

Applying to Oxford and Cambridge



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What distinguishes Oxford and Cambridge?

- Collegiate
 - Supervisions or tutorials: weekly teaching in very small groups
 - Your home in Oxford or Cambridge
 - Outstanding student support, including financial support
- Innovative and challenging courses, inspired by cutting-edge research
- Superb academic facilities
- Excellent career opportunities



What characteristics do we look for in our students?

- Genuine subject interest
- Good 'fit' between your interest and aptitude, and your course
- Excellent academic track record: the average grade-profile of entrants (2.5 A*s at A Level) far exceeds standard offers
- Capacity for hard work (~45 hours per week)
- Core knowledge and technical fluency
- Ability to learn independently, with focus and determination
- Natural curiosity
- Vocational commitment (where appropriate)

Key information in selection

- Assessment is holistic within an academic context
 - Results and predicted grades in public exams
 - Appropriately contextualised
 - A Level or equivalent is likely to be the final arbiter
 - GCSEs: a factor, but not a major one
 - UCAS reference
 - UCAS personal statement
 - Admissions test results
 - Submitted written work
 - Interview performance

UCAS personal statement

- Assessed in its own right
- A potential starting-point for some interview questions
- Write with integrity
- Cover
 - Course interest
 - Relevant subjects you have studied
 - Super-curricular exploration – which is vital to showing interest in your subject, and to building knowledge and understanding
- Extra-curricular activities do **not** figure in our considerations

Cambridge admissions assessments

- Subject-based aptitude tests
- Pre-interview admissions assessments
 - Sat in school/college in late October/early November
 - Pre-register via school/college by 1 October (BMAT) or 15 October (others)
- At-interview admissions assessments
 - Sat at time of interview
- Know the format and practise against the clock
- Used holistically alongside other indicators for both shortlisting for interview and offers of places

Oxford admissions tests

- Key information

- www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/tests?wssl=1

- Sat in school/college in late October/early November (except LNAT)
- Pre-register via school/college by 1 October (BMAT), 5 October (LNAT) or 15 October (all other admissions tests)
- Know the format and practise against the clock
- Used principally for shortlisting for interview

Interviews: nature and format

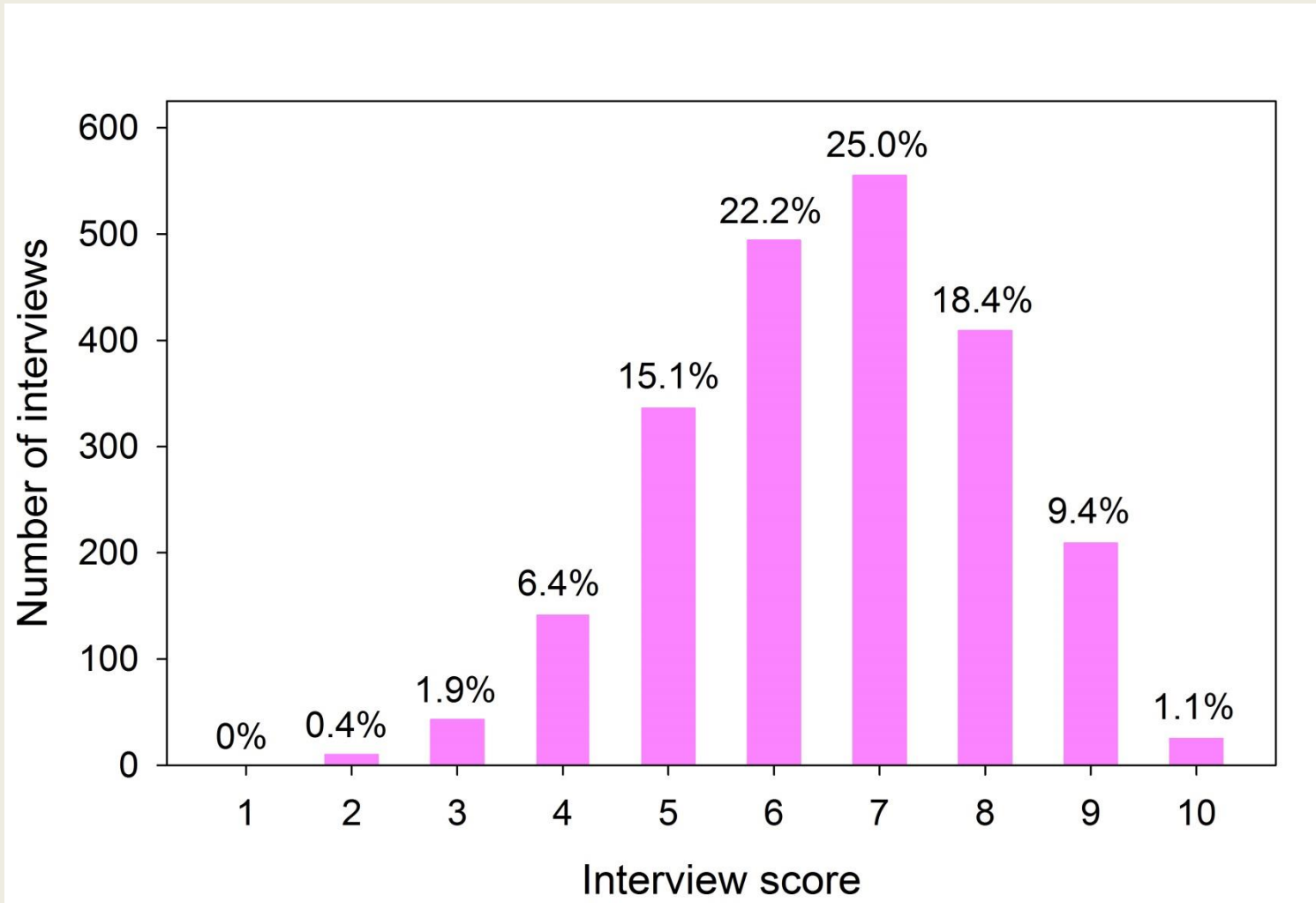
- Interactive tests of core knowledge, aptitude and interest – calling them ‘interviews’ is arguably misleading
- Typically 2-4 interviews of 20-30 minutes each
- Conducted by subject specialists, and focused on your subject
- Problem-solving scenarios, discussion and technical working
- Focused and challenging academic questions
- Prompting from, and questions to, interviewers
- **We have no hidden agenda and ask no trick questions**

Interviews: what do we talk about?

- Academic content covered in school or college
- Reading and other super-curricular exploration
- Questions emerging from your UCAS personal statement
- Submitted written work
- Prompt material



Interviews: most applicants do well



Possible pitfalls

- Wrong subject
- Track-record in exams or exam predictions raise questions
- Poor organisation
- Lack of super-curricular exploration – often first evidenced by a thin UCAS personal statement
- At interview:
 - Core subject knowledge insecure
 - Little wider subject knowledge
 - Insufficient analytical ability, synoptic ability or clarity of thought
 - Unwillingness to re-think ideas in the face of contrary evidence

Summary: what makes a difference?

- Hard work and hard thought
 - Right subject
 - Good GCSEs, given your school context, and excellent predictions and results at A-Level or equivalent
 - Sustained wider reading and analytical thinking
 - Practise for admissions tests
 - Revision in advance of interview

Questions ?

