

Oxbridge Applications

Is Oxbridge right for me?

Considering whether it's for you – student's view :

'Don't be put off by the rumours! Whilst Oxbridge does have a reputation for being a posh/geeky, inaccessible institution with a ridiculously rigorous workload it's not (completely) true.

I, like many others, was initially put off from applying by this same idea and only applied to get a better reference at school. I was under the impression that I would never be able to get in, wouldn't fit in there and could never handle that level of work and intended to reject the offer even if I did get one.

After attending the interviews however, and meeting some of the tutors, I absolutely loved it and can't say I have for a second regretted the choice to attend.

Oxbridge is a place where any individual can fit in, with a society and college to fit every type of person.

Whilst the workload can be quite large, most students are passionate about the subject, and the tutorial system gives students the chance to really engage with their topics and so one learns quickly to appreciate the work and, more importantly, how to skim read and churn out essays at a very fast pace.

So if you love your subject, and want a truly engaging university experience, which combines study with a whole host of extracurricular activities, events and traditions; throws in an awesome social life to be shaped to your desire and pushes you to achieve your potential then Oxbridge is definitely for you.

Choosing between the two

Many aspects are shared by both universities including tutorial system, bursaries and excellent facilities. Where they do differ however is:

- Accommodation - whilst some Oxford college only offer 2 years accommodation, all Cambridge colleges provide accommodation for the three years.

- Atmosphere - Cambridge is slightly smaller than Oxford, having more beautiful architecture and a more serene atmosphere. Oxford on the other hand boasts a better night life and some more modern colleges.
- Course choice will be an easy way to help you decide here. Only very specific courses are offered by each. Oxford for instance doesn't offer the study of Economics by itself or the study of Veterinary science at all, whilst Cambridge does but misses out on some of Oxford's renowned joint courses.
- Whilst the two universities are always competing, in general Oxford is considered better for Arts subjects and Cambridge for Maths and Science, but check the league tables to see where each stand for your particular choice.
- Even with the same subjects, studying it at one institution may be quite different from studying it at the other due to course content and tutors, so check out these to figure out your preference

Choosing a college

With both universities having around 30 colleges, it can be a daunting and tough decision but it is perhaps one of the most important.

You'll spend most of your university life in your college, make friends there, attend parties and social events and join its societies and so it's important to choose the college that's right for you.

Whilst a lot of people 'learn to love' their college, if you select the right one the first time round you're far more likely to have a good Oxbridge experience, so do spend time browsing through them to decide.

The best thing to do is visit and check out their websites but here are a few pointers to help you know what to look out for.

- Atmosphere - Each of the colleges will be famous for its own specific things, some for academic excellence and others for sporting achievements and student vibe. Try to bear these in mind as this will determine the feel of the college. If you get the chance try looking around the colleges and speaking to students to get an idea of this. Another good way is to get a feel for the 'real' college is to read the alternative prospectus that can be found for most colleges on their website.

- Accommodation - At Oxford, some colleges require you to live out during your second year so this may be something to bear in mind. Colleges each have very different facilities in terms of sports, IT facilities and kitchen/bathroom space. Whilst most colleges are quite well equipped in all these regards you may want to research further to see which is right for you.

- In addition to facilities, colleges vary greatly in terms of buildings and grounds. Some have a bigger bar whilst others have their own deer park or lake and the architecture can also vary greatly so try to have a look round before you apply.

- Location - whilst a lot of people decide based on a college's distance to the main street and university facilities this should not really be a deciding factor. Most places are within walking distance and often own a bike which makes journeys fairly quick and so distance is the least important of issues.

- Teaching - It is not always the case that your college tutors will be those that teach you but in the majority of cases where it is their specialist subject they will choose to teach you. It may be worth therefore looking up the tutors for your particular interests to see which college they are affiliated to.

- Pooling - Oxbridge does have a system of pooling where you can be sent to other colleges for interviews despite your first preference. If this does happen to you don't worry as it can be for a number of reasons including because they think you're better suited to another college. In any case most of the colleges are pretty welcoming and if you don't fit in at your college there's always a whole heap of university wide societies and facilities available to help you make the most of your experience.'

Oxbridge deadline

For all courses at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, your UCAS application must reach UCAS by the 15th October.

Remember that Oxbridge applications go far sooner than those applying for other universities so make sure to set yourself personal deadlines to get it all done in time.

It's best to have the personal statement done by the end of summer, or in the first couple of weeks of school, so that you can get a few people to read over it and give you feedback.

Essays and Tests

Each subject will have its own application process so research into this before applying, many require additional essays or tests to be sat so be in the know about what's required for yours.

Preparation for each test can always be found online so we recommend you check out sample papers and practice questions.

Interviews

Preparation for interviews begins far earlier than when you apply for Oxford as many things you have previously read or done will help you in the application process. Continue to build on this knowledge by keeping up to date with the most recent news on your subject.

While it often varies, some colleges only get in touch within the few weeks before the interview date - therefore, be prepared by continuing to read around your subject so that you aren't rushed once you have received the letter.

Interviews for Cambridge generally only require a day of your time whilst Oxford likes its applicants to stay for a few days. Nearer the date, it's most important to spend your time relaxing.

Brush up on a few things but try to keep calm and enjoy yourself so that you're comfortable enough to perform your best in the interviews.

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/>

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/>