted A2 grades. Your performance at AS levels is therefore becoming more and more important. At present, Cambridge is the only university which asks for this as part of the application process, but other universities have been known to request details of AS scores.
3. **Interest in the subject:** this is very important. Your academic motivation, an awareness of what the course entails as well as an indication that you will make a success of a degree course (new pattern of work and teaching methods).
4. **Personal qualities:** - powers of expression, independence of thought, industry, determination, sense of responsibility, realistic assessment of your own abilities, sense of purpose and an ability to meet deadlines; Would you be interesting and rewarding to teach?
5. **Interests:** - as presented by you in your Personal Statement. A good entry that is convincing can assist a borderline candidate. Don't just list everything that you do, but try to demonstrate what it has taught you.

Apply early - more and more universities are making early decisions and it is more difficult to receive an offer once the university has reached its quota. This is particularly true for applicants in Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, Law, Media Studies, English and History.

Do not assume that high grade offers are an indication of a good course. They might or might not be. In fact, they represent a course or university's popularity. Such popularity

is not always based solely on academic merit, so do not be easily misled by the reputation of a course or university.

Ensure your Application is realistic – Only apply to universities where you have a realistic chance of acceptance. The higher the offers a department is making, the more popular the course, and the greater the chances of rejection. The weaker you are as a candidate, the less you can afford wasted applications. Some pupils find themselves in Clearing in August because they made unrealistic choices so, if you are doubtful about getting the required grades, you may prefer to apply after your A Level results. With the right approach, this can prove to be a profitable strategy, and we give as much support to Old Monmothians, as you would then be, as we do to current sixth form students.

Your final five choices should be for the same subject or for closely related subjects. A mixture suggests uncertainty and makes your Personal Statement difficult (even impossible) to write.

Include a spread of institutions that are likely to make a range of grade offers. It may be unwise to list five highly prestigious universities as even very strong candidates have been on the receiving end of a good number of rejections in such circumstances. Grade offers should ideally reflect the grades which you are most likely to get, but also could get on a good or bad day. This is equally true for moderate candidates who should consider some of the newer universities which might represent a more realistic target, and might well have courses that are better suited. This is recommended for anyone who cannot be confident of securing a minimum of BBC at A Level, and especially for candidates applying for particularly popular subjects.

Ensure that you are qualified to make an application. Check that you have the correct GCSEs at the required grades and that you are taking the correct AS and A2 courses. If you are not a UK citizen you may not be eligible for certain government funded NHS courses.

Your Personal Statement is crucial, so give it plenty of time and effort.

HOW OFFERS ARE DETERMINED

Universities are legally bound to accept all candidates who have accepted a conditional offer and have achieved the required grades. This means that all universities have a student entry target for the following October, and tutors will want to meet that target by recruiting the best students they can find. They are not permitted to overshoot the target, but at the same time they must avoid undershooting, for a low student intake places a department's future in jeopardy. Tutors, like students, therefore face uncertainties in determining their admissions policy. They might make offers to students who decide eventually to go elsewhere and many students might not achieve the conditional grades set in their offer. Most departments therefore make a compromise between two approaches:

1. Having a standard A Level or points offer and making it to a large number of candidates - A Level examinations then do most of the selection for them. Although most universities will still make their offers on A Level predicted grades, they will have looked very carefully at your GCSE and AS results since these are the clearest indicators available of your ability. If the number of candidates increases, then the grades are raised (sometimes above the typical offer listed in the prospectus) so that the number of qualifiers falls. Hence a standard offer represents an assessment of the current strength of the market, and is based on past experience of the popularity of the course, the university's position in the market, and how many students are likely to accept an offer at that level; and
2. Selection mainly through interviews and school references, with lower grade offers made to a smaller number of preferred but good quality candidates. However the offer may be stiffer if there are nagging doubts about a candidate's motivation. On some occasions a low offer might simply reflect a shortage of applicants.

Universities differ on the use of the A* Grade in making offers. Cambridge University's standard offer is A* AA. The A* can be in any of the three subjects, although in some cases a subject may be specified. Other universities using the A* include Bristol, Imperial College London, University College London, London School of Economics and Warwick. Oxford has also now adopted use of the A* Grade for offers in certain subjects.

University departments also differ in their attitude towards a Gap Year. Some may be unable or unwilling to commit a place a year in advance. Others may positively welcome an application from a candidate who intends to use the year profitably, and can demonstrate what he can gain from it. Generally, Maths tutors are the least keen on Gap Years because your skills may well become rusty. Clearly, working in the City for a year prior to an Economics degree, or travelling in South America prior to reading Spanish, for example, would be regarded as highly beneficial. Read each Prospectus carefully and you should always write or telephone the Department and ask about their attitude to a Gap Year.

It is therefore essential that you should know something about selection policy, both in general terms and for particular universities and departments. In order to be eligible for an offer, you must first ensure that you are qualified.

RESPONDING TO OFFERS FROM UCAS

Once you have received all your decisions from the universities, UCAS will send you a 'Replying to Offers' letter giving you a deadline by which to make your replies. This date is likely to be at the beginning of May but can be different for different people. This is because it is based on when you received your last decision from your chosen universities.

You must consider your replies carefully since these commitments are binding. You cannot just change your mind when the results come out in August. If you do later decide that you have made the wrong choices, you will need to withdraw your Application and start again next year.

Official decisions will be sent to you by UCAS and verbal and written offers from the institutions are not confirmed until they come through UCAS. You may have to be patient while institutions reach their decisions, although you can contact the universities to ask when you might hear from them.

You may well receive offers without interviews but you will almost certainly be invited to an Open Day soon after. Do your best to attend these, certainly the ones you are most serious about, before making your final decision. You should certainly not commit to a place without having visited it!

Your offer will almost certainly be conditional upon your A2 and AS results. Offers are likely to be stated either as a grades requirement or as a points score on the UCAS tariff. If you have any doubts at this stage, it is crucial that you seek advice from your tutor before committing yourself.

- You will be asked to log on to Track to accept or decline the offers. You can hold two offers, one being your firm acceptance, the other being your insurance acceptance, or you can just hold one firm offer. If you hold one firm unconditional offer, you are committing yourself to that course.
- A **firm acceptance** means that this is your first preference of all the offers you have received. It is the course you want to study at the university of your choice. Assuming you meet the offer's conditions, this is the course and institution which you will attend.
- An **insurance acceptance** should normally be at lower grades or points than your firm acceptance, although it may occasionally be the same. Remember that if you don't get into your firm choice but satisfy the conditions of your insurance place, then you are committed to going to your insurance choice. You cannot then choose to enter Clearing. So it's important to think very carefully about your insurance acceptance – will you be happy to go there after the disappointment of not getting into your firm choice?
- If you did not use all five choices on your initial application then it is possible to add later – as long as you have not already replied to all offers received.

If you find yourself without an offer, or if you decline all the offers you receive, you can make further choices (one at a time) through Extra.

PROSPECTUSES, OPEN DAYS & VISITS

The Careers Library has current prospectuses for over 160 universities and colleges for you to consult during school time and you should send away for your own copies to keep at home. Bear in mind however that university prospectuses are usually glossy exercises in marketing, and their range, quality and accuracy can be variable. Some of the claims may be hard to square with the realities revealed by a visit. Alternative guides produced by students are usually readable and informative, but also uneven and highly subjective. You should read both types of guide with the above in mind and remember that the most effective way of finding out about a university is to go and visit.

Attending open days, says Ashar Ehsan, who organises them for the University of Bradford, is “absolutely crucial.” If you don’t go, you won’t know what you are getting yourself into until you show up, toothbrush in wash bag, to start your new course.

“Open Days are an opportunity for prospective students to compare environments, have one-to-one contact with tutors, and meet existing students”, says Ehsan. The insight gained from these first-year students, he says, is invaluable. “Current students are able to offer honest and practical advice.”

Swansea University graduate Ceri Jones agrees, “The girl who showed me round one university complained that the washing machines were located right over the other side of the campus”. That wouldn’t have been something she’d have thought to ask about, she says, “but it did help me get my head around the idea that I would actually be living there and the kind of practical issues that crop up.”

And tours, says Ehsan, are a must-do “especially if the university or college is based on more than one site”. This is where you’ll see what accommodation, if any, is offered to first-years, which will usually be halls of residence and/or student flats. At some institutions, these are quite swish, with en-suite bathrooms and internet connection. Others are less impressive, with shared bathrooms and fairly basic facilities. You generally get what you pay for, although that is relative to the area. Weigh up the costs with the facilities and location, but most crucial of all is the feeling you get when you arrive – do you want to live here? Your Open Day tour will help you decide better than any prospectus.

But, says Ceri, be careful about who accompanies you on your Open Day. “The first one I went to, I turned up with my best mate”, she says. “We had fun, but afterwards, I realised how much of my view of the campus had been coloured by hers. After that, I went to one on my own, and then to another with my Dad. Although I was dreading this, it was the most useful day – he knows me better than anyone and really helped me to get the most out of it.”

To make the most of an Open Day, arrive with a checklist. You need to see the accommodation, your course premises and facilities, learning resources (including the library and computer rooms), the students’ union and what it offers, and the nearby town or city. Don’t board your train home until you’ve ticked everything on your checklist.

APTITUDE & PRE-INTEVIEW TESTS

Some of the more competitive courses, such as Medicine and Law, as well as many courses at Oxford and Cambridge, require you to sit tests as part of the selection process. If a test is required the UCAS site will alert you to this fact when you enter the course details in your Application. However, if registration is required, you are responsible for this. The test centre may be Monmouth School (in some cases) or may be somewhere close to your home. Failure to sit a test is likely to render your application unsuccessful.

The Bio Medical Admissions Test (BMAT)

The BMAT is a subject-specific admissions test taken by applicants to certain Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and related courses at the institutions listed below. The two hour test is taken in School in early November and is divided into three sections: a 60-minute Aptitude and Skills multiple-choice section; a 30-minute Scientific Knowledge and Application multiple-choice section, and a 30-minute writing task. Specimen papers can be obtained from the BMAT website: www.bmat.org.uk. You must register to sit the test by 30th September, although late registrations are accepted until 15th October, subject to a late charge. The BMAT is required by:

University of Cambridge
Imperial College London
University of Oxford
Royal Veterinary College
University College London

Note that universities use the test results in different ways and favour certain sections of the test over others. For example Oxford favours Sections 1 and 2 believing them to be better indicators of future performance than Section 3. It uses the scores from these two sections along with your GCSE results to pre-select for interview. It would be worth your while finding out how your chosen medical schools will use your BMAT result.

The UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT)

This test is not subject specific and is used by a number of Medical and Dental schools to identify mental abilities and attitudes which they consider to be important for doctors and dentists. It does not contain any curriculum or science content that can be revised for, but focuses on exploring cognitive powers and other attributes which are considered to be valuable.

The test includes sections on Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning, Abstract Reasoning and Decision Analysis and Non-cognitive Analysis. Unlike the BMAT, this test is taken before you apply to UCAS with registration beginning in May and the final test date being 8th October. For further details on how to register, find your nearest test centre and for practice papers, consult the website: www.ukcat.ac.uk. The following institutions require the UKCAT:

University of Aberdeen
Brighton & Sussex Medical School
Barts and London School of Medicine & Dentistry
Cardiff University
University of Dundee
University of Durham
University of East Anglia
University of Edinburgh
University of Glasgow
Hull York Medical School

King's College London
University of Leeds
University of Leicester
University of Manchester
University of Newcastle
University of Nottingham
Peninsula Medical School
Queen's University Belfast
University of Sheffield
University of Southampton

Keele University

University of St Andrews
St George's University of
London

You should confirm your interest in either medical test with Miss Barson as early as possible.

National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT)

This test is required by nine universities and is designed to assist in the selection from among hundreds of able candidates for law. It does not require knowledge of the law or of any other subject, other than the English language. Part one (95 minutes) contains 42 multiple-choice questions. This will test understanding, powers of analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction. Part two (40 minutes) requires you to write an essay in around 500 – 600 words, arguing a position on an everyday subject and exhibiting a good command of the English language. From 2011, the essay section of the paper will be marked by the assessment centre, and a copy sent to the law faculties to which you have applied. Sample questions and further guidance can be found at www.lnat.ac.uk.

For 2012 the LNAT is required by the following universities however each year this list changes, so please check the website:

The University of Birmingham
University of Bristol
Durham University
University of Glasgow
University of Manchester

King's College London
University of Nottingham
University of Oxford
University College London

Registration is usually from the 1st August and testing begins in early September. If you are applying to Oxford you must register for the test before the October 15th deadline and sit the test by 1st November. Please be sure to check these dates once the website has been updated for 2011 entry.

Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)

This test is now used by Oxford, Cambridge and UCL and tests critical thinking and problem solving skills. It does not require knowledge of any specific subject but practice papers can be downloaded from the website www.cam.ac.uk/admissions

Oxford uses the test to pre-select for interview purposes and must be taken by anyone wishing to study Economics and Management or Philosophy, Politics and Economics.

Cambridge does not use it as a pre-selection tool but as part of the interview process. Some Cambridge Colleges use it to assess applicants for Computer Science, Economics, Engineering, Land Economy, Natural Sciences and Social and Political Sciences. Therefore you should check with the Colleges themselves whether the test will be required for your chosen subject. It is taken while you are in Cambridge for your interview and results are used as part of the final selection process.

It is used by UCL for anyone wishing to study European Social and Political Studies and, like Cambridge, is taken during the interview process.

Oxford:

At present, around 70% of applicants to Oxford are required to sit an admissions test in advance of short-listing for interviews. In addition to the tests for Law and Medicine mentioned above, if you are applying to study **History** (or any combination involving History) **Physics, Physics and Philosophy, English Language and Literature,**

English and Modern Languages, Mathematics (or Mathematics with Computer Science, Philosophy or Statistics) or Computer Science you will be required to sit an aptitude test in these subjects. With the exception of the Aptitude Test for English (ELAT), for which you have to register by 15th October on the website www.elat.org.uk, you are automatically registered on completion of your UCAS Application with the UCAS school code. The above mentioned tests are taken at the beginning of November in school.

If you are applying to study **Philosophy, Politics and Economics or Economics and Management** you will have to sit the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) referred to above. You must register on the website www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk by 15th October and the test is taken at the beginning of November in school.

You may also be asked to submit written work if applying for certain courses. Up-to-date information on tests can be found at www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/apply

Cambridge:

Although Cambridge Colleges work together to ensure that their assessment methods are broadly similar, each College has its own assessment methods so it would be wise to check with the Colleges themselves about the requirements for your particular subject. The Cambridge website contains details of the subjects in the different colleges that will require additional tests. www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/tests All of the tests referred to are based on knowledge that you will have acquired in your GCSEs or A Levels and/or assess your own problem-solving ability. The TSA, mentioned above may be used but you will be asked to sit this when you attend for interview. You may also be asked to send examples of some school written work.

Sixth Term Examination Papers in Mathematics (STEP)

STEP Mathematics is a post-interview test used in addition to your examination grades to assess your aptitude for the study of Mathematics at university. Cambridge Colleges use STEP as part of almost all conditional offers they make in Mathematics and some Colleges also require the test for other subjects such as Engineering, Natural Science and Computer Science.² The test consists of three papers which are based on material that is common to the core of A Level Mathematics (and therefore requires no further knowledge). The questions are designed to test qualities like insight, originality, grasp of broader issues and the ability to use standard techniques in unusual ways and situations.

Your application to take this test should be made through the school and you should speak to Mr. Vaughan-Smith about how to register. It takes place immediately after A2 examinations. The test is administered by Cambridge Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge, see www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk for further details.

Cambridge Law Test

For entry to law at Cambridge, the University has its own law test, which is designed to assess your potential for a law course. It is used alongside your exam results, the other information on your UCAS form and your performance at interview, to assist admissions tutors in making selection decisions. The test lasts for one hour and no prior knowledge of the law is necessary. See www.law.cam.ac.uk for further information and specimen papers.

² The University of Warwick also includes STEP in its undergraduate Mathematics offers; the University of Bristol, the University of Oxford and Imperial College London all encourage applicants to take the papers.

PREPARING FOR AND SURVIVING THE INTERVIEW

The number of applications to universities has increased so much in recent years that most university departments simply cannot interview all, or even many of their applicants. However, Oxford and Cambridge will not make offers without an interview, nor will Medical or Veterinary Schools, and you may also be called for interview by some of the more prestigious universities particularly if you are applying for a competitive course.

With this in mind, here are a few things to think about as you prepare, and some tips for how to survive on the day. Coming across well in an interview is a practised art, one which you cannot possibly have perfected at this stage in your career, so bear in mind that the interviewer is not looking for a performance from an experienced professional. In fact, if you come across as over coached and too confident, it may be to your detriment. Remember that an interviewer is trying to find out whether you are suitable for the course and whether you would be rewarding to teach..

1. Be well prepared.

Like many things in life, success at interview depends upon preparation and practice. Check the Prospectus and the university website to see what advice is given about interviews. In the case of Oxford and Cambridge, there is a huge amount of useful information available.

Re-read your Personal Statement and try to anticipate some of the questions that you might be asked. One of the aims of the interview is to assess your suitability for the course, so be sure to have an answer to the question, why did you apply for the course? If you have thought about this seriously then it should be clear to the interviewer that you are genuinely interested and why. This is particularly important if it is not one of the subjects that you have been studying at school.

If you are applying for Medicine or Veterinary Science, there is a quite a lot of literature available to assist you. Trotman's Getting into Medical School & Getting into Veterinary School have sections on typical questions, mock interviews, presentation and general advice. Aside from the types of questions, the advice is sound for all types of interview. You can find lists of typical interview questions at www.medical-interviews.co.uk.

You may be asked about your Sixth Form Studies, which subjects you enjoy and why. Interviews for Oxbridge may include questions about your AS and A2 subjects as well as the questions you answered or failed to answer in your Pre-Interview or Aptitude Test.

You should be knowledgeable about Current Affairs, both in the UK and elsewhere, so make sure that you read a quality broadsheet newspaper twice a week. If you are applying for Medicine make sure you know about any recent medical breakthrough/research and its implications. If you are applying for Law, look at the Court Reports in the Times and find out if there have been any recent interesting cases. You do not need to have a knowledge of the law, but you should know something about (and have a view on) justice and the legal system. Interviewers however are not so much interested in what you know, as in how you think.

You may be asked about career ideas (however vague) that you are developing, any literary or artistic ambitions, academic ambitions (i.e. what area within the subject applied for interests you in particular?) What non-academic interests do you have? This will only form a small part of most interviews as almost all focus on academic issues.

2. Be well turned out and on time.

Check the time and place of your interview and plan your journey in advance. Get hold of a map or directions before you leave so that you are not late. You should aim to arrive at least 10 minutes before the interview is due to start. This will give you the chance to calm your nerves and an opportunity to form an impression of your surroundings and the people there.

Dress smartly but comfortably and make sure that your hair and hands/nails are clean. First impressions matter, so enter the interview room confidently and smile. Be ready to shake hands firmly and make eye contact. Say something like 'good morning' to take the opportunity to get your voice working. Be careful not to overdo it though and do not try to take control of the proceedings.

Experts say that 60% of communication is through the body and only 40% through speech so try to be aware of your body language. Try to sit in a relaxed, but more or less upright position. It is worth practising (before a mirror or a friend) what posture feels most comfortable to you without appearing too casual. Once you are settled, don't fidget.

3. Answer questions clearly and honestly.

There are usually some easy questions to begin which are to help put you at your ease, so try to use this time to relax a little. Give your answers slowly and surely at first to get your voice working clearly. Here are a few tips to help, and read Chapter 14 which contains Interview Reports written by your predecessors.

- Be enthusiastic and motivated about your choice of subject.
- Speak simply and directly; don't try to be cynical, flippant or funny.
- Don't be afraid to pause to think before answering.
- Don't be afraid of a silence or try to fill it with 'um' or 'er'.
- Don't use the word "like" except if you really do mean you like something.
- If you don't know the answer, say so. It will soon become apparent anyway.
- When answering, look straight at the person who has posed the question;
- Don't be put off if the interviewer suggests that you have contradicted something you said earlier, admit it and try to clarify what you do think.
- Be flexible in your thinking, and take account of alternative viewpoints.
- Be polite and enthusiastic but not ingratiating; be relaxed but not arrogant.
- If asked about what interests you, choose something that you really can talk about. This is where your preparation comes in.
- Ask questions if you are given the chance at the end. Have something prepared - about the course, the accommodation, the sort of teaching but don't give the impression you haven't done your research.
- Be enthusiastic and know your stuff!

Personal qualities are just as important as your academic abilities and how you come across in an interview will depend quite considerably on how confident you feel. You will feel more confident if you have prepared for the interview. Of course you cannot be prepared for everything and there will be questions that take you by surprise, but these will end up being a small part of the interview if you have prepared well. We arrange practice interviews for Oxbridge candidates and Medical applicants during the Michaelmas Term and Mr Tatham will always be happy to organise practice interviews for other applications.

INTERVIEWS 2007-2009

The following feedback was given by members of VI.2 who went for interviews for entry to universities in recent years

Chemistry

Oriel College & St Peter's College

Oxford: I had 3 interviews, two at my preferred college on the first day and then one the next day at another college. Each interview lasted around half an hour. The first interview involved the interviewer asking me what I wanted to talk about. He then quickly moved it on to something I hadn't seen before and wanted me to think my way through it logically much like a tutorial would be. The second and third interviews were more syllabus based.

I was interviewed by two people for each interview.

Asked about alcohols, benzene structure, ionisation energies, amino acids and my maths was also tested.

I was given a sheet on arrival to the college which was for the second interview and it had ten topics on. It said to choose one I was comfortable with to discuss at the start of the interview. The topics were AS/A level based. The idea was then progressed during the interview.

My first interviewer wasn't very nice and was uncomfortable. Others were really nice. Don't worry if you think it didn't go very well and don't read too much in to whether you are pooled! I was pooled on the second day but was accepted by my first choice college. *Ed McCord 2009*

Classics

Jesus College, St Hilda's College & LMH Oxford:

Jesus 1 – Interviewed by 2 men, one a tutor of Classical Literature and the other of Philosophy; was given a sheet consisting of 4 quotations from various ancient sources, asked to comment. Also discussed Aristophanes and test I had sat the previous day.

Jesus 2 – interviewed by 2 women, one a tutor of Ancient History and the other studying for a doctorate at Oxford, probably an Ancient History or Classics course; I was invited to choose a topic to discuss, I chose Thucydides and Tacitus. Also presented with some old oil-lamps, asked to how they might be made/dating/use.

St Hilda's – 2 women and a man ; given 20 minutes before a passage of Greek (Hesiod) with Eng translation, then discussed narrative techniques. Also interviewed on one author I had included in my personal statement (Horace).

LMH – 3 men and a woman. Given an interview sheet with list of various 'arguments' – asked to determine whether they were 'valid' or not. Led by tutor of Philosophy but also talked a little about Horace and his political status. Different things explored from interview at St Hilda's.

Generally things orientated around either a passage with which I was provided or relating to areas discussing on my personal statement. No howlers but in all 4 interviews I found myself being pushed – often expanding from the specific example to broader aspects (for instance, beginning with Thucydides as a historian and expanding to questioning the relationship between truth and rhetoric; also Horace as a lyric poet broadening to intrinsic differences between lyric and epic poetry).

Jonathan Griffiths 2009

Swansea: An informal interview: interviewees called to Swansea for small Open Day before being separated for interview in specific rooms. I was interviewed by one person, Dr Ian Repath and did not prepare anything – nor did it appear that my Personal Statement had been read. We then discussed the Epic Poetry set texts I did for AS Level. Questions included: "what texts have you read as part of your A Level Latin and Greek Courses? What did you especially like about these texts? Which was your

favourite? You mentioned the similarities between Homer and Vergil – how similar did you find them overall? Do you personally think the Aeneid was written as a piece of Augustan propaganda? Do you have any questions about the department or degree scheme at all?”

No problems to solve before or during the interview other than my name, as ever. Very friendly and welcoming department. *Ben Morse 2008*

Jesus College Oxford

My first interview at Jesus College was with the College's Classics and Philosophy tutors. I was given a sheet of paper five minutes beforehand with four 'one-liners' from classical times, from different sources. I was asked to speak about anything that I found interesting, and the basis of the entire interview came from this sheet. I entered into a philosophical debate about whether someone can have too much of any one thing, which I certainly wasn't expecting. My second interview for Jesus took place at Oriel College with two Ancient History tutors. I was given a poem to read beforehand for fifteen minutes. There were no extra details given about the poem, just the poem itself. I was asked to speak about the poem for about fifteen minutes, when I was told to select a piece of pottery from the table in front of me. I was asked questions about the item, such as what I found interesting about it. Let's just say I hate pottery...

Another interview was allocated to me at St. Benet's – a Permanent Private Hall. The people there were very welcoming, and once again I was given two articles to read beforehand – one a piece of ancient history, the other a love poem. All of the articles chosen for the interviews were very obscure and fragmentary. My interview consisted of speaking about the two articles for about twenty minutes each with the hall's Classics and Ancient History tutors. After this interview, I had a much more informal chat with the hall's Master. This was the only interview in which my personal statement was mentioned for more than thirty seconds. Lastly, I received a call at 10.30pm telling me I had another interview the next day at

Regent's Park – another Private Hall. When I arrived I immediately felt as if I had entered a run-down youth hostel – this didn't put me in the best mood. Once again, I was given a poem to read beforehand and this was the basis of a twenty minute discussion with one tutor, before the other tutor present began questioning me about the Welsh Language.

The first thing you should know is that every Oxford interview is unique – the tutors might and usually do talk about anything and everything. Also, you can never really know how well each one has gone – your idea of a successful interview is almost certainly different to the tutors opposite you. You just have to do as well as you can, and hope for the best! *Elgan Alderman 2010*

Dentistry

Sheffield: I had one interview and there were three interviewers; two dental staff and a fourth year dental student. It was a question and answer session. I was asked about my Personal Statement, whether I would continue with my extra-curricular interests and what examples could I give to demonstrate my manual dexterity. I asked about future research topics, when the dept was last refurbished, when I would get to start Clinical – don't ask about information that is available in the Prospectus. The main interviewer was quite direct and not bothered about trying to make me feel at ease. A tour of the Dental School was included but was very brief. Take your own food! Take examples of your manual dexterity and don't lie! *Tasker Thomas 2009*

Engineering

New College & Lincoln College Oxford I had two interviews for engineering at Oxford, one at New College and another at Lincoln College. There're only two interviews for engineering at Ox, and it is the only subject that requires applicants in ox for one day only.

My first interview at **New College**, 35mins

Firstly I was shown some pictures on a laptop of an open cast mining machine, and was asked what I thought it was, and what the significant engineering achievements points are on it. Then I was asked about my work experience stuff that I had done for about 2 mins. The interview was mainly a lot of maths and physics questions. At first I had to differentiate x^2 , then I had to draw its graph. Next I was told to prove that $R_{total} = R_1 + R_2$ for resistances in a circuit connected in series, and then I had to prove the equivalent results for resistances in parallel. At the end I was shown a wine bottle holder which they then asked why it stood upright etc to do with the centre of mass over the contact and balancing moments.

My second interview at **Lincoln** was for about 30 mins (your second choice college is randomly selected by a computer at Ox):

Once again I was asked a little about my work exp at Airbus, then I had to differentiate $y = \arcsin x$. Then I was given another equation which I had to differentiate and then draw the graph of (can't remember the function, it was quite complicated). Next I was asked to work out what the relationship is between the extension and the spring constants of two springs with different spring constants when they're connected in series with a mass on the end. Lastly, they asked how many times a ball would bounce from a height h for it to rebound to $1/4h$ if it drops with gravity g and $e = 1/2$ between the ball and the ground.

In all, the interviews were quite short – they're no written test for eng at Ox, and they don't require you to send in any work either. I would say that background reading, although useful for lots of other subjects, isn't that big a factor for eng, I wasn't asked any questions about books, and not much about what I put on my Personal Statement. What they're really interested in is the Maths and Physics ability of the candidates I think.
Eric Yip 2007

Keble & Somerville Colleges Oxford

I had two engineering interviews at Oxford, both on the same day so there was no need for me to stay overnight. My first interview was with two tutors at my first-choice college, Keble. To start with I was asked about why I chose engineering why I wanted to go to Oxford. These initial questions took about 5 minutes before I was then asked to draw a tricky graph. I worked my way through this with hints from the tutors. They also asked me other questions about it, such as stationary points etc. I was then given a book from the bookshelf and asked to discuss its centre of mass on the edge of the table. This lasted until the end of the interview.

I was allocated my second interview at Somerville College. Again, two tutors sat in on the 30 minute process. A few questions were asked to settle me in before I was asked a differentiation question and then the questions became more physics orientated. We talked about the voltage of a standard battery and of a domestic power supply. In answering the questions I had to use equations from the A-Level Physics syllabus and recall what I had been taught in both Maths and Physics. This concluded the interview process. *Charlie Hiram 2010*

Chemical Engineering

Manchester University:

They only asked me some basic questions. Didn't have to prepare any work for them.

One person interviewed me. Why do you want to do chemical engineering?

Is there anything which you have learnt, can apply on the course of chemical engineering? What will you do other than chemical engineering? (A chance to emphasize why chemical engineering is good to study) No problems to solve before or during the interview.

It was very informal. They just wanted to have a chat with the undergraduates before giving out a conditional offer.

Deryck Li 2009

Civil Engineering

Imperial College London: In the morning we completed a practical on Fluid Mechanics, applying basic A Level Physics principles and mechanics to complete a worksheet. I was interviewed by one person, the first year co-ordinator. I was asked about the practical, how that had gone and whether I had any questions about it. Why did I want to do Civil Engineering? Where I saw myself heading in the future? Why Imperial College? Main differences between school and university life for me? Apparently some of the interviewers asked students to run through the problems they faced in the practical in the morning. The interview was very relaxed. Advice would be to prepare the usual questions – why that course/uni? Sound interested and be enthusiastic.
Rodrigo Pearse 2008

University College London: The purpose of the visit was for us the Applicants to find out about the different style of teaching at UCL for Civil Engineering. A group of Professors was overseeing the group work and helping out. In our group we were given a problem and asked to come up with some solution after working through different aspects of the scenario. Be prepared to work with people you have never met before.
Rodrigo Pearse 2008

Oxford – Trinity & Pembroke Colleges: A series of general questions, mainly on things I had written about in my Personal Statement, followed by some mathematical exercises. I was interviewed by two professors at Trinity and two at Pembroke. I was asked why I wanted to study engineering, were there any particular projects I had had a look at or studied more closely and what my duties as being Deputy Head of House meant. In the first interview the problem to solve was finding the differential of an expression. Then there was a second question on a physics topic. In the second interview I was asked several maths questions, drawing graphs. I was asked to provide an explanation for some things that happen and how they work. Prepare to be put on

the spot but don't panic. Think the answer through and then speak. *Rodrigo Pearse 2008*

English

Warwick University: I was asked to prepare a passage before the interview and then talk about it during the interview. We talked about my Personal Statement in general and then moved on to specific aspects of my statement and the way in which they linked in to the poem I had been given. I then had to discuss the poem and how it fitted with my ideas on the Modernist era. We then talked about GCSE and AS Level grades, my suitability for the course, specifically my ability to write essays and then discussed any work I had done in foreign languages. I was interviewed by one person and I was asked whether I thought I had the ability to write essays at University level. It was very friendly and easy to be interviewed.
Daniel Conant 2009

History

University College London: I was sent a questionnaire: favourite historical author/problem. Had to send in an essay. I was interviewed by two history teachers and asked mainly about my essay and my Personal Statement. No problems to solve during the interview and it was very friendly.
George Moczulski 2008

Lincoln College Oxford: I was asked for different viewpoints:
First piece was focusing on 'divine right of kings'; how freedom and liberty are good aims but have not been achieved so far;
Second piece on Joan of Arc's Trial and a trial held after her death. Question: what does it tell us about religion in her day? Was the church affected by politics? What did it tell us about women's role in society? (very similar to spoken HAT)

General questions:
I was given the option of what to discuss and chose the Cold War.
What was Britain's role during the start of the Cold War?

Who was more aggressive, the US or USSR?
Was the Cold War inevitable?
How much were US actions driven on by public opinion at home?

Format of interviews:

1st one: 14 minutes on the text
2nd one: 17 minutes on Cold War
3rd one: 15 minutes on text followed by 10 minutes on Cold War.
Ben Moseley 2010

Law

Lincoln College Oxford: The interview process for law was divided into two separate sessions; Interview A and Interview B. Each interview was scheduled to last approximately half an hour.

On arrival to the college I was given an introduction pack which contained a case summary and judgements from the Court of Appeal. I would recommend to anyone applying to Law at Oxford that they be familiar with what these documents look like and where to look for useful evidence. (A very useful book for this and for applying for Law as a whole is *Learning The Law* by Glanville Williams) Interview A was based around this case and what my thoughts were on the issues involved in it. The discussion varied widely and does not necessarily have to stay directly on point to the case itself, often branching into more philosophical concepts. It is important to remember to present your thoughts clearly and attempt to lead the discussion as much as is possible. Do not panic if one of your ideas is shown to be weak by their interrogation, attempt to work with them to come to a reasonable conclusion.

There was no preparatory work given for Interview B, instead I was given a case to look at upon entering the interview room. Again, like Interview A the discussion did not stay entirely fixed upon the case, but it was more important in this interview. The important things to remember in this type of interview is to be concise in your thinking, but don't be afraid to think aloud and be engaging with your interviewers. Keep in mind that they want to know you

are a person who they will enjoy teaching and interacting with, and the best way to show this is through engaging with them as much as possible.

Examples of questions that arose during the interview would be:

- 1) Define human dignity.
- 2) Define necessity.
- 3) Imagine that you stumble upon a switching station on a railway and you see that a train is hurtling towards a stationary carriage of 100 people and you have the possibility of switching it to instead collide with a carriage of 10, what do you do?

(Follow-up questions include; who is to blame if you do flip the switch? Are you then guilty of murder? Is it your right to claim that 100 people are more valuable than 10?)

Many other scenarios like this came up during interview, including bringing down hijacked planes, whether cannibalism is acceptable in a situation of otherwise unavoidable starvation. It must be remembered that the Oxford course for Law is called Jurisprudence, which shows its insistence towards the more philosophical and theoretical elements to law, which is something that I would remind you to consider upon application.
Ryan Turner 2010

Materials Science

St Anne's College Oxford: I had my first two interviews at St. Anne's. I went there in the morning and waited in the Junior Common Room until I was called for interview by the students who were helping organise the interviews. The same process applied at St Edmund Hall, where I had my third interview of the day. I was asked various questions such as to draw out the periodic table, sketch some mathematical graphs and how I would go about finding out how many atoms were in a piece of metal. (Mr MacDonald has a full list of the questions I was asked).I was

only asked one question about my personal statement and nothing about any of the further reading I had told them I had done. All of my interviews were conducted on one day and I left Oxford in the evening. Most of the tutors were nice and easy to talk to although one arrived 20 minutes late to my interview.

Ben Jenkins 2010

Mathematics

Merton & Queen's Colleges Oxford I had three interviews (two at Merton, one at Queen's), and in each one I was interviewed by two people. I was asked one question about my Personal Statement in the first one, and every other question was a Maths problem.

Tom Keyton 2007

Emmanuel College Oxford Interview for Maths.

Two interviews: first 25 minutes, second 40 minutes.

First interview with two fellows from the College. Entirely Maths, with a mixture of calculus, graph sketching and DEs. It felt much more like an academic discussion with two knowledgeable people, all of us very interested in the subject, than a "grilling" or formal discussion. Started off with some second order differential equations, looking at how to derive the auxiliary equation. Then I was given a second order DE but it was of the type $A \frac{dy^2}{dx^2} + B \frac{dy}{dx} + C = 0$, i.e. nothing on the right hand side. Find the general solution and then, how many pieces of information would you need to solve it for particular conditions? I was then given some conditions, but instead what I was used to of numerical values, I had one numerical value and the fact that as x tended to infinity y remained finite. Find the particular solution given these conditions.

After this some graph sketching and power series. The graph sketching relied on rewriting e^x using the power series which then telescoped down so that you could find the gradient at the origin. In its original form it came out to $0/0$ which is of course not very helpful. There were a few

other graphs to sketch based on this graph with various transformations, such as multiplying by x^2 . At the end we talked very quickly about l'Hopital's rule which is another approach to $0/0$ type problems.

Second interview with a professor and the Director of Studies. It was longer and, I think intentionally, harder. Started off with some logic style questions such as "I have fifty numbers between 1 and 100. Does one have to be the sum of a perfect square and a perfect cube? Do two of them have to add up to 101?" etc. This was very different to anything I'd done before so I needed a fair bit of prompting especially on the harder ones. After this we did some graph sketching using polar co-ordinates. Again, something I hadn't done before but they explained the principles and then we sketched out two graphs based on a polar equation. One was a heart, the other a heart with a hole in. Afterwards some more sketching, $y = \cos(1/x)$ and then $x^2 \cos(1/x)$. The interview finished with a lengthy discussion about the gradient of this graph at the origin (it is impossible to differentiate – so does it even have a gradient?). I came out thinking I hadn't done quite as well in this one but just tried to forget about it till the letter came through the door on January 3rd.

Generally I found the interviews much less scary than I was expecting, especially the first one. The interviewers were all very friendly and obviously doing their best to put candidates at ease. The emphasis was on starting off with problems you know from (the more difficult areas of) the A level syllabus and then extending them to see how you coped with unfamiliar situations. One thing I did find was they didn't ask at all about books I'd read or my other interests, despite having jotted down some books and mathematical interests outside the A level syllabus on my Personal Statement. In fact the only question any interviewer asked me which wasn't a Maths problem to solve was if I'd had a good journey!

Oliver Sleath 2007

St John's College Oxford Being asked to arrive the night before my entrance exam, I was able to meet many people who were also there for interviews, both for my own subject and for several others. During the few days, I was able to make good friends who I am still in touch with. Several second years had remained in college after they had broken up for Christmas and were always around in the social rooms. I found it really helpful to talk to them about anything to do with the university and the college as well as just socialising with them in the evenings.

The day after I arrived I had the three hour exam which, although tiring, I found bearable since there was plenty of time. Over the next two days I had an interview at my first and my second college. Each interview lasted around 25 minutes, which flew by. They asked a couple of questions about my studies and my gap year, nothing too searching and nothing I had not prepared. They then asked me a couple of extended maths questions which they built up on top of my previous answers, gradually getting more challenging. A candidate is not expected to get all the answers straight away under the pressure of the interview and more than once I came to a halt and needed to be prompted by the interviewer. I learned later that everyone was in the same situation, and no-one came out feeling that they had 'nailed it'. Each person was challenged.

My advice to those being interviewed in the coming years would be to make the most of your time there, try to meet some people and just relax. Everyone being interviewed will be feeling the same as you and do not worry if you come out thinking of things you should have said, that is just the way it always is.

Will Moyle 2007

Medicine

Manchester University This was my first interview. I travelled up by train and got a taxi to the building. There were a few candidates sitting together and some friendly medical students trying to get me

to go to the medics' panto. We had to give in our forms and then sat around talking in the lobby. There were no tours or talks or anything, we just sat around. At first people came without parents, but then parents arrived and conversation stopped. I was called into a room 15 mins before my interview. The interview itself was quite scary. There were four doctors sat behind a big table. Only two spoke. The first 10 minutes were questions like "why medicine?" "how would you cope with stress?" etc and then the final 5 minutes were about medicine on TV. Everyone has a five minute ethical discussion on different subjects. I then just went and got the train. It went ok I thought. The applicants were friendly but there was nothing put on for us. And don't go with a parent, it spoils the atmosphere. PBL is rubbish. Interview was scary. I got rejected. Nick Roberts 2008

Oxford Brasenose Had two interviews both with two people in the room. The first was quite laid back. The first question was to talk about something I was studying which I found interesting. There were then three or so questions which were science based but not typical exam questions, they made you think. The second interview was in a scary room which had all the lights turned off except for one spotlight at the end of a big table. The questions were all science based. I had to interpret a graph and talk about a diagram. I had a good time at Brasenose and it was all laid back. I spent most of the time in the JCR socialising, playing guitar. We tried to go out in the evening but all the local pubs know it's interview period. I found the people at Oxford to be more relaxed and sociable than anywhere else. The absence of parents also made the atmosphere better. I wore a suit with no tie, most people wore suits/smart but a few wore casual clothes. To prepare I looked through my folders from AS level and the term. As long as you know your stuff a bit you'll be ok. They test your thinking not knowledge. I got an offer AAA. *Nick Roberts 2008*

Oxford St Peter's I was walked to St Peter's from Brasenose in the morning.

Spent time in the JCR. All the medics had a brief talk and we had half an hour to write a short essay on whether a caveman lifestyle was better than a modern lifestyle, pros/cons. I had two interviews the first with two people on ethical dilemmas then an abstract question I had to think through and finally I talked about the differences between two joints. It was quite relaxed. The second was more challenging again with two people, one of the interviewers was Spanish and I couldn't understand what he said. Questions on genetics and something about the optic nerve. All science/seeing how I think. Nothing about why medicine or why Oxford. They don't care about your personality only your thinking. I wore a suit with tie. The people were all friendly, a couple of American s for some reason were there. I was finished by two in the afternoon so a couple of us went into Oxford for the afternoon. Everyone was a bit more intense in the St Peter's than in the Brasenose, no guitar hero playing before interviews, but it was all good. I am still in contact with a couple of people I met in Oxford. *Nick Roberts 2008*

Cardiff I tried to walk from the Central Train Station to the Medical School. Don't do it, it's further than it looks on the map. This meant I missed a 45 minute talk, don't think I missed much though. We then all had a tour around Cardiff on a bus and were dropped at a place where we got to play with some cadavers and identify parts of them, which was fun. There were about 16 people of which only two were male. We then went back to the medical school and had a brief talk. We were then free until our interviews so I had lunch and three of us had a bit of a chat. We then went into the pre interview room. Everyone was silent, you could cut the tension with a cricket stump. My interview was with one doctor and one medical student. Everyone else had two doctors, mine was skiving. It was a relaxed atmosphere and was mainly Personal Statement/ethics based. "Why Cardiff?" "How would you decide who to give a kidney to?" "MIAS" "Problems with the NHS" etc. Also the doctor's son went to Monmouth so we talked about that for a

while. After the interview I went home. My advice would be don't walk. Take a taxi.

Nick Roberts 2008

Leeds I arrived at 12.00 for a sandwich lunch. There were loads of applicants in the room, three girls to every boy. We all stood around talking. We then had tours in groups around the medical building. The tour was ok. My interview was scheduled for 3.30. We sat around in separate groups. The seats were in rows making conversation rubbish. I was the last person to be interviewed as my guys were slow. The interview was with two doctors and a medical student. It was quite relaxed. Everyone else came out smiling. I didn't enjoy it. They asked stuff like "Why medicine?" but it was mainly Personal Statement, in particular what I learned from the stuff I did and what qualities I displayed by doing these things. It lasted about twenty minutes. There were some med students around who were very friendly. Walking back to the station was a challenge. Good uni, good course. Shame about the city.

Nick Roberts 2008

St Andrews: I had one interview with a university lecturer and a medical practitioner. I was given an article from the New Scientist 10 minutes before the interview and was asked to summarise it, asked why there was a problem and whether I would like to know more, having read it. Questions were on my Personal Statement and why St Andrews, what do you think of the town etc. More specific questions were: If you were Director General of the NHS what changes would you make? Describe further what my work experience had been about/ what exactly was I doing? It seems pointless for people to learn many different languages, trade is easier if we all speak the same, do you agree? What do you do to unwind? I asked how much contact you have with your personal Tutor. The interviewers made me feel relaxed and welcome. Tips would be to take a highlighter with you for the article, get a map of the town and find the interview location the day before. I had a tour of the medical school after the interview. *Rhydian Harris 2009*

Liverpool I had one interview with two interviewers – not sure of their positions. It was a question and answer session, mostly informal (where are you from, why Liverpool/Medicine/personality questions). I didn't ask any questions. Interviewers made me feel relaxed and welcome but advice would be don't let down your guard too much, it's not as informal as people describe. *Mustafa Rashid 2009*

Bristol One interview with a Professor and a Junior Doctor – question and answer session and questions were on current affairs and my Personal Statement. I didn't ask any questions. They made me feel relaxed and welcome but it was hard to find the interview area. *Mustafa Rashid 2009*

Cardiff One interview with three people; a Consultant, Professor and Student. Question and answer and very formal, very Personal Statement based and they tried to catch me out on current affairs. I didn't ask any questions and they didn't make me feel relaxed and welcome. Advice would be it's very formal; learn general medical information about the NHS and talk about the dissection room. *Mustafa Rashid 2009*

Modern Languages

Cambridge – Pembroke College: I was asked to translate and analyse a passage and talk about the course in general. I was interviewed by 4 interviewers in 4 separate interviews. I was asked why I wanted to study Modern Languages, what interested me most about this subject and why I wanted to study at Cambridge. Problems so solve during the interview were just the translation and the analysis of the passage. Advice to others would be: try not to be too nervous or too relaxed, the interviewers will pick this up. *Damien Sykes 2008*

St John's College Oxford: French: I wasn't asked to prepare anything before arriving. Whilst I was there I was questioned about my personal statement, followed by some in depth discussion of some of the films and books that I

mentioned having read. To finish there was a very short grammar test and some French speaking practice. Interviewed by one person. Specific questions about what I had written in my personal statement (e.g *why is literature important to you?*)

Specific questions about texts/films/authors I mentioned (e.g *How is Balzac's writing effective?*)
Very friendly and informative. *Gwil Hughes 2009*

Linguistics

Oxford (St Catherine's) I think the only conclusion I can draw from the whole process is that it's not going to be what you expect. Unlike Cambridge, you are kept for several days. I was kept for three days in total, although if other colleges want to have a look at you there's a chance you'd stay longer. The most days I think anyone stays for is four (as far as I know).

The college to which I applied – St. Catherine's – is a relatively modern-looking establishment. Everyone there is, unsurprisingly, really nice and accommodating. The curfew was quite relaxed and the food was amazing... not more I can say about that really.

Despite the hubbub, I only attended two interviews. I personally encountered none of the general, sweeping interviews involving questions such as "Why Oxford?" or "Why this course?" or even anything about me. My two interviews – French and Linguistics respectively – were very focused and specific.

The French was 20 minutes, although you are expected to arrive 20 minutes in advance to receive an unseen text, which you have to talk about in the interview. You should prepare the text in that time, but just make sure you really know what it's about. Don't try and anticipate any questions you'll think they'll ask – you might be able to prepare for some "obvious" questions, but you never know what they're going to throw at you. 20 minutes isn't really that long for a completely unseen text. A part of the

interview itself will be conducted in French – the length varies from candidate to candidate, and from interviewer to interviewer. I had two professors interviewing me, largely taking turns to talk about various things, although one seemed to be asking the most questions (as the other one's primary field was Linguistics and would be heading the relevant interview the next day). I had to speak in French with them for about 6 or 7 minutes, about the text. Saying what it was about, etc. Then we spoke in English, still about the text, for another 7-10 minutes. After this I was asked briefly about an essay I had sent up (a French one about *Les Justes* by Camus), about how the play would work on stage. Then I was asked if I had any questions.

The Linguistics interview was 35 minutes, and I had two interviewers again (one from the French interview, one new one). It was essentially a verbal, or oral, linguistics test, much like the entrance tests I had taken. I was given some verbs in Swahili, with their translations, and I had to work out what parts of the words meant what (tense, person, mood, etc). Then I was asked briefly about how I came across Linguistics. I then got into a bit of a circle when I said it was "the science of Language" and they asked me to explain myself – eventually I got out it but that was quite scary. Then I was given some word-play sentences, and I had to explain how they worked in terms of phonetics and homonyms and their meanings, and so on. *George Sully 2007*

Music

Cardiff: Had to prepare 8 minutes worth of performance which I played at the beginning of the interview. This was followed by a brief discussion. Then a written analysis of an unseen piece (lasted for one hour). I was interviewed by one person who asked me: "Why Cardiff as opposed to any other university; what particular interests in music did I have and what did I enjoy doing outside music?" No particular problems before or during the interview. *Andrew Hayman 2008*

Manchester: I had to talk through an essay on harmony and composition. Then I was asked some general questions on what I listened to and who inspired my composition. Had to sight read Bach Chorale at the piano and was asked to identify chords. I was interviewed by one person – Professor Barry Cooper. Questions asked? – on harmony – what would I change? What do I listen to? Do I attend concerts? Why Music? Why Manchester? Interview was friendly but very challenging. No questions on, or real indication that he had read my Personal Statement. Most questions not tailored to me personally.

York: I had to prepare a five minute performance and the interviewer looked through a composition and essay. There was a general discussion about Russian and Film music to in my statement, but in very little detail. Interviewed by one person – American. Questions asked: What do I like about Ennio Morricone? Also a question on music and culture and its importance. No problems to solve either before or during the interview. It was very, very friendly. *Adam Godfrey 2010*

Natural Science

Oxford- (Wadham) -Physics: I went in and was asked questions virtually entirely about Physics. They used basic knowledge applied in new ways. Also asked why I wanted to study Physics and why at Oxford. I was interviewed by one person at Wadham and two at St Anne's. I had some problems to solve during the interview. They were friendly interviewers. Think questions through out loud before answering. *Matthew Andrew 2008*

Cambridge -Trinity College: I was given an exam/test to do in one hour, consisting of eight questions. When the time was up I took the paper to my interview where they asked me to answer the questions I hadn't answered on the test. I was interviewed by two professors and the questions were purely on my A Level syllabus in Chemistry and Biology. There were no

personal questions. The whole interview consisted of answering problems on chemistry and biology. Make sure you know everything you have studied so far in your A Level syllabus.

William Hughes 2008

Oxford - Queen's College (Physics). I wasn't given anything in particular to revise, but was advised to re-read my Personal Statement and any Physics books that I find of interest. I had three interviews, each with two interviewers. I was asked questions like 'why do helium balloons float', 'how long would you need to run a kettle if its energy was going into lifting a car by 1m', 'find the approximate value of $\tan 91^\circ$ ' and 'why is a rainbow "rainbow" shaped etc. The interviewers were keen to see me solve the problem so if I got stuck they helped me out and weren't very intimidating at all. They tested me on lots of things that are just outside the A Level Syllabus, so be sure to ask your subject teachers lots of questions!

Charles Baynham 2009

UCL: Quite an informal "chat" about school life, university life and some areas of my Personal Statement. I was interviewed by one person in a big room with around 10 other people being interviewed by other people. Had no problems to solve during the interview and it was friendly and informal.

Sam Troughton 2009

Experimental Psychology

Oxford (Worcester & St Anne's) During my stay at Oxford I was interviewed twice and sat one written exam, the specimen paper of which can be found on the university website.

I had my written test on the first day. It was a comprehension paper, and comprised of a scientific article and a few questions. It is usually about cognitive

science, and one would have to summarise the article, be able to extract meanings out of tables and graphs and pinpoint the implications of the investigation in discussed.

My first interview took place at Worcester college (my first choice college), and I had to arrive 15 minutes before my interview to read two science experiment. And, similar to the written test, I had to understand what it was about as well as spotting the problem with the approach. However, the hardest task was that I had to suggest improvements to the experiments, which was hard to think on the spot. But as you can see, the interview concerned more on the way one analyse psychology experiments with a scientific mind, but not text book knowledge.

My second interview took place at St. Anne's College. I didn't have to arrive early that time, and I was given an article to read during the interview. Unlike the first one when the interviewers asked nothing apart from the articles, I was asked to express more about my opinion on psychology in general, and I certainly did better in that.

It is not necessary to study Psychology as an A level to get into Oxford Psychology, having a general and personal outlook on the subject are qualities that the interviewers look for in candidates. There is no point in revising because you can't, and I did get the impression that despite some experiments resemble various area of the syllabus, they were something else (e.g. what you might expect to be a conditioning experiment, is instead an investigation on expectancy). And having too firm a knowledge on the subject might actually prevent you from thinking out of the box.

Forest Kwok 2007

OXFORD & CAMBRIDGE

1. Monmouth School Policy for Applications to the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford

Entrance to Oxbridge colleges has become significantly more competitive over recent years with candidates facing increasingly-rigorous selection procedures. It would therefore be helpful to clarify what recent evidence suggests about the expected standard. From 2010 Cambridge University's standard offer has been at least one A* and two A grades at A Level. The minimum offer at Oxford is currently three A grades at A Level but the A* has been introduced for certain subjects. Monmouth School wants to support applications from those of its pupils who have both the ambition and the academic track record to succeed at this high level. We also recognise, however, that an Oxbridge application may not be suitable for all; indeed, some pupils with very good academic records may well be better advised to apply to other equally prestigious universities where competition may not be so intense.

The normal profile of a successful Monmouth School applicant to Oxbridge over recent years has been as follows:

- Seven or more A* grades at GCSE, with the remainder being A grades.
- Four A grades at AS Level, with the scores in the three subjects being taken to A2 Level of 270 and over.
- Three, or more, A grades at A Level.
- In addition, successful applicants will have shown significant independence and breadth in their studies, well beyond the confines of the A Level syllabus.

Candidates who fall significantly short of either of the first two criteria should be aware that their application is unlikely to be successful. If they wish to pursue an Oxbridge application in such circumstances, they and their parents will be asked to discuss this with the Head of Sixth Form before the application is made. The purpose of this policy is not to discourage aspiration but, rather, to encourage candidates to weigh up their options very carefully so that they do not commit to a course of action which is not in their best interests. It is hoped that it will also emphasise just how important each phase of their education is in terms of building a profile that will eventually attract admissions tutors.

2. Making an Application

If you are proceeding with an application to either Oxford or Cambridge, then all of the advice in this book about research and applications applies to you. However, given your earlier deadline of **15th October**, you would be wise to begin your research as soon as you return from study leave. Both Oxford and Cambridge have excellent websites which give you an enormous amount of useful information.

Oxford: First of all check the Entrance Requirements for your course; you may be asked for certain qualifications. Entrance requirements are at www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/apply At the moment around 70% of applicants to Oxford are expected to sit an admissions test as part of the short-listing process and some subjects also require you to submit written work. See Chapter 12 and the university website for more details. For some other subjects you may be asked to sit a test during or before the interview itself.

The majority of the pre-interview tests take place at the beginning of November, but you should check with the university and college that you are interested in for the most up to date list and the dates for each test. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are registered to sit

the required tests, some of which are taken at examination centres beforehand. Shortlisted candidates are then invited to interview, usually during December. Offers are then made through UCAS.

Cambridge: In addition to your UCAS Application you have to submit a Supplementary Application Questionnaire. You will be notified by email about this and will be given a deadline for submission. The Supplementary Application Questionnaire asks for details of UMS marks obtained on AS and A2 units, information about topics already covered as part of your AS/A2 level (or equivalent) courses and registration numbers for admissions tests (if applicable). Cambridge uses this information to help assess the applications and also to decide upon which questions to ask at interview.

Some Colleges will require you to sit a Thinking Skills Assessment when you come for interview, a subject specific test and/or may require you to sit STEP Mathematics (taken just after your A Levels) and will make this part of your conditional offer. The College will inform you about this.

Cambridge is not only interested in the individual A Level subjects you have chosen but also in your subject combination, stating in the Prospectus, "We generally prefer applicants to have taken certain subjects or subject combinations because we believe that they are more likely to provide an effective preparation for study at the University of Cambridge."

A Level Critical Thinking is not an acceptable third A Level for any courses, but as a fourth AS or A Level subject, is considered a "worthwhile addition to your portfolio of qualifications". For more details on acceptable subjects and subject combinations go to www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/requirements.

3. Choral and Organ Scholarships

If you wish to apply for a Choral or Organ Award you need to complete a Choral and Organ Award Application Form in addition to your UCAS Application. For **Oxford** this must be received by your first-preference College by 1st September (for both Choral and Organ) and for **Cambridge** by 1st September (in the case of an Organ Scholarship) or 12th September (in the case of a Choral Scholarship). However, your actual UCAS Application does not have to be submitted until the 15th October deadline. You can obtain copies of the form from the relevant College Admissions Office, The Cambridge Admissions Office, Oxford Admissions Office or from the relevant area on the undergraduate admissions websites.

4. Colleges

Oxford and Cambridge are both large universities and at the same time collections of smaller colleges, which complement each other in providing different facilities. The Universities determine the courses offered and the content of the syllabuses. They conduct the exams and also confer the degrees. So, irrespective of which college you chose, you essentially follow the same course. The universities provide facilities such as lectures halls, libraries, laboratories and IT Centres. The colleges are much smaller communities. They are independent and self-governing, making their own decisions on which applicants to select and also upon which approach to study they think best. Applications can be to a specific college or can be Open (i.e. with no stated preference of college) Both Universities operate a 'pool' system of passing on to other colleges good students whom they cannot accept. Not all colleges admit students for all subjects, nor do all have a Tutor for all subjects, so you will need to do your research carefully.

Both universities advise not to agonise over your choice of college, stating that most students will be very happy wherever they end up. Colleges change all the time and generalisations about them are impossible. Most colleges now can offer accommodation for all three or four years. Consult the University and College Prospectuses and websites (www.ox.ac.uk and www.cam.ac.uk) thoroughly and consult the Good University Guides which give very useful information on subject strengths at Colleges.

Talking to any student will almost certainly elicit the information that his or her college is the best, a vindication of both the system and the value of asking, as well as a suggestion that the *most* important decision is whether to apply to Oxford or Cambridge or not. Talk to Mr Tatham, your Tutors and Heads of Department.

5. Oxford and Cambridge Application Procedure 2011 Entry

Visit Oxford and/or Cambridge. There are School visits to Oxford and Cambridge on 6th and 7th July respectively. Contact colleges that interest you and book yourself in for the Open Day. For your Application to be ready by 15th October, a great deal of work has to be done in school by a number of different people. Therefore stick to the deadlines you are given and this will help the process run smoothly for all.

June	Collect vacation work from relevant subject teachers and Heads of Departments.
1 st September	Deadline for Organ Scholarship Applications (both Oxford and Cambridge).
5 th September	Final date for submission of completed UCAS Application to Tutor.
12 th September	Deadline for Choral Scholarship Applications (Cambridge).
15th October	Deadline for submissions of UCAS Applications.
2 nd November	Admissions and Aptitude Tests.
Early November	Submission of Written Work (if required). Practice Interviews.
Early December	Interviews at Oxford and Cambridge.
Before Christmas	Most of the successful candidates for <u>Oxford</u> are notified.
Early January	Successful candidates for <u>Cambridge</u> are notified and candidates in the intercollegiate pool called for interview.

APPLICATION TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

Competition for entry to medical school is the most intense of any subject. The minimum A2 Grades you will need for entry are AAA and most candidates will be predicted to achieve more than this. Offers are rarely made to applicants who have achieved less than six grade A* passes at GCSE and high marks (90%) at AS are not unusual. Despite the statistics however, Medicine continues to be a popular choice and, if this is your choice, you must prepare thoroughly to ensure that you have the best chance of success.

A medical degree is a preparation for a vocation and requires great personal commitment. The training is long and can be arduous, and failure to pass the different assessments along the way may mean re-sits, and ultimately exclusion from the course.

Each medical school has its own style of teaching and method of assessment and the approach does vary, so it is important to decide which type of course suits you best. Some courses are firmly traditional in their method of teaching and assessment and some place greater emphasis on problem based learning. However, most medical schools use a combination of both styles and whichever approach is used, there are still large amounts of material that you will be expected to learn. You should first choose the type of course that suits your style of learning and then decide on the institutions.

Depending upon which medical schools you apply to, you will probably have to sit the UKCAT and four medical schools demand the BMAT. It is recommended that you only include one BMAT university and that you also consider including at least one of the universities that do not request either test in your application. See page 23 for more details, but please consult the relevant websites and ensure that you practise well beforehand.

One of the first things you will be asked at any interview is why you want to be a doctor. Some of the usual answers include a desire to help others, a wish to work for the benefit of others and an interest in human biology with a desire to apply this knowledge in a practical way. Some of the more imaginative of you will find more complex philosophical reasons for pursuing this challenging vocation, but do not try to be too clever. Remember also that a love of science is not enough on its own.

Admissions Tutors look not only for high academic achievement and potential, but for an indication that you are aware of what is involved and that you have the right qualities to be a doctor. You should already have found out about life as a doctor by talking to doctors and through work experience. As you will be applying to medical schools in the September and early October begin your research as soon as possible. Keep a journal of your work experience and other activities so that you can include details in your Personal Statement.

However, Admissions Tutors are well aware that not all students can find work experience in a hospital or with a GP. Therefore if you can find voluntary work within the wider health care sector, this is just as worthwhile. An insight into the lives of others less fortunate than you is important. Try to take part in different activities which show commitment such as voluntary work, residential courses or other long term commitments, such as the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

Read a quality broadsheet newspaper and keep up to date with changes and developments in the medical profession, particularly NHS reforms. Watch relevant programs on television and be prepared to talk about what has interested or inspired you. The School will give you as much support as possible with your application, but recognise that you must be organised and motivated. If you require further advice, talk to Miss Barson as soon as possible. Do not leave it until you are about to apply, as preparation is essential for success.

STUDENT FINANCE

While you are at university you will have two main types of expense: tuition fees and living costs, (sometimes referred to as maintenance costs) and there is help available towards both in the shape of loans and grants.

Are you Eligible?

To be eligible for student loans and grants both you and the course for which you have applied must be eligible for support. Your personal eligibility is concerned with your residence and nationality on the first day of your new course. Briefly:

You must be ordinarily resident on that date;

You must have been ordinarily resident for the previous three years before that date; and

You must have “settled status” which means you must have settled within the UK within the meaning of the Immigration Act 1971.

If you are a student from within the European Union, but outside the UK, you will be treated in a similar way in respect of tuition fees, but you will not be eligible for any maintenance loan or grant. You must therefore pay your own living expenses at university. If you are an overseas student from outside the European Union, universities are entitled to charge you the full cost of the course and this is likely to be significantly higher than the UK tuition fee. You will not be eligible for a loan for tuition fees or maintenance, so you should look into other sources of financial aid and as early as possible.

Loans for Tuition Fees

Tuition Fees charged by universities go towards the costs of salaries and other expenses incurred in educating you. From 2012 universities are entitled to charge £6,000 for Tuition Fees and, subject to fulfilling certain conditions, can charge up to a maximum of £9,000. As of May 2011 around two thirds of UK universities have stated that they intend to charge the higher rate of £9,000. By the time you come to choose your university, most institutions will have declared their fees for 2012, so you will be able to compare courses and costs.

As in previous years, regardless of your household income, you can take out a loan to cover these fees and that loan only becomes repayable when you have started to earn above a certain amount. Details of the new funding arrangements have not all been worked out or passed as legislation, and some important matters remain vague, such as the repayment terms. As you will not have to apply for your loans until next spring, you have some time to research your choices and the costs of your course at the different universities. Keep a close eye on the press for announcements and consult the following websites:

- 1) If you live in Wales www.studentfinanceengland.co.uk
- 2) If you live in England www.studentfinanceengland.co.uk
- 3) If you live in Scotland www.student-support-saas.gov.uk;
- 4) If you live in Ireland www.studentfinancenl.co.uk

Loans & Grants for Living Costs

Your living expenses are all your other costs excluding your tuition fees, and include such things as costs of your accommodation, books, stationery & other equipment, clothing and laundry, travel, socialising etc. Once again, help is available in the shape of grants and loans which are calculated taking into account your household income.

- **Maintenance Grants**

If your household income is £25,000 or under you will be entitled to a grant of £3,250, and if your household income is between £25,000 and £42,600 you will be entitled to a partial grant. The maintenance grant is paid in three instalments at the start of each term and does not have to be paid back.

- **Loans for Living Costs**

A Living Cost or Maintenance Loan is available to help with living costs each year of your course and the amount you get will depend on where you live and study and your household income. For students starting their courses in 2012, the maximum Living Cost Loans are:

- £5,500 if you live away from home and study at a university or college outside London:
- £7,675 if you live away from home and study at a university or college in London; and
- £4,375 if you live at home

The majority of these amounts is available to everyone, but a certain percentage will be income assessed. Last year the percentages were 72% available to all and 28% income assessed. However, these proportions may have changed for 2012, so you should check the relevant government websites for exact figures. Note also that if you are entitled to a Maintenance Grant then the amount of any loan awarded will be reduced £1 for £1 to take into account the maintenance grant you receive, up to a certain limit.

This loan is paid into your bank account at the start of each term, once you've registered on your course.

Repayment Exact details of repayment have not been approved by Parliament, but for the moment it seems clear that the amount you will have to earn before you will begin to repay your loan will be £21,000. The size of your monthly repayment will depend upon how much you have borrowed and how much you are earning; hence those on lower incomes will have longer payback periods, in some cases exceeding 20 years. Repayment levels will be based on a percentage of your marginal income. Also bear in mind that you don't have to borrow the entire amount, or indeed anything at all, in which case you will have to find other sources of income.

When to Apply You do not have to wait until you have a confirmed place on a course before you apply. You can simply quote the course which you are likely to attend. The deadlines for applying differ in England, Wales and Scotland, so be sure you know which ones apply to you.

University Bursaries

Universities have always offered extra financial help to good students and since the rise in tuition fees amounts are greater than they ever have been. Bursaries are extra sources of funding that do not have to be paid back and these can include:

- bursaries to help with your living costs if you get the maximum Maintenance Grant
- bursaries to help with your tuition fees if you get the full Maintenance Grant and pay the maximum tuition fee
- Scholarships if you meet conditions set by your university or college, based on your academic ability, home situation or subject of study.

By way of reference, if you received the full Maintenance Grant and paid the maximum tuition fee in 2011/2012 your university would have been obliged to offer you a minimum bursary of £338. Many universities offer more and some give bursaries to students entitled to partial grant. Bursaries can be paid in cash or in another form - such as a discount on accommodation or books.

Contact the university itself and look at the bursary map at www.bursarymap.direct.gov.uk Also look at the Entry Profiles on the UCAS website written for your chosen courses at each institution. By following the link to bursaries you will see what financial awards are available in your subject at your chosen university.

University Scholarships

A growing number of university departments have introduced scholarships for selected students, partly to offset the additional costs to students, and partly to entice well qualified applicants. The sums involved can range from £300 to £4,000 a year, but there is usually an element of achievement involved, be it academic, sporting or musical. Some, for example, offer scholarships to candidates who achieve three A grades at A Level, whilst others set separate exams.

Consult the Higher Education/Student Finance Section in the Careers Library where you will find books on University Scholarships and Bursaries and how to get them.

Many courses in languages, science and engineering offer up to a year of study in the European Union. Under the Socrates-Erasmus scheme (European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students), you might be eligible for an additional grant towards the cost of studying elsewhere in the EU for part of your course. Further details can be found on the website at www.erasmus.ac.uk.

UNIVERSITIES ABROAD: HONG KONG & USA

If you are thinking about university overseas you will need to begin your research early as deadlines for overseas applications are different and you must be sure not to miss them. An overseas application cannot be made through UCAS so you will have to find out about the application process in the particular country concerned. If you haven't decided on which university or even which country, www.braintrack.com is a useful website with a worldwide index of universities. It is organised by region and then country with links to the various institutions.

1. Hong Kong

If you are a Boarder from Hong Kong and are planning to return there to university, you will apply through the "non-JUPAS" Admissions Scheme. This is for international and local applicants who are not currently students in school in Hong Kong and who are not applying for admission on the strength of Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination results. If you are a Boarder from Mainland China, some of the universities have a special category for Mainland applicants, so be sure to check that you apply through the correct route.

Although admissions requirements for Hong Kong universities are broadly similar, they are not identical, so be sure to check the individual admissions procedures for each university. Most applications for the following academic year must be submitted by the end of January but note that Hong Kong University of Science and Technology has a December deadline. You will complete your application on line and the School will submit a reference. If you are also applying to UK universities through UCAS then your UCAS reference can be included, but Hong Kong universities ask for information about you in a different format, so speak to you Tutor as soon as possible, so that any necessary changes can be made.

2. United States of America

Applying to university in the US can be a lengthy process, and if you want to be successful you will need to commit a good deal of time to researching and writing your application. Begin your research as soon as possible, around 18 months in advance and a useful place to start is with Trotman's Getting into US and Canadian Universities, a copy of which is in the Careers Library. Look at www.fulbright.co.uk and www.petersons.com which are helpful websites and also consider attending the annual 'College Day' at the beginning of October at the Fulbright Commission in London. It is attended by many of the American universities who are interested in recruiting students from the UK.

Universities in the US are either Public (state-funded) or Private, the latter being more expensive and tuition fees can vary greatly as each institution sets its own rates. The cost of going to one of the Ivy League universities such as Harvard is around \$52,000 per annum (tuition, room and board and insurance). See www.harvard-ukadmissions.co.uk

US universities tend to deliver a broader more liberal arts education than in the UK and have a core curriculum. Courses are broad and include quantitative subjects and language and arts subjects. All universities have different requirements, so check this all beforehand as you may find yourself having to go back and take subjects you thought you had left behind after GCSEs.

In terms of the applications process itself, there are two main differences between the US and the UK.

- 1 In the US you apply directly to the institutions themselves and not via a system like UCAS. Although broadly similar, each university has its own application forms,

admissions criteria and there is a fee payable for each application. Universities have different closing dates and the more competitive ones have early dates.

A large number, but not all, of the US universities participate in the Common Application system which helps streamline the applications process. If you are interested in a number of different universities, and they are members of the Common Application, you can apply once via the website and your application will be sent to all of the institutions. Otherwise you must submit your applications to the individual universities. See www.commonapp.org for further details.

- 2 The second difference is that admissions decisions are taken by the University Undergraduate Admissions Department and not by a particular Faculty (although there are some exceptions to this; engineering, nursing and architecture). Consequently perhaps, they are not just interested in your desire to study Physics or your skills as a Chemist, but want to know more about you as an individual. This is in addition to information about how good you are at Physics or Chemistry, and not instead of. So, although you will be able to use your UCAS Personal Statement, you will need to make it much more detailed and expansive to be appropriate for a US application.

Admissions Tests

Most (although not all) US universities will ask you to sit an admissions test, either the SAT or the ACT. The SAT is the most widely used test, and it is administered by the College Board – www.collegeboard.com. There are two parts: Part one Reasoning (Critical Reading, Maths and Writing) and Part two Subject³ and not all universities will ask for both Papers to be taken, so be sure to check specific requirements. SATs are scored out of 800 and you must achieve more than 700 in order to be considered for a prestigious university. No slack is given to foreign students. The SAT test centres get booked up early, so be sure to find out your nearest centre and register, otherwise you may find yourself having to travel quite far to take the SATs. For details of the ACTs see www.actstudent.org. Lists of universities not requiring SATs/ACTs can be found at www.fairtest.org

Finance

US institutions declare themselves either to be “needs aware” or “needs blind” Simply, this means that your ability to pay the fees may be a factor in the decision to offer you a place, or it may not be. American universities are expensive and you will not be entitled to any UK government funding so you will have to work hard at finding other sources of finance. Look for funding at www.fundingusstudy.org. There are scholarships to be had, and a number of different sources of finance available, so you should look into this as soon as possible. The US Educational Advisory Service, based at the Fulbright Commission (details on their website) is an excellent source of information on funding as well as other aspects of studying in the US.

³ Part 2 Subject Tests are only offered in a very limited number of subjects, for example there is no Economics and the History is World History/US History and does not match the A Level Syllabus. Therefore chose your institution carefully and talk to your Tutor about extra reading and revising for Paper 2.

USEFUL WEBSITES

<p>General Information www.ucas.com www.ukcoursefinder.com www.qaa.ac.uk</p>	<p>Finance www.studentmoneynet.co.uk www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance www.bursarymap.direct.gov.uk www.slc.co.uk</p>	<p>Subject Specific Tests www.bmat.org.uk www.ukcat.ac.uk www.medical-interviews.co.uk www.lnat.ac.uk www.cam.ac.uk/admissions</p>
<p>Universities' Information www.uniupdate.com www.[university name].ac.uk www.opendays.com www.studentuk.com</p>	<p>Oxford & Cambridge www.oxblogster.blogspot.com www.law.cam.ac.uk www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/apply</p>	<p>Student Guides www.bunk.com www.push.co.uk</p>
<p>Studying Abroad www.petersons.com www.fulbright.co.uk www.erasmus.ac.uk www.braintrack.com www.commonapp.org www.collegeboard.com www.actstudent.org www.fairtest.org www.fundingstudy.org</p>	<p>Statistical Comparisons www.hero.ac.uk www.unistats.com www.hesa.ac.uk</p>	<p>Careers & HE Guidance www.isco.org.uk www.careerseurope.co.uk</p>
<p>Gap Year www.gap-year.com</p>	<p>Student Life www.student123.com www.studentmagazine.com www.nus.org.uk</p>	

DESTINATIONS OF VI.2 LEAVERS 2010

Name	University	Course
Ali Ahmed	Birmingham	Medicine
Luke Aldridge	Swansea 2011-12	History
Matthew Amos	Direct to employment	
Alex Arnold	Southampton	Biochemistry
Max Backhouse	Applying 2010-11	
Didar Batayev	Manchester Metropolitan	Accounting & Finance
Harry Baynham	Loughborough	Aeronautical Engineering
Hugh Beatson-Hird	Direct to employment	
Felix Besch	Applying 2010-11	
Simeon Bogg	Re-applying 2010-11	
Sam Bolingbroke	Nottingham	Computer Science
Ben Bradley	Reading	Computer Science
James Brierley	Durham	Business
Jack Byrne	Bristol UWE 2011-12	Audio & Music Technology
Ethan Clayton	St. Andrew's 2011-12	Biology
Jake Clayton	Durham	General Engineering
Oliver Clayton	St. Andrew's 2011-12	Social Anthropology
Daniel Comber	Glamorgan, Cardiff & Pontypridd	
George Coxell	Re-applying 2010-11	Sound Technology
Arpan Das	UCL, London 2011-12	Medicine
Harri Davies	Durham 2011-12	Anthropology
Daniel Domanski	Queen Mary, London	Materials Engineering
Matthew Dryburgh	Oxford Brookes	Sport & Exercise Sciences
Ross Evans	Re-applying 2010-11	
Alasdair Fleming	Lancaster	Economics
Yudi Fleming	Bath	Accounting & Finance
Andrew Fok	Imperial College, London 2011-12	Mechanical Engineering
Jerry Fu	Nottingham	Pharmacy
Robert Grant	Cardiff	French & Italian
Adam Greenwood	University College, London	Medicine
Will Griffiee	Newcastle 2011-12	Politics & Sociology
Jonathan Griffiths	St. Hilda's College, Oxford	Classics
Will Griffiths	Cardiff	Politics
Oliver Hancock	Applying 2010-11	
Gwilym Hughes	Somerville College, Oxford	French
Harry Jacques	Re-applying 2010-11	
Josh Jenkins	Applying 2010-11	
Harry Johnson	Sheffield	French & History
Charles Kennedy	King's College, London	Molecular Genetics
Nicky Kog	Chinese U of Hong Kong	Pharmacy
Chris Lawlor	Bath 2011-12	Economics
George Lea	Harper Adams	Business Management with Marketing
Alastair Lee	Re-applying 2010-11	
Andrew Lee	Bath	Pharmacy
Mark Lewis	Bangor 2011-12	Sports Science
Deryck Li	Bath	Chemical Engineering
Edward Li	LSE	Philosophy & Economics
Adam Littleproud	Re-applying 2010-11	
Gareth Llewelyn	Oriel College, Oxford	Engineering

Brian Loubet-Jambert	Manchester 2011-12	Spanish & Business & Management
David Love	Bristol	Dentistry
Matthew Lovett	Applying 2010-11	Engineering
Angus Macdonald	Oriel College, Oxford	International Business
Gareth Makemson	Bristol UWE	European Studies
Dominic Matthews	Royal Holloway, London	Chemistry
Edward McCord	Oriel College, Oxford	Business & Management
Edward McGladdery	Direct to employment	Modern Languages
James Millard	Exeter 2011-12	
Adam Oldfield	University College, London	Classics
Lewis Oliva	Direct to employment	Biomedical Sciences
Haydn Palmer	Applying 2010-11	Economics & Politics
Joe Park	King's College, London	History
Owen Parris	Cardiff UWIC	
Lewis Powell	Manchester	Economics & Finance
Daniel Rees	King's College, London	Economics
	2011-12	Geography
Ben Robb	Re-applying 2010-11	Biomedical Science
James Robinson	Re-applying 2010-11	Business Administration
Luke Rose	Bristol 2011-12	Aerospace Engineering
Max Scarr	Durham	Philosophy
Matthew Stephens	Exeter	Physics & Philosophy
Tom Stone	Imperial College, London	Geography
Owen Sweeney	Bath 2011-12	Natural Sciences
Dan Thomas	Queen's, Belfast	Pharmacy
Grant Thomas	Lampeter	Economics
Jac Thomas	King's College, London	Medicine
Oliver Thomas	Swansea 2011-12	Medicine
Sam Troughton	Robinson College, Cambridge	Business in Property
Stephen Tuck	Reading 2011-12	English & Film Studies
Scott Turner	Loughborough	Mathematics with Economics
William Warner	Wadham College, Oxford	
Michael Warren	Liverpool	Chemistry
Tom Watkins	Bristol UWE	Primary English Language
Gruff Watts	Queen Mary, London	Education
David Wham	Re-applying 2010-11	
Edward Wheeler	Loughborough	
Josh Williams	Re-applying 2010-11	
Nick Williams	Wadham College, Oxford	
Nikko Yiu	Hong Kong	

DESTINATIONS OF VI.2 LEAVERS 2009

Name	University	Course
Robert Bailey	<i>Applying 2009-10</i>	
James Baldwin	Exeter	Economics & Politics
Michael Barton	Liverpool	Veterinary Science
Tim Battersby	Kingston	Aerospace Engineering
Charles Baynham	Queen's College, Oxford	Physics
Mark Bellamy	Nottingham	Philosophy
Jamie Bennett	Warwick	Biochemistry
Oscar Cheung	Cardiff	Civil Engineering
Derek Choi	Birmingham	Chemical Engineering with Business Management
Matthew Christopher	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
Ben Clayton	Peninsula 2010-11	Medicine
Adam Conant	Durham	History
Dan Conant	Exeter	English
Ollie Cook	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
William Coulton	Jesus College, Oxford	Physics
Bradley Davies	Reading	English Literature & Film & Theatre
Matthew Davies	Exeter	Psychology
Lloyd Davies	Cardiff 2010-11	Business Economics
Jon Denning	<i>Applying 2009-10</i>	
Andrew Dickson	Keele	Medicine
James Dillon	Royal Agricultural College 2010-11	Rural Land Management
Rhys Dixon	Swansea	Philosophy, Politics & Economics
James Dobson	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
Nathan Dowds	UCL London 2010-11	Biomedical Sciences
Sam Dukinfield	Birmingham	Modern Languages with Film Studies
Tom Dutton	Portsmouth	Computer Science
Phil Egan	Bath	Modern Languages & European Studies
George Elletson	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
Jack Evans	Swansea	History & Ancient History
Mitchell Evans	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
James Furnell	Birmingham 2010-11	Economics
Binyu Gao	Queen Mary, London	Politics
Tom Goddard	Bristol	Physics
Tim Gray	Exeter	History
George Grinnell-Moore	Leicester	Computer Science
Omar Habboush	Exeter	Economics & Finance
Tom Harries	Swansea	Business Management
Rhydian Harris	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
Ed Hemmings	Liverpool	Architecture
Andrew Henley	Exeter	English
Julian Hitomi	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
James Holloway	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
Oli James	Loughborough 2010-11	Business Economics & Finance
Henry Jinman	Exeter 2010-11	Philosophy & Politics with European Study

Alexander Jones	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
Nathan Jones	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
Will Kellard	Newcastle 2010-11	Economics
Tom Kelvin-Smith	Kent 2010-11	Law with Spanish
Matthew Kinloch	Durham 2010-11	Ancient History & Archaeology
Robert Kyle	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
Tim Law	Edinburgh	Economics
Jonathan Lawrence	Exeter	Economics & Finance with European Study
Adrian McDowell	University College, London	European Social & Political Studies
Liam McVeigh	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
Arthur Mills	<i>Applying 2009-10</i>	
Gareth Morgan	St. Catherine's College, Oxford	Molecular & Cellular Biochemistry
Ryan Nelson	Birmingham	Medicine
Robbie Oliver	Swansea	French with Business Studies
Tom Parfitt	Southampton	English & Philosophy
Adam Park	Nottingham 2010-11	Economics
Sam Parry	Reading 2010-11	Business Economics
Tom Penfold	Reading	Robotics
David Poynton	Aberystwyth	Geography
Matthew Poynton	Imperial College, London	Medicine
Tom Pugh-Jones	Oxford Brookes	Business & Management
Mustafa Rashid	Bristol	Medicine
Alex Robertson	Imperial College, London	Mathematics
Michael Robinson	Cardiff	Mechanical Engineering
Hugo Sacks	Royal Agricultural College 2010-11	Business Management
Edward Sargeant	Royal Agricultural College	Rural Land Management
Maher Shaban	Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania USA	Engineering
Robert Slade	Birmingham	Economics
Jonathan Sykes	Bristol UWE 2010-11	Computer Science
Harry Thomas	Westminster 2010-11	International Business
Tasker Thomas	Cardiff	Dentistry
Alex Townshend	Birmingham	Economics
James Walker	Cardiff	Philosophy
Sebastian Warwick	Bath 2010-11	International Management & Modern Languages
Charles Westwood	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	Classics
Findlay Williams	Swansea	Business Management
Dafydd Wood	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	
Tom Wragg-Smith	<i>Re-applying 2009-10</i>	

SIXTH FORM READING LIST

The following books have been suggested by the Heads of Department and 6th Form Tutors. No booklist can ever claim to be exhaustive and this is no different, containing as it does many personal favourites. What is undisputed, however, is that any pupil would gain a great deal from reading some (or all) of these, both those which are directly related to their subject areas and those of a broader appeal.

- Atom* – Jim al-Khalili
Black Holes, Wormholes and Time Machines – Jim al-Khalili
Quantum: A Guide for the Perplexed – Jim al-Khalili
The House of the Spirits – Isabel Allende
Four Laws that Drive the Universe – Peter Atkins
The Second Law: Energy, Chaos and Form – Peter Atkins
The Conference of the Birds – Farid Attar
Persuasion – Jane Austen
Lost Illusions – Honore Balzac
Old Goriot – Honore Balzac
The Lion Book of Bible Stories – Mary Batchelor
Krapp's Last Tape – Samuel Beckett
A Short History of Nearly Everything – Bill Bryson
The Master and the Margarita – Mikhail Bulgakov
If on a Winter's Night a Traveller – Italo Calvino
The Hero with a Thousand Faces – Joseph Campbell
The Outsider – Albert Camus
The Songlines – Bruce Chatwin
The Canterbury Tales – Geoffrey Chaucer
A History of the English-Speaking Peoples – Winston Churchill
Heart of Darkness – Joseph Conrad
The Strange Death of Liberal England – George Dangerfield
On the Origin of Species – Charles Darwin
The Discipline of Law – Lord Alfred Denning
Mathematics: the New Golden Age – Keith Devlin
Hard Times – Charles Dickens
Crime and Punishment – Fyodor Dostoyevsky
Lady Chatterley's Lover – D. H. Lawrence
To Kill a Mockingbird – Harper Lee
God's Undertaker – Has Science Buried God? – John C. Lennox
If This Is a Man – Primo Levi
Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores
- The Brothers Karamazov* – Fyodor Dostoyevsky
The Name of the Rose – Umberto Eco
Middlemarch – George Elliot
Nature's Building Blocks: An A-Z Guide to the Elements – John Emsley
Molecules at an Exhibition: Portraits of Intriguing Materials in Everyday Life – John Emsley
QED: The Strange Theory of Light and Matter – Richard Feynman
The Diamond as big as the Ritz – F. Scott Fitzgerald
The Great Gatsby – F. Scott Fitzgerald
In Code: A Mathematical Journey – Sarah Flannery
Madame Bovary – Gustave Flaubert
The Magus – John Fowles
Bad Science – Ben Goldacre
The Spire – William Golding
The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections in Natural History – Stephen Jay Gould
The Greek Myths – Robert Graves
The Return of the native – Thomas Hardy
The Old Man and the Sea – Ernest Hemingway
Industrial Design – John Heskett
Narziss and Goldmund – Hermann Hesse
The Iliad – Homer
The Odyssey – Homer
The Line of Beauty – Alan Hollinghurst
The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini
Dubliners – James Joyce
Ulysses – James Joyce
The Trial – Franz Kafka
Everlasting Lightbulbs: How Economics Illuminates the World – John Kay
Odes – John Keats
Eve Was Framed: Women and British Justice – Helena Kennedy
The Unbearable Lightness of Being – Milan Kundera
The Wealth and Poverty of Nations – David S. Landes
The Republic – Plato

the Hidden Side of Everything – Steven D. Levitt
Green Design: Design for the Environment – Dorothy Mackenzie
The Magic Mountain – Thomas Mann
Doctor Faustus – Christopher Marlowe
One Hundred Years of Solitude – Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Life of Pi – Yann Martel
The Seven Storey Mountain – Thomas Merton
On Liberty – J. S. Mill
Paradise Lost – John Milton
Cloud Atlas – David Mitchell
On the Blue Shore of Silence: Poems of the Sea – Pablo Neruda
A Nietzsche Reader – Friedrich Nietzsche and R. J. Hollingdale
Age and Guile Beat Youth, Innocence and a Bad Haircut – P. J. O'Rourke
The Metamorphoses - Ovid
The Rights of Man – Thomas Paine
The Gormenghast trilogy – Mervyn Peake
The Road to Reality – Roger Penrose
The Map That Changed the World: William Smith and the Birth of Modern Geology – Simon Winchester
Candide - Voltaire
The Flying Circus of Physics – Jearl Walker
Knowledge of Angels - Jill Paton Walsh
Night – Elie Wiesel

The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity – Roy Porter
The Language Instinct – Steven Pinker
The Cloudspotter's Guide – Gavin Pretor-Pinney
Genome: The Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters – Matt Ridley
A History of Western Philosophy – Bertrand Russell
The Roads to Freedom trilogy – Jean-Paul Sartre
Small is Beautiful – E. F. Schumacher
An Equal Music – Vikram Seth
Hamlet – William Shakespeare
Fermat's Last Theorem – Simon Singh
Longitude – Dava Sobel
One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich – Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn
An Actor Prepares – Constantin Stanislavski
The Red and the Black – Stendhal
The Problems of Mathematics – Ian Stewart
Manufacturing Processes for Design Professionals – Rob Thompson
The Aeneid – Virgil
St. John's Gospel (Authorised Version)

(Incidentally, *Bad Science*, *Candide*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Middlemarch*, *On Liberty* and *The Outsider* were all nominated more than once.) Thank you to all those who have contributed suggestions: JA, KHB, JB, RCB, MDC, ANC, ASC, SGC, JPD, MJD, SJE, AVF, PMG, JMH, JJH, DGH, LAH, GRK, DFL, KJM, JMcE, KAM, PS, AJT, PVS, DW, SMW and AJW.