

M|P|W

Oxbridge Programme

Oxbridge Preparation Programme

2026/2027



www.mpw.ac.uk

MPW has been helping students get into Oxford and Cambridge since 1973. In fact, our college was founded with the explicit aim of doing just that.

Since then, we have grown into one of London's leading independent sixth-form colleges. Now we prepare over 600 students aged 14-20 for exam success in a broad range of subjects at GCSE and A level and our relaxed, collegiate atmosphere and small class sizes provide excellent preparation for life at university. Every year we prepare between twenty and thirty students for application to Oxford and Cambridge. Over the past 20 years we have helped close to 700 applicants, many of whom have been successful in winning a place.

Making the cut

First of all, let's be honest. No matter how much preparation a student is given, he or she has to be an excellent candidate to stand a chance of being offered a place at Oxford or Cambridge. Competition for places is intense for all subjects. Statistics showing the number of applicants, the number of offers made and places gained are available on both universities' websites. Across the board, a candidate has a roughly 1 in 6 chance of obtaining a place.

The minimum requirement is AAA at A level but it is much more likely that you will be asked for A*AA or A*A*A, the higher offer becoming increasingly typical for science courses and medicine. Whilst the universities can be sympathetic to extenuating circumstances, achievement of these grades is effectively non-negotiable. You should note that there is no advantage to studying four A levels and doing so may well result in a four-grade offer.

Neither Cambridge nor Oxford require specific GCSEs but they do say that most applicants have a high proportion of A and A* grades. With the recent changes to A levels, many students will no longer be sitting modular A levels and will therefore not be able to submit AS grades and unit scores as part of their application. Both universities are clear that this will not put any student at a disadvantage.

Oxford and Cambridge also set admissions tests for the majority of their courses. Depending on your course and university, these are assessments that you may sit before interview or if you go up for interview. They do not require you to learn anything beyond the specification of the relevant A level(s) but rather are designed to test to your capacity to think and apply your knowledge.

There is no one factor that determines whether you will be offered a place. Predicted or actual grades at A level or equivalent, performance in admissions tests, school references, the personal statement and performance at interview are all reviewed carefully before a candidate is offered a place or rejected.

We can offer help in three main areas:

- our mock Oxbridge interviews
- a personal statement review service
- individual tuition to prepare for specialist tests

The interview

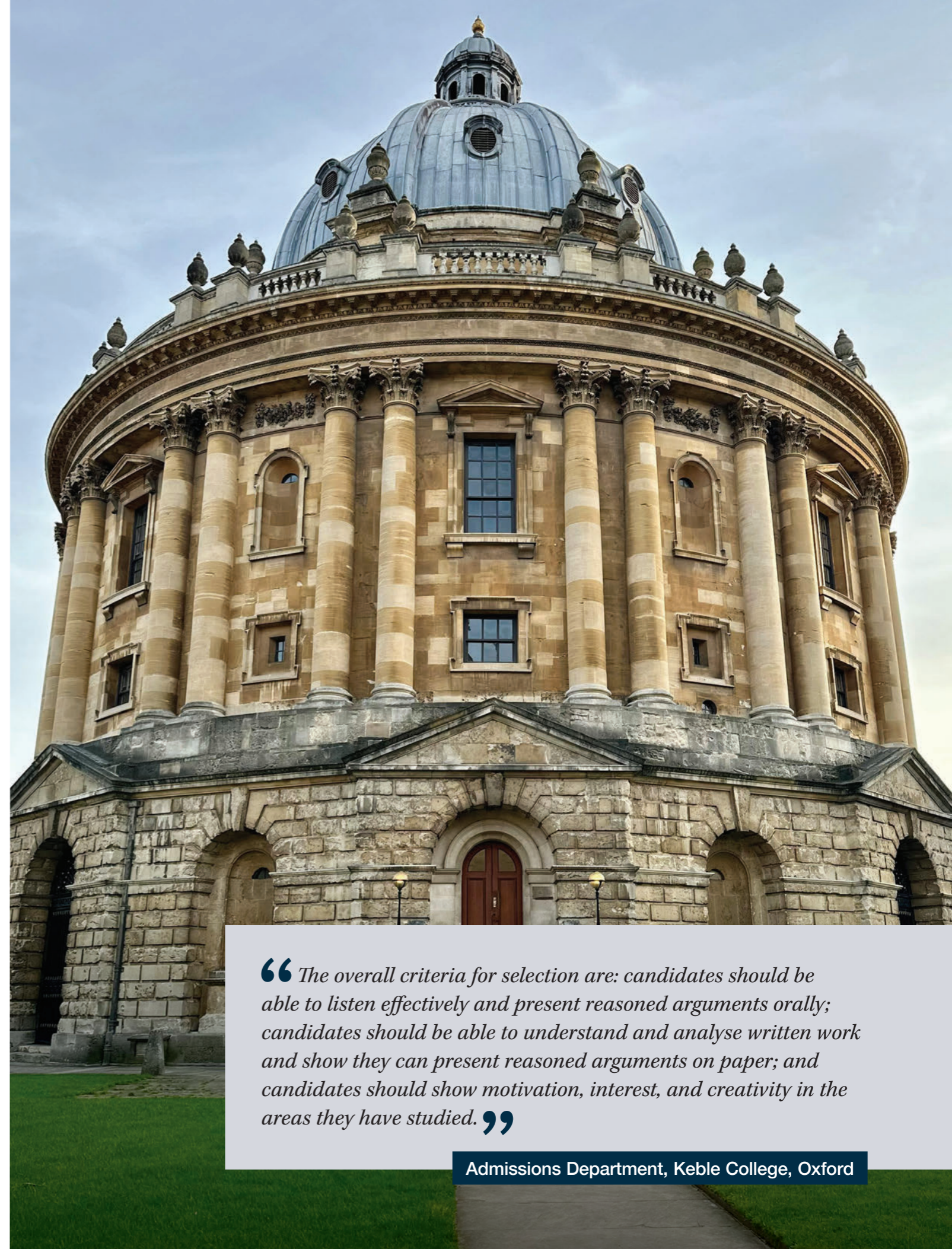
There's no real mystery about what you are likely to be asked at the interview. The questions are intended to engage you in an academic discussion that enables the college to find out about your intellectual abilities, whether they will enjoy teaching you and, last but not least, your potential for future development. Students who are likely to do well at interview are those who have read well beyond the demands of their A level courses and can demonstrate both depth and breadth of learning in their subject(s) of choice.

At interview, you need to prove that you can:

- listen effectively;
- absorb facts and ideas presented to you and assess their relevance;
- respond to problems and criticisms; and
- present arguments in a logical, clear manner.

Questions often tend to be open-ended, so there will be no 'correct' answer. The interview is not in the first instance a test of your existing knowledge but of your power of reasoning and your ability to think critically and discuss issues.

Interviews usually last between 20 and 45 minutes.



“The overall criteria for selection are: candidates should be able to listen effectively and present reasoned arguments orally; candidates should be able to understand and analyse written work and show they can present reasoned arguments on paper; and candidates should show motivation, interest, and creativity in the areas they have studied.”

Admissions Department, Keble College, Oxford



Interviewers will be looking for evidence of general interest in and enthusiasm for your chosen subject and the motivation to work hard.

How will MPW mock interviews help you in the real thing?

It is worth saying what our mock interviews are not: they are not intended to enable you to prepare material for an interview. Our purpose is to give you an idea of what an actual interview is like. To that end, the interview experience should enable you to identify your strengths and weaknesses both in using your subject knowledge and in interview techniques. Since applicants are encouraged to read beyond the bounds of their subject specifications as part of their preparation, we will ask questions which explore your ability to think independently. Having an analytical and critical discussion over a wide range of issues with strangers in a setting at once formal and unfamiliar is effective preparation for the real thing.

How does the MPW interview process work?

Interviews are held by senior staff and external experts at MPW and last for up to 40 minutes, after which verbal feedback is given, as well as a written report. Both written and verbal feedback will assess you on your:

- passion for your chosen subject;
- subject knowledge;
- responsiveness to new material within a tutorial situation;
- ability to think analytically and creatively;
- evidence of reading;
- knowledge of your chosen course and college; and
- verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

In addition, the report will offer suggestions about how you might improve your chances of success, especially in relation to further reading and research.

All mock interview candidates are given a copy of the MPW Guide *Getting into Oxford and Cambridge*. This provides detailed, up-to-date advice and information about all aspects of Oxford and Cambridge admissions.

You may wish to book a second interview in order to have the opportunity of acting on the recommendations of a previous report and to become familiar with different interview styles.

Our staff

Our tutors are highly qualified and many have studied at Oxford and Cambridge themselves. During the Oxbridge application cycle, through our extensive network of contacts, we can provide experienced interviewers who are experts in their subjects and who understand what Admissions Tutors are looking for in an Oxbridge candidate.

Organising a mock interview

Please contact Mat Carmody at:

Mander Portman Woodward
90-92 Queen's Gate
London
SW7 5AB
Tel: 0207 835 1355
email: mat.carmody@mpw.ac.uk

Timetable

Mock interviews are held from September onwards.

Oxford

Interview dates Early December
Notification dates Early January/Mid-January

Cambridge

Interview dates Early December
Notification dates Middle to end of January

Fees for MPW mock interviews

One mock interview with a written report: **£240**

Further mock interviews can be arranged for an additional fee.

Our tutors read over 300 every year, so they have a wealth of experience to call on in assessing what makes a good personal statement.

MPW UCAS Application Consultation

We can provide advice on how to complete your UCAS application, with a particular focus on the personal statement.

Most candidates will present themselves with excellent grades, predicted or actual, and glowing references from their teachers. They may also have taken specific admission tests or submitted written work. The personal statement is one more element which can be used to judge whether or not a candidate will be suitable for their courses.

Be assured they are not expecting a literary masterpiece or a work of stunning originality. They want to hear about you, and in particular:

- *What interests you about your chosen subject and why?*
- *Why you want to study the subject(s) you've applied for?*
- *What you have learnt/done outside your school/college?*

- *What have you done/studied that has added to your knowledge of your subject?*
- *What do you do apart from studying and why is this important to you?*
- *What do you hope to do after you've finished university, if you have any idea?*

Over the years, we have often been asked to give an opinion on the quality of a student's personal statement. When you've finished your first draft, we can provide you with feedback on its strengths and weaknesses. We often list additional reading/research areas that would make the personal statement more compelling and we can give you guidance on how it might be improved. What we won't do is write it for you.

*Our UCAS Application Consultation costs **£135**.*



Individual Tuition for Oxford and Cambridge Tests

Over the past few years, more and more students have been achieving A and A* grades at A level. As it has become harder to identify academically outstanding students through their A level results, both Oxford and Cambridge now rely on additional testing systems when selecting candidates for interview.

A full list of these tests and the dates on which they are sat appears on the last page of this prospectus. The tests aim to highlight the natural intelligence and academic potential of the candidate and, in doing so, widen access to the universities. It is therefore difficult to prepare for the tests; students have to rely on their innate intellectual ability to complete them. In theory, no student, whatever their school, should be at a disadvantage.

The style of testing also differs from what many school leavers will be used to. Whereas A levels often test factual recall, the Oxbridge written exams look for analytical and critical capabilities. There is no pass mark for these tests and you will certainly not be expected to achieve 100%. Furthermore, your score will not be the deciding factor but one criterion amongst many determining whether you are called for interview or offered a place.

Testing happens at various stages during the application process. Tests for Oxford courses and some Cambridge courses are sat in early November at your school. The results of these tests can then play a part in determining whether you are called to interview. Other Cambridge courses will ask you to sit a test if you are called for interview in early December.

Don't let taking these tests put you off applying. If you are serious about wanting a place at a top university, you should be able to do well without masses of additional tuition or extra work. It is very important, however, to go online and get full details of what the tests entail and to do some practice papers if they are provided.

If you feel that you need extra help to pass these exams, we can arrange individual tuition with a specialist tutor for **£96** per hour.

N.B. This tuition can only be given at MPW on weekdays between 9am and 7pm.

Oxbridge Key dates 2026-2027

1 June 2026

Registration for Oxford's pre-interview written assessments opens.

20 June 2026

Test booking for Oxford's pre-interview tests opens.

23 June 2026

UCAT booking begins. Registration for Cambridge's pre-interview ESAT/TMUA assessments opens.

20 July 2026

Booking test slots for registered candidates for Cambridge's pre-interview ESAT/TARA/TMUA assessments opens.

1 August 2026

LNAT registration begins.

18 August 2026

Booking test slots for registered candidates for Oxford's pre-written assessments.

1 September 2026

LNAT testing begins.

14 September 2026

The closing date for submitting access arrangements for Oxford's and Cambridge's pre-interview admissions tests.

15 September 2026

The closing date for registering for the LNAT.

16 September 2026

The closing date for booking a UCAT sitting.

24 September 2026

The last test day for UCAT.

28 September 2026

The closing date for booking test slots for Oxford's and Cambridge's pre-interview assessments.

15 October 2026

The closing date for all Oxbridge applications (6pm). LNAT must be taken by this date.

12 - 16 October 2026

Oxford's and Cambridge's pre-interview written assessments.

7 November 2026

The closing date for the submission of portfolios for Fine Art (Oxford).

10 November 2026

The closing date for the submission of written work (Oxford).

16 November 2026

Results of Oxford's and Cambridge's pre-interview written assessments sent to candidates.

End of November 2026

Applicants will have found out if they have been invited to interview.

30 November-18 December 2026

Oxford and Cambridge interviews (some colleges online, some in person).

January 2027 onwards

Applicants will find out if they have been made an offer.



Which written tests are required by the entrance process?

Oxford Tests

Course	Test
Biomedical Sciences	ESAT
Computer Science	TMUA
Computer Science and Philosophy	TMUA
Economics and Management	TARA
Engineering Science	ESAT
Fine Art	Fine Art practical
History and Economics	TARA
History and Politics	TARA
Human Sciences	TARA
Law (Jurisprudence)	LNAT
Mathematics	TMUA
Mathematics and Computer Science	TMUA
Mathematics and Philosophy	TMUA
Mathematics and Statistics	TMUA
Medicine	UCAT
Medicine (Graduate Entry)	UCAT
Music	Music Performance Test
Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)	TARA
Physics	ESAT
Physics and Philosophy	ESAT
Psychology (Experimental)	TARA
Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics	TARA

Cambridge Admissions Tests

Course	Test
Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic	If shortlisted for interview (all colleges)
Architecture	If shortlisted for interview (all colleges)
Asian and Middle Eastern Studies	If shortlisted for interview (all colleges)
Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology	Pre-interview: ESAT
Classics	If shortlisted for interview (all colleges)
Computer Science	Pre-interview: TMUA
Design	If shortlisted for interview (all colleges)
Economics	Pre-interview: TMUA
Engineering	Pre-interview: TMUA
English	If shortlisted for interview (all colleges)

Course	Test
Foundation Year in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	If shortlisted for interview (all colleges)
Geography	If shortlisted for interview (Hughes Hall, St Edmund's)
History	If shortlisted for interview (Hughes Hall, Peterhouse, St Edmund's)
History and Modern Languages	If shortlisted for interview (all colleges)
History and Politics	If shortlisted for interview (Hughes Hall, Peterhouse, St Edmund's)
History of Art	None
Human, Social and Political Sciences	If shortlisted for interview (Hughes Hall, King's, Newnham, Peterhouse)
Law	Pre-interview: LNAT
Linguistics	If shortlisted for interview (all colleges except Christ's)
Mathematics	If shortlisted for interview (Churchill, King's, Lucy Cavendish, St Edmund's, Trinity)
Medicine	Pre-interview: UCAT (University Clinical Aptitude Test)
Medicine (Graduate Course)	Pre-interview: UCAT (University Clinical Aptitude Test)
Modern and Medieval Languages	If shortlisted for interview (all colleges)
Music	If shortlisted for interview (Downing, Girton, Gonville & Caius, Jesus, Magdalene, Murray Edwards, Newnham, Queens', Robinson, Selwyn, St John's, Trinity, Trinity Hall)
Natural Sciences	Pre-interview: ESAT
Psychological and Behavioural Sciences	If shortlisted for interview (Homerton, Newnham, Selwyn, St Edmund's)
Veterinary Medicine	Pre-interview: ESAT

ESAT = Engineering and Science Admissions Test
TARA = Test of Academic Reasoning for Admissions
TMUA = Test of Mathematics for University Admission



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