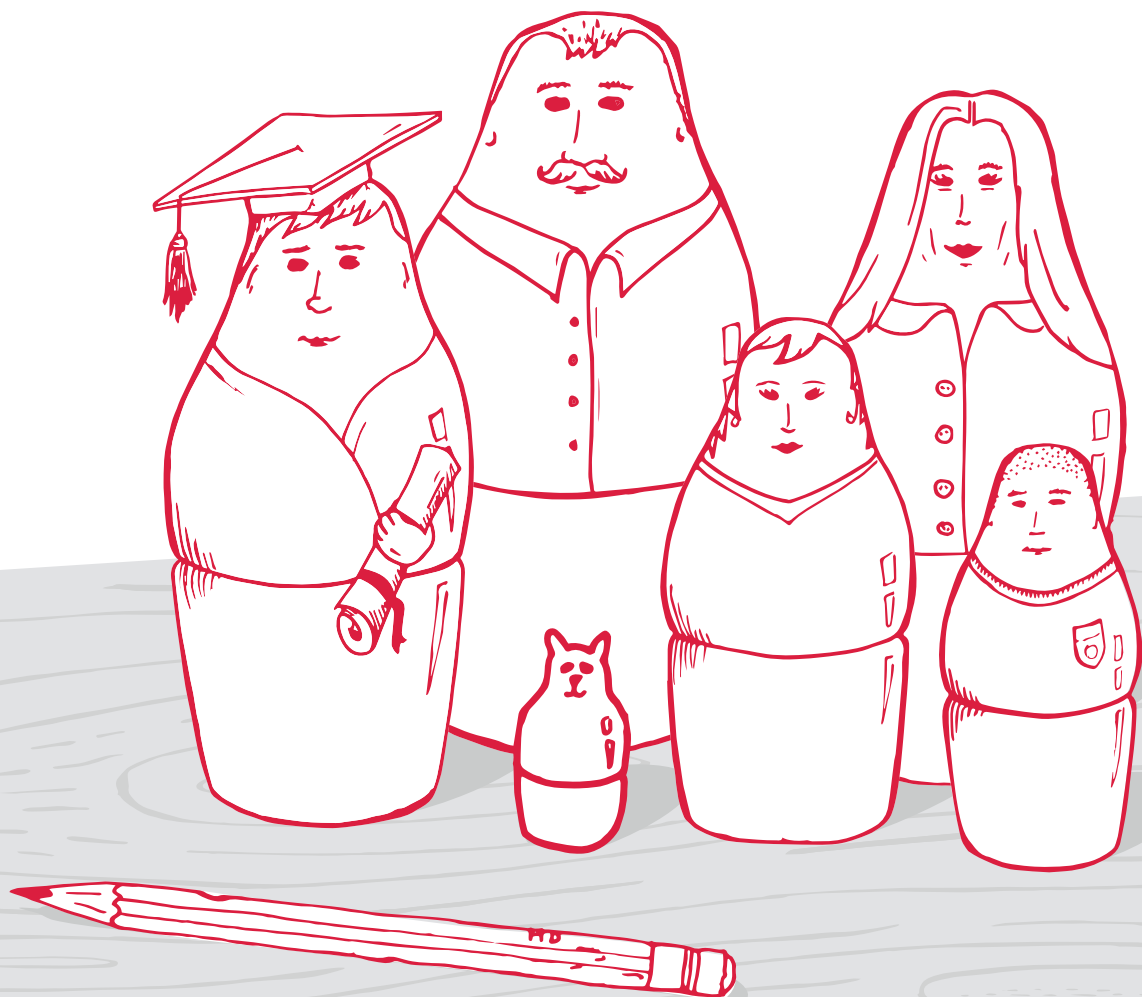


Studying at
Cambridge:
A guide for parents
and supporters

2016 entry



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Please note

This guide covers application and admission procedures for UK/EU applicants. Further details are available on the Undergraduate Study website (www.study.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/), including information for overseas/international students (from outside the EU).

Details are correct at the time of printing (June 2015) but should be checked against the Undergraduate Study website for the most up-to-date information.

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Welcome

If you're supporting someone who's thinking about applying to university for 2016 entry, it's likely that you have your own questions and concerns about them entering higher education. This guide has been produced to try to answer those questions, dispel any concerns and help you to advise your prospective applicant.

In the pages that follow you'll find information about the University of Cambridge, student support, student finance, our application process and more. We hope that you'll find this booklet useful, and if you have any further queries we'll be happy to help – just get in touch (see the back cover for contact details).

Cambridge explained: a collegiate university

As a 'collegiate' university, Cambridge comprises:

- University faculties and departments in different academic subjects
- a number of Colleges

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

The University:

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

The Colleges:

- admit undergraduate students
- organise small-group teaching (supervisions)
- are responsible for academic and pastoral care
- provide accommodation, places to eat and recreational facilities



Why Cambridge?

Are you wondering whether Cambridge might be right for the student you're supporting? The following are 10 reasons why we feel they should consider applying to the University.

Academic excellence

The University of Cambridge is one of the world's greatest universities. We provide challenging, flexible and individual tuition, and are consistently rated at the top of national and international league tables. Our teaching staff includes many national and world subject leaders, so students have the exciting opportunity to be taught by leading experts in their field.

The collegiate structure

Cambridge is a 'collegiate' university that comprises faculties and departments in different academic subjects, and a number of Colleges. Therefore, as well as being a member of a large university, students are also part of a smaller College community. The collegiate system offers a huge amount of pastoral and academic support for each student, providing a place for them to live, study and socialise (though students in all Colleges take the same course and examinations and are awarded degrees by the University, see p1).

Flexible learning

Many of our degree courses (also referred to at Cambridge as Triposes) encompass several subjects, with some papers available in a number of courses. Our courses are generally broad in the first year, before becoming increasingly focused in later years. This offers students flexibility by allowing them to explore their subject, strengths and interests before specialising. See online for more about our courses (www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacourse/).

More personal tuition

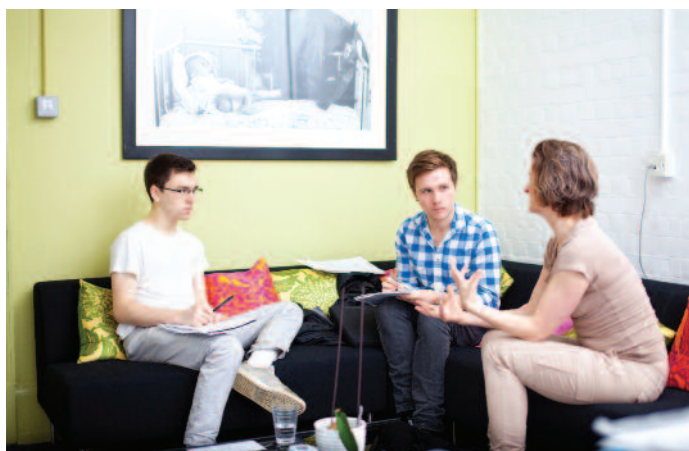
In addition to lectures, practicals and seminars, which are all organised by the appropriate University faculty or department, students receive regular small-group tuition (most often for between one and three students). These more personal sessions, called 'supervisions', allow students to explore course material in much greater depth, receive regular feedback on their work, investigate new approaches and clarify anything they have questions about.

Outstanding support

To help our students to succeed we provide expert teachers and lecturers, excellent library and computing facilities, superb labs and lots of support. Our extensive welfare networks ensure that students' individual needs can be recognised and met (see also p4-5). This commitment to the overall wellbeing of our students is reflected in our undergraduate student retention – we regularly have one of the highest rates in the UK (98.0 per cent, in comparison to 90.9 per cent nationally¹).

Accommodation guarantee

The Cambridge Colleges² guarantee accommodation to single undergraduates without children for three years (many also provide for fourth-year students). Students are only charged rent when they're in residence – most accommodation contracts are for 30-39 weeks – and the costs compare favourably with other universities (www.cam.ac.uk/accommodation/).



¹ Higher Education Statistics Agency, March 2015.

² With the exception of St Edmund's College.



Low cost of living

Cambridge is a relatively inexpensive place to study.³ Study costs are kept low because we're fortunate to have excellent computing and library facilities (see p4); and transport costs in the city are minimal as it's easy to get around on foot or by bicycle.

Substantial financial support

The University and Colleges are committed to the principle that no suitably qualified UK/EU student should be deterred from applying to Cambridge by their financial circumstances, and that no publicly funded UK/EU student should have to leave because of financial difficulties. Therefore, an extensive programme of financial support – including non-repayable Cambridge Bursaries of up to £3,500 per year – is provided to ensure that our undergraduates can meet the costs of their Cambridge education, regardless of background. See p6-7 for more information.

Everyone 'fits in'

At Cambridge, every student's background is the right background to be from and the diversity of our student body is valued and celebrated by all. We encourage our students to get involved socially and they certainly do – our 700+ student-run clubs and societies are testimony of that. Whatever students' interests are, there'll be plenty of others here that share them (see also p5).

Excellent career prospects

Cambridge graduates from all disciplines go into a very wide range of occupations. They're highly employable and greatly sought after due to the key transferable skills they develop and hone here (www.careers.cam.ac.uk). We have one of the highest graduate employment rates in the UK,⁴ are in the top three in the world for employer reputation,⁵ and are one of the top three universities targeted by Britain's leading graduate employers.⁶

³ For the academic year 2013-14, estimated living costs for a UK student at Cambridge were £7,850 (depending on lifestyle), compared to the National Union of Students (NUS) estimated average expenditure for living costs of £12,160 (studying in England but outside London).

⁴ Of the UK/EU students who graduated from the University in 2013, 91.7 per cent were in employment or further study within six months.

⁵ QS World University Rankings 2014.

⁶ The Graduate Market in 2014.

Student support

Throughout the collegiate University there are numerous individuals and services offering academic and personal support and guidance. This welfare system helps students make the transition from school/college to the University, and to successfully complete their course at Cambridge.

College welfare

The greatest strengths of the College system are the personal teaching and support that are available.

Within their College undergraduates have a Director of Studies (DoS) looking after their academic welfare and monitoring their progress, and a pastoral Tutor who can advise on any personal or financial matters. In addition, Colleges have a variety of other staff – such as a nurse, counsellor and/or chaplain – and Welfare Officer(s) on the College students' union committee who can all offer advice and support.

University support

The University's Counselling Service offers free and confidential professional counselling to students wishing to talk through any personal or emotional circumstances, and the Childcare Information Service provides advice to student parents. The Careers Service is available to help both current students and alumni make informed career choices.

Cambridge University Students' Union (CUSU) represents students at a University level and provides a range of student-run welfare services. There are six full-time officers – elected annually – and CUSU also employs two permanent professional Student Advisers to provide confidential and impartial support to students.

Further information

 www.cam.ac.uk/support/

Resources and facilities

The University has considerable resources and facilities available to support and enrich academic study, and help keep study costs down.

- The collegiate University has more than 100 libraries providing access to millions of books, journals and documents, as well as extensive electronic resources (many students rarely need to buy books).
- All students have access to up-to-date computing facilities in the departments and their College, and the Computing Service offers a programme of free IT courses.
- The University has nine specialist museums and collections open to students and the public.
- The Language Centre assists students wanting to develop their existing language skills or learn a new language from scratch, regardless of degree subject.

See the Undergraduate Study website for more details (www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacourse/).

Care leavers

The University holds the Buttle UK Quality Mark in recognition of our commitment to supporting prospective applicants and current students who are (or have previously spent time) in care. As well as the support that's available to all students:

- care leavers are entitled to year-round College-owned accommodation, should they wish to stay in Cambridge over the vacations
- Colleges are keen to support care leavers should any financial or pastoral issues arise

A number of events and activities are organised throughout the year that aim to raise the aspirations of young people who are or have previously spent time in care. If you or the student you're supporting would like more information, please see the website or contact the Cambridge Admissions Office (telephone: 01223 766872; email: care@cao.cam.ac.uk).

Further information

 www.cam.ac.uk/careleavers/



BUTTLE UK

Disabled students

The University's Disability Resource Centre (DRC) provides information and support to applicants and current students with any impairment/disability, long-term medical condition or injury, including those with:

- specific learning difficulties (SpLDs, eg dyslexia, dyspraxia)
- mobility impairments and injuries (eg wheelchair users, upper limb disorder/RSI)
- sensory impairments (eg hearing, visual)
- mental health difficulties (eg depression, anxiety disorder)
- long-term medical conditions (eg cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, HIV, diabetes, epilepsy)
- Asperger syndrome and autism

Applicants and their advisers/supporters are welcome to contact the DRC (see the back cover) for advice on College/department accessibility and facilities/resources (www.cam.ac.uk/accessguide/), to arrange visits and informally discuss their support needs.

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

Further information

📞 www.cam.ac.uk/disability/



Settling in

Arriving in Cambridge

Once offer-holders meet the conditions of their offer, their College will start to contact them about arrangements for when they come up to Cambridge. New undergraduates may also find it helpful to have a look at CUSU's online *Freshers' Guide*, which covers many aspects of starting university.

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

Meeting people

We encourage undergraduates to get involved socially – an appropriate work:life balance is essential for their wellbeing and it's important that they take advantage of the social/recreational (as well as academic) opportunities available here.

During freshers' week, College students' unions offer activities for new undergraduates, and CUSU runs the Societies Fair so students can find out about the various groups and clubs available.

Adjusting academically

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

However, it's important that your student understands that there'll be an initial adjustment period while they get to grips with the demands of their new timetable and workload. How long this takes naturally varies from student to student, and at Cambridge there are plenty of people to support undergraduates through this transition (including DoSs, supervisors, Tutors, nurses and counsellors), which is why almost all of our students stay and successfully complete their studies here (see also p2).

Safety

In general, Cambridge is a safe city in which to live and study, and the vast majority of students never experience any problems during their time here. However, students are expected to use the same common sense with regard to security and personal safety that they would use anywhere else.



Student finance

There are two higher education costs to consider – tuition fees and living (or ‘maintenance’) costs. The University has one of the most extensive financial support programmes in the country to ensure that, regardless of their background, students can meet the cost of their Cambridge education.

The information that follows relates to the situation for UK/EU students starting a course in October 2015 (unless otherwise stated). Figures for 2016-17 will be published on the Undergraduate Study website (www.cam.ac.uk/studentfinance/) as soon as they’re available. Further information about financial arrangements is also available from the GOV.UK website (www.gov.uk/studentfinance/).

Tuition fees

As at most English universities, in 2015-16 the tuition fees at Cambridge for UK/EU students¹ studying for an undergraduate degree are £9,000 per year for all courses.²

Tuition fee support

No UK/EU student has to pay their tuition fees while they’re studying.² They can take out a government Tuition Fee Loan and defer payment until after they’ve left university and are earning a minimum salary, at which point they’ll start to repay the loan in installments. Please refer to the appropriate student finance award agency for details (see opposite).

Living costs

An individual’s living costs as a student – food, accommodation, books/study materials, personal expenses – will obviously vary depending on their lifestyle and course, but the University is a relatively inexpensive place to study and we estimate that undergraduates should allow approximately £8,360 a year for such costs in Cambridge. Further details are available from the Undergraduate Study website.

Living costs support: government

As well as the Tuition Fee Loan, students from the UK are eligible for a government Maintenance Loan² for living costs (up to £5,740 per year for students from England in 2015-16). A portion of the Maintenance Loan is available to all students (regardless of financial circumstances), but eligibility for the full amount is dependent on household income.

As for the Tuition Fee Loan, the Maintenance Loan has to be paid back once the student has left university and is earning a minimum salary.

Students from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the EU should refer to the relevant student finance authority for information regarding support for living costs.

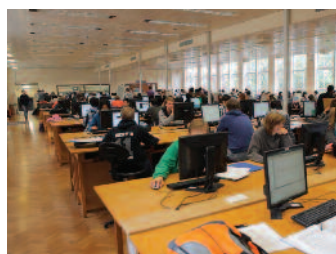
UK students from lower-income households may also be entitled to a non-repayable government grant for maintenance/living costs (up to £3,387 per year for students from England in 2015-16)² and certain groups of students (such as student parents and disabled students) may be eligible for additional government financial support. Please see the GOV.UK or relevant student finance award agency website for details.

Cost-effective Cambridge 2015-16	
What am I paying for?	How much does it cost per year?
Tuition fees	£9,000
Living costs total	c£8,360
Included in living costs total:	
Accommodation ³	£2,850-£3,600
	£3,300-£4,500 en suite
Kitchen facilities charges ³	£390-£570
College meals	£3-£6 each
Transport in Cambridge	Cheap or free!

¹ Islands’ students (those from the Channel Islands and Isle of Man) are classified as overseas students and so charged tuition fees at the overseas rate. As overseas students, they also have to pay College fees in addition to tuition fees (www.cam.ac.uk/uginternational/).

² Applies to students studying for their first undergraduate degree.

³ Figures based on an academic year of 30 weeks.



Living costs support: University

The University is offering non-repayable Cambridge Bursaries worth up to £10,500 over three years, or £14,000 over four years, to help UK/EU students² meet their living costs (usually accommodation costs) while at the University.

The value of each Bursary is based on household income and calculated on a sliding scale up to a maximum of £3,500 per year in 2015-16 (up to £5,600 for some mature students).

- If the household income is £25,000 per year or less, undergraduates will be eligible for the maximum non-repayable Cambridge Bursary of £3,500 per year.
- If the household income is between £25,001 and £42,620 per year, undergraduates will be eligible for a partial non-repayable Cambridge Bursary.
- There's no limit to the number of Bursaries available – every eligible student who applies will receive one.

Further details about the Cambridge Bursary Scheme can be found online (www.cam.ac.uk/cambridgebursary/).



Living costs support: College

There are a number of College-level awards that students can apply for, such as book and equipment grants to help with specific study-related costs; scholarships and prizes for academic, musical and sporting achievement; and hardship funds that support students who are facing unexpected financial difficulties. Information on these funds is available from each College (www.cam.ac.uk/collegeawards/).

Please note

Students are strongly advised to apply for financial support as early as possible. In the case of government support, students don't need a confirmed place at a university to apply.



Student finance award agencies

Arrangements for financial support for undergraduates studying in the UK differ depending on where they're from. Applicants should contact the relevant organisation for information and guidance.

Students from England

Student Finance England

☎ 0300 100 0607

🌐 www.gov.uk/studentfinance/

Students from Northern Ireland

Student Finance NI

☎ 0300 100 0077

🌐 www.studentfinance.ni.co.uk

Students from Scotland

Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS)

☎ 0300 555 0505

🌐 www.saas.gov.uk

Students from Wales

Student Finance Wales

☎ 0300 200 4050

🌐 www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Students from the EU

Student Finance Services Non UK Team

☎ +44 (0) 141 243 3570

🌐 www.gov.uk/studentfinance/

What we're looking for

Admission to Cambridge is highly competitive and those assessing applications have to make very difficult decisions when choosing between students. Applicants are assessed on their academic ability, their suitability for the chosen course and their potential to benefit from and flourish in the Cambridge environment.

The Colleges are committed to admitting the most able students irrespective of background, and each applicant is assessed individually, without partiality or bias (www.cam.ac.uk/admissionspolicy/).

There's no blueprint for an ideal Cambridge student and we want to give applicants as many opportunities as possible to demonstrate their strengths and potential. Therefore, each application is considered individually and using all information available, such as:

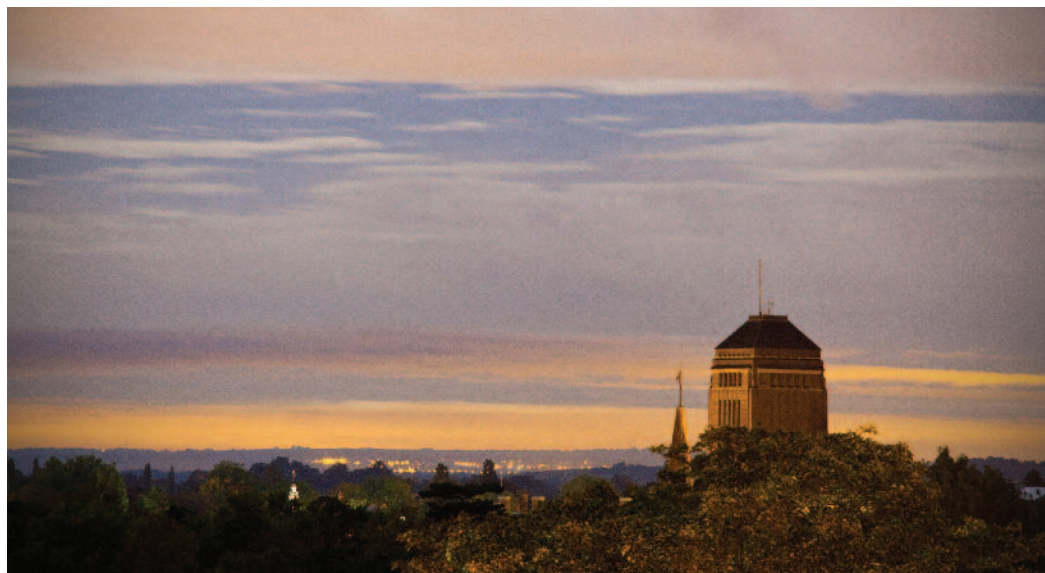
- academic record, including GCSE and AS (or equivalent) grades or scores, and A Level (or equivalent) grades, scores or predictions
- school/college reference
- personal statement
- any written work submitted (where requested)
- performance in any required tests
- contextual data, such as school performance data (where available)
- performance at interview (if interviewed)

Every application is assessed holistically. Admissions Tutors consider all of the information available together before making any decisions – no part of an application is considered in isolation.

Rigorous moderation procedures are in place that enable Colleges to compare the quality of their own applicants with those across the University before deciding who to make offers to. This helps to ensure that an applicant's chances of admission don't depend on College choice (or College allocation, in the case of open applications, see p13).

Will taking more A Levels improve an applicant's chances of admission?

Most applicants to Cambridge are studying three or four subjects at A Level. This is usually sufficient to show the breadth of an applicant's interests and their ability to manage a range of differing academic tasks. We would prefer applicants to develop a broader and deeper knowledge of the subjects most relevant/closest to their chosen course than to accumulate additional A Levels. In cases where an applicant has successfully taken an A Level early, we expect to see evidence of their ability to cope in Year 13 with a workload equivalent to three A Levels taken simultaneously.





Extenuating circumstances

If an applicant's education has been significantly disrupted or disadvantaged through health or personal problems, disability or difficulties with schooling, their school/college referee should complete our Extenuating Circumstances Form.

The information given on the form provides context within which Admissions Tutors can consider the applicant's academic record, and which can be useful when assessing their performance at interview (if interviewed).

Circumstances that this form should be used to advise us of include:

- a serious, acute or chronic medical condition (especially since the age of 14) which caused significant educational disruption
- significant caring responsibilities, or recent bereavement or serious illness within close family
- serious disruption to educational provision at school/college
- other circumstances where significant disruption has occurred – applicants or their referee are advised to contact a College admissions office as early as possible to discuss individual cases

The student should apply in the usual way (see p10-1) and their school/college referee should complete and submit the Extenuating Circumstances Form for receipt by the 15 October deadline. In those rare cases where the school/college is unaware of the circumstances, a doctor or social worker may complete and validate the form.

More information is available on the Undergraduate Study website at: www.cam.ac.uk/apply/.

How many A*s at GCSE do applicants need?

With the exception of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, there are no GCSE (or equivalent) requirements for entry to Cambridge.

An applicant's GCSE results are looked at as a performance indicator within the context of the school/college performance. See the Undergraduate Study website for further guidance about entry requirements (www.cam.ac.uk/entrancerequirements/).

Will extra-curricular activities help an applicant's chances of admission?

All admissions decisions are based on academic criteria – ability and potential. Excellence in extra-curricular activities will never compensate for lower academic potential.

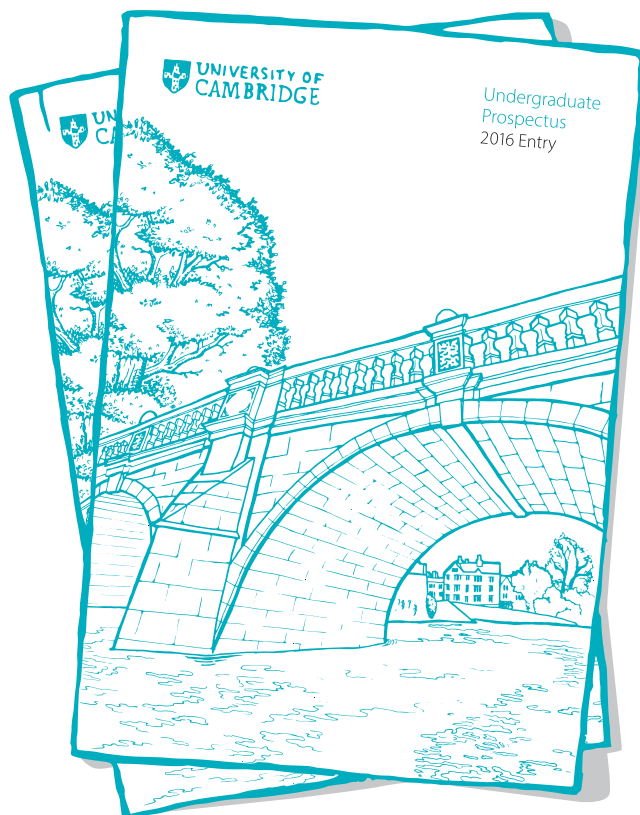
A student's participation (or not) in specific extra-curricular activities not relevant to the course applied for aren't taken into consideration and don't affect their chances of being made an offer of a place at Cambridge. However, other universities may differ. Students should check what all of their university options look for in candidates and take this into account when composing their personal statement.

Applying to Cambridge

Applications to universities in the UK are made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), and your student's school/college should be able to provide advice on making a UCAS application.

To apply to Cambridge, the process (summarised below) is much the same as that for other universities. However, at Cambridge the process starts earlier to allow time for all the application information to be gathered and considered. In addition, students are required to provide some information not covered by the UCAS application.

The five steps below outline the application process (with further detail given on the following pages). We also encourage prospective applicants to visit the University so they can see for themselves what it might be like to study here. There are more than 200 open days and events in Cambridge each year to choose from – details can be found online at: www.cam.ac.uk/outreachevents/.

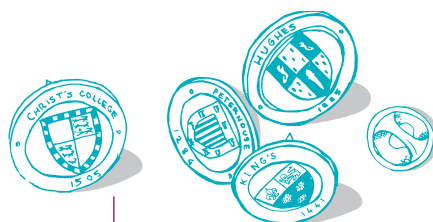


1

Course

Consider a course.

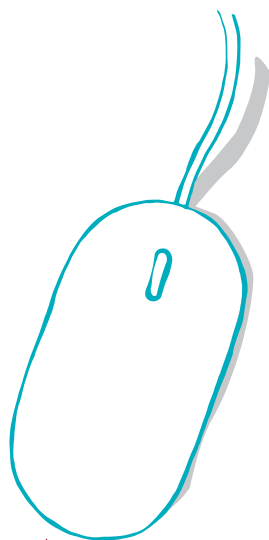
See **p12** and www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacourse/.



2

College

Consider where they'd like to live when they're here – applicants indicate in their UCAS application if they have a preferred College or want to make an 'open' application. See **p13** and www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacollege/.



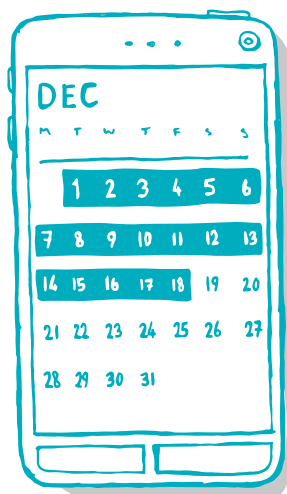
3

Apply

UCAS application¹ submitted online by 15 October.²

Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ) submitted by students shortly afterwards.

See **p14** and www.cam.ac.uk/apply/.

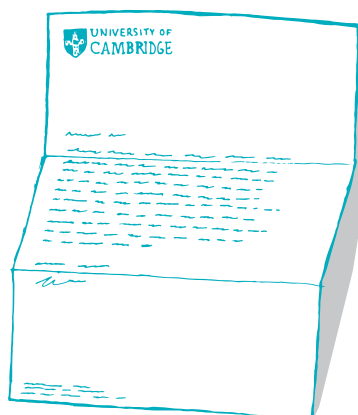


4

Interview

Conducted in December.

See **p14-5** and www.cam.ac.uk/interviews/.



5

Decision

Applicants will be advised of our decision before the end of January, see **p16**.

If a student attends a state/private school will this disadvantage their application?

No. The University and Colleges are committed to offering admission to students of the highest intellectual ability and potential, regardless of their background. We do not discriminate for or against applicants because of the type of school they attend (www.cam.ac.uk/admissionspolicy/). Analysis of the academic performance of undergraduates at Cambridge shows that students from different UK educational backgrounds do equally well here – there's no difference in degree performance of undergraduates from state and independent sectors.

Which Colleges are the 'best' for which subjects?

No Colleges are 'better' for certain subjects. Students on the same course, regardless of their College, are taught together by and in the University's academic faculties/departments, attending the same lectures, seminars and practicals.

¹ As well as a UCAS application, an additional application must be submitted by students living/attending school/college outside the EU at the time of application, applying for the Graduate Course in Medicine, and/or applying for an Organ Scholarship.

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



Choosing a course

Post-16 subject choices

The subject choices for sixth-form studies made in Year 11 (or equivalent) can have a significant effect on a student's higher education (HE) options.

When assessing applicants, we consider not only the individual subjects being offered but also the combination of these. Many Cambridge courses require prior knowledge of certain subjects and the Colleges expect such subjects to be passed, normally with an A or A* grade at A Level/grade 6 or 7 at Higher Level of the IB (or equivalent). Students who have decided on a university course should look at the course requirements before finalising their A Level/IB Higher Level subject choices to check their suitability for entry (www.cam.ac.uk/entrancerequirements/).

Those students unsure about the course they'd like to study should note that there are certain subjects that are essential for several courses at Cambridge. Therefore, choosing one or more of these can help keep their options open. Further advice about subjects and subject combinations that provide a more effective preparation for study at Cambridge can be found in our *Subject Matters* leaflet, available on our website (www.cam.ac.uk/ugpublications/).

Degree course choices

Choosing the right degree course is the most important decision students will make in the application process and they should think very carefully about their options.

Our Admissions Tutors are looking for the students who they believe have the greatest academic ability and potential, are best suited to the course applied for, and who'll most benefit from the teaching and learning environment offered at Cambridge. Therefore, when contemplating their degree course choice(s), applicants should be encouraged to consider the following points.

- **Identify their interests and motivations.** Students should consider what they most enjoy learning about – this may be particular topics within subjects currently being studied and/or something from their wider interests. In order to be motivated and successful at university, it's crucial that they have a genuine personal interest in their subject and enjoy studying it.
- **Be open-minded** and avoid limiting themselves to the more 'obvious' or familiar-sounding courses. For example, students interested in history, literature and language may like to consider courses that incorporate all these areas, such as Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic; Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Classics; Linguistics; and Modern and Medieval Languages, as well as English and History.

- **Research course outlines** and understand what they entail. Courses with the same title at different universities can vary greatly, with different entrance requirements, content, structures, options, and teaching and assessment methods.
- **Don't make assumptions about career prospects.** While a small number of professions do require certain qualifications, most employers don't specify degree subjects. For example, you don't need an undergraduate degree in Accountancy and Finance to become an accountant. If the student you're supporting has a particular occupation in mind, encourage them to research what people in that profession studied at university and their subsequent career path – they may be surprised at the range they discover.

Please note that students can't apply to both the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford in the same year.

Further information

- ① www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacourse/



Choosing a College

Cambridge students are members of a College as well as the University. If the student you're supporting applies to the University, they must indicate either a preference College or an 'open' application (see below) in their UCAS application.

A student's College is their base for the time they're at Cambridge – where they live, eat, do a lot of socialising, receive academic support, and where they often (though not always) have their supervisions.

Does College choice matter?

The Colleges are more alike than different and students quickly settle in whichever they attend, so applicants shouldn't spend too long choosing a College (see also information about the 'pool' system, p16).

The differences that do exist lie in the ambience, not the educational opportunities – there aren't any that are 'better' for particular courses than others (see p11). Also, for equally well-qualified students, making an open application or indicating a preference College makes no difference to applicants' chances of being made an offer.

How do students choose a College?

Some Colleges don't have places on all courses so applicants should check availability for their course first. Otherwise, we suggest they think of choosing a College in terms of where they'd like to live. They may find it useful to consider:

- **their age** – four Colleges are exclusively for students aged 21 or over (mature students)
- **their gender** – three Colleges consider applications from female students only
- **size** – number of students
- **appearance** and type of accommodation
- **particular facilities**
- **personal instinct/preference** – many students can't explain why they were drawn to their College other than it just 'felt right' for them

Further information about the Colleges is available online and students may find it helpful to visit a few (there's no obligation to apply to a College they visit).

Open applications

If a student doesn't mind to which College they belong, they don't have to choose – they can make an open application instead.

After the closing date, a computer program allocates each UK/EU open application to a College which happens, in that year, to have

received fewer applications per place in that subject than the average number across all Colleges.

Once allocated, open applications are treated exactly the same as any other – Admissions Tutors can't see whether an applicant made an open application or stated a preference College, and candidates won't be asked about their choice at interview.

Before submitting an open application, students should be sure that they'll be content whatever the allocation outcome as preferences can't be stated or changes made.

A few extra notes

- Advice about how *not* to choose a College (eg based on application statistics, specialisms of College Fellows) is also online.
- If an applicant has unusual qualifications or particular requirements, it's advisable to apply to a specific College having sought advice at an early stage.
- Students can only submit one application to Cambridge in a year, either choosing a preference College or an open application, and once the UCAS application has been submitted this choice can't be changed.

Further information

 www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacollege/



The application

UCAS application

To apply to the University, students must submit a UCAS application online, listing Cambridge as one of their options in the 'Choices' section (institution code CAM C05) as well as a College (UCAS campus) code or '9' for an open application.

To ensure that there's sufficient time for all applicants to be assessed equally and fairly, the deadline for applying to Cambridge for most students is 15 October.¹

As well as a UCAS application, students must submit an additional application if they're:

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

If there are extenuating circumstances which have caused significant educational disruption, the applicant's school/college referee (or doctor or social worker) should also complete and submit the Extenuating Circumstances Form (see p9) by 15 October.

Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ)

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

The SAQ enables us to collect information that's not part of the UCAS application but is useful when assessing candidates: for example topics covered as part of AS/A Level (or equivalent) courses (which helps interviewers decide which questions to ask).

To make a valid application to the University of Cambridge, students must submit their SAQ by the deadline set. In the majority of cases this will be 22 October.³ More information about the SAQ is available online (www.cam.ac.uk/saq/).

Interviews and tests

Depending on the course and College, an interview may be the only additional assessment we undertake. Alternatively, applicants may be asked to:

- send in one or two of their marked school essays, which may then be discussed in part of the interview
- take a test, either when they come for interview or beforehand. This may be a subject-based test organised by the College, the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA), the Cambridge Law Test or the Bio-Medical Admissions Test (BMAT)

Information about the additional forms of assessment used by each College for each course can be found on our website (www.cam.ac.uk/tests/) and the College websites. The College will advise applicants if they need to send in any work or sit a test and the arrangements for this.

¹ Other deadlines apply for applicants wishing to be interviewed in particular overseas countries (www.cam.ac.uk/uginternational/), and for some mature students (www.cam.ac.uk/mature/).

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

³ If a different deadline applies, the applicant's College will notify them of the date. If there's any doubt about the deadline by which they must complete the SAQ, they should contact the College as soon as possible to check.



Who we interview

All applicants with a realistic chance of being offered a place on their chosen course (more than 80 per cent of UK/EU applicants every year) are invited to attend an interview.

Applicants with a good examination record and a favourable reference are likely to be asked to attend an interview. However, due to the level of competition for places, there are applicants each year who aren't interviewed.

When the interviews take place

Most interviews take place during the first three weeks of December and applicants shouldn't make any unbreakable commitments or travel plans for this period.

Interview arrangements

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

If the student you're supporting is invited for interview, they'll be sent full details explaining when and where to go, what the format will be and what will be expected of them, including whether any written work will be set. Some applicants may be asked to stay overnight, in which case they'll not normally be expected to pay for accommodation or meals.

What interviewers are looking for

The main focus of interviews is to explore applicants' academic potential, motivation and suitability for their chosen course, as well as to assess how they'd respond to the teaching methods used here.

Applicants must be prepared to think hard in the interview but should also be reminded that very often there are no right or wrong answers to the questions asked. It's the process of reaching their answer – how they think around the topic being discussed and apply their current knowledge to less familiar problems – that's generally of most significance, rather than the answer itself.

More details and advice about interviews, including short films about how to prepare and what to expect, can be found on our website at: www.cam.ac.uk/interviews/.

Please note

We are aware of private companies that offer, at a charge, information and advice on our admissions process and interviews.

We DO NOT support or encourage any of these commercial enterprises. None of these companies has access to any information that is not already available free of charge to all schools, colleges and individual students from College admissions offices, the Cambridge Admissions Office or Cambridge University Students' Union.

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



The application outcome

All undergraduate admissions decisions are the responsibility of the Cambridge Colleges. Following the assessment of each application there are three possible outcomes.

1. **The student may be made an offer.** If they're still studying, an offer will normally be conditional and dependent on them achieving particular grades in their qualifications.
2. **Their application may be 'pooled'** for other Colleges to consider (see right).
3. **Their application may be unsuccessful.** On average, we receive around five applications for each place (www.cam.ac.uk/ugstatistics/), so every year we have to turn down many students with good grade predictions whom we'd like to have taken. Disappointing though this may be, we hope that all applicants find the process a useful experience and valuable preparation for their other university choices. We hope that students won't be deterred from applying by the prospect of not being successful – we can only offer places to those who apply.

If the student you're supporting is offered a place at Cambridge, they'll be informed by the College and through UCAS. They must then reply, as per UCAS requirements and deadlines.

If they accept Cambridge 'firmly', they must meet any conditions of the offer by 31 August of the admissions cycle in which they applied.

Clearing and the adjustment period

The University of Cambridge doesn't enter Clearing, nor will places be available in the August adjustment period. If your student's examination results are better than predicted and, having carefully considered their options, decide they wish to apply for a place at Cambridge, they'll need to apply in the following year's admissions round.

The pool system

The pool system is designed to ensure that the best applicants with the greatest potential are offered places, no matter which College they applied/were allocated to.

Directors of Studies in each subject meet during the admissions period to discuss the overall standard of applications so that they can see how their own College's applicants compare. If a College is over-subscribed for a particular course, strong applicants are put into the 'winter pool' for other Colleges to consider. All Colleges can consider pooled applicants and Colleges would rather admit a strong applicant from the pool than a weaker applicant who applied directly/was allocated to them.

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

Normally, around one in five applicants is pooled and, of these, around one in four (887 for 2014 entry) receives an offer of a place from a College other than the one they applied/were allocated to.

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

How you can help

If the student you're supporting intends to apply to Cambridge there are many ways you can help support them to do this.

Encourage wider academic engagement

We expect applicants to be taking an active interest in the subject they're applying for and look for evidence in their application of their motivation to learn about that subject area in their own time.

Therefore, students should be encouraged to read broadly and critically beyond the range expected for their current courses, and particularly in the areas of their A Level/IB Higher Level (or equivalent) subjects that they find most interesting. Guidance on suggested reading and other preparation can be found in the course information on our website (www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacourse/). Applicants should also have an awareness and understanding of subject-related issues readily visible in the wider world.

Come and visit

Though they don't need to visit Cambridge to apply to the University, your student may find it useful to do so. We offer a large number of open days, challenge days, masterclasses and residential events throughout the year to provide information about and preparation for study at the University. Details about all of these events are on our website at: www.cam.ac.uk/outreachevents/.

You might like to explore together which events may be of use to them, and help them to plan their visit and the questions they want to ask.

Think ahead

Because the UCAS application deadline for Cambridge is earlier than for most other universities, we advise students to start thinking about their application early and become familiar with the admissions process so they know what to expect and when. For example, the long summer break is the perfect time to think about what to include in their personal statement (www.ucas.com/personalstatement/). Why do they want to study that particular subject? What interests do they have within that field? How have they been pursuing their subject interests?

Remember the deadlines

Once the autumn term begins, 15 October can come round very quickly. You could help them to prepare for deadlines and respond promptly to correspondence from the University and/or UCAS. Students must regularly check both the inbox and 'spam'/'junk' folder of the email account they give in their UCAS application as they'll be contacted by the University and/or UCAS by email at various stages of their application.

Interview preparation

If your applicant is invited to attend an interview, you can support their preparation by encouraging them to talk confidently in conversation about the course they've applied for and explain what attracted them to their subject, as well as discuss their wider interests. See also p14-5 and www.cam.ac.uk/interviews/, and their school/college may be able to arrange a mock interview.

Been inspired yourself?

If you've been inspired and are interested in returning to full-time education to study for an undergraduate degree as a mature student, visit our website for further information at: www.cam.ac.uk/mature/.


Further information and advice

If you'd like more information or details about anything mentioned in this guide, or have questions that haven't been answered here, please visit the Undergraduate Study website or contact any College admissions office or the Cambridge Admissions Office.

 www.study.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/

Cambridge Admissions Office

Fitzwilliam House
32 Trumpington Street
Cambridge CB2 1QY

 01223 333308

 admissions@cam.ac.uk

Cambridge Colleges


 www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacollege/


Other useful contacts

In addition, you may wish to contact the following organisations for more information about applying to and studying at the University of Cambridge.

Cambridge University Students' Union (CUSU)

Old Examination Hall
Free School Lane
Cambridge CB2 3RF


 01223 333313

 access@cusu.cam.ac.uk

 www.cusu.cam.ac.uk/prospective/

Disability Resource Centre (DRC)

Keynes House
Trumpington Street
Cambridge CB2 1QA

 01223 332301

 disability@admin.cam.ac.uk

 www.cam.ac.uk/disability/

UCAS (for information about applying to higher education in general)

Rosehill
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham GL52 3LZ

 0371 468 0 468

 www.ucas.com