

February 2025

HE Early Applicants Information Presentation



Prince Henry's Grammar School
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TRUST



Applying to Oxford or Cambridge



Oversubscribed

- 23,000 applicants for 3,300 places at Oxford (2023)
- 21,500 applicants for 3,500 places at Cambridge (2023)
- Average 7 applicants per place
- 68% Oxford undergraduates from state schools (8% increase since 2018), 73% at Cambridge
- Most competitive courses: Economics, Computer Science, Medicine, Biomedical Science, History and Politics, Physics, PPE, Law, Maths, Natural Sciences (Camb)
- Over 85% of students had A*AA or better

Success rate for applicants (2022)	Best three A level results
60.8%	A*A*A*
19.8%	A*A*A
10.6%	A*A A
2.5%	A A A
6.3%	Not just A* or A



Typical Offers

At Cambridge

- A*AA non-science subjects
- A*A*A science subjects

At Oxford

- A*A*A – AAA depending on course

Also

- Admissions tests for most courses
- Some pre-interview taken at school, some at interview
- Written work also required
- See websites for further details



How do you get an A*?

- Top 2-5% of grades in total
- More A* grades awarded in Maths, sciences and Art
- Fewer A* grades in English, Humanities and social sciences
- Offers tend to reflect this



What is different about Oxbridge?

- Broad range of academic courses
- World-class teaching – lectures, seminars/classes, practicals
- Small-group teaching – tutorials/supervisions
- Excellent facilities and resources
- Academic, pastoral and financial support
- Wide range of extra-curricular options
- Excellent graduate opportunities, irrespective of degree discipline

You can only apply to either Oxford or Cambridge



University and Departments

As a student, you're a member of the University, a department AND a College. The University:

- Plans course content;
- Organises lectures, seminars, practicals and projects;
- Plans assessments and sets exams;
- Awards degrees;
- Runs the Careers Service;
- Co-ordinates Disability Support;



Colleges

A College is like a mini campus, providing a home and a base for students. When considering Colleges, think about where you'd like to live. Make an 'open application' if you don't mind. Colleges:

- Admit students;
- Organise academic and pastoral care;
- Provide accommodation, dining and recreation;
- Organise small-group teaching aka 'supervisions';
- Provide facilities for academic study.
- Specific colleges linked to our region – Selwyn (Cambridge), Worcester (Oxford) – others – Keeble (Oxford), King's (Cambridge)



Foundation Year

Cambridge – Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Oxford – As above plus Chemistry, Engineering and Materials Science

Both require at least 3 Bs and are for students who have experienced significant disadvantage or disruption to studies (e.g. care leaver, young carer, significant health-related absences, refugee, homeless etc)

Fully paid for year with progression to an Oxford or Cambridge degree course



What are Oxbridge looking for?

- Genuine subject interest – motivation and enthusiasm
- Academic ability and potential
- Good 'fit' between applicant and course

Advice is to pick the course that you enjoy most

This is not necessarily the one where you get the highest grades, but the one which you love.



Application timeline

- Apply by 15th October 2025 – to university and college (or make open application)
- Register for any admissions tests
- Complete SAQ and AAIF (Cambridge only)
- Submit written work and/or take admission test
- Interviews – December (and sometimes in January if you have been 'pooled') mostly online
- Offers January 2026



How to prepare

Results

- Work hard to do as well as you can

Practice

- Discussing your academic interest(s)
- Read widely around your subject (super-curricular knowledge)
- Past/example admission test/assessment papers
- Time management – generally and for exams
- Mock interviews – in and out of school
- Visits
- Essay competitions / seminars / tasters



Applying for Medicine

What's the difference?

- Minimum offer AAA
- UCAT – taken at test centre (BMAT discontinued)
- **4** medicine choices on UCAS
- 5 year course
- Work experience essential
- Early deadline 15th October 2025
- Different styles of course and admissions processes –research essential



Applying for Veterinary Science/Dentistry

- Early deadline 15th October
- AAA typical offer
- UCAT for some courses
- Significant work experience – large and small animal for veterinary
- Typical 5 year course
- 4 choices on UCAS



What are medical schools looking for?

- Somebody who can do the job!
- Somebody who cares about other people/animals
- Somebody who will work in the NHS
- Somebody who knows what they are getting in to
- Somebody with the right moral attributes
- Somebody with the right academic qualifications



Choosing courses

Medicine courses use the same sets of information in different ways

Some rank based on GCSE, some just have a minimum requirement

Some have a minimum UCAT test score, some take the top 30% that year

Some score personal statements, some don't

Key message is find out about the admissions process at different universities and play to your strengths



How to prepare

- Academic pathways group
- Reading medical/dental/veterinary blogs, research and journals
- Volunteering and work experience (Nottingham virtual work exp)
- UCAT familiarisation and practice
<https://www.ucat.ac.uk/>
- Mock interviews
- Medic mentor – reasonably priced support



The application process in school

- Register with UCAS in Summer term
- Up to 5 courses (4 for medical)
- Declare results of all completed qualifications – GCSE results important
- A-level courses listed – school gives predicted grade (not always the same as target grade)
- References provided by subject teachers and collated by Sixth Form team



Offers and Acceptance

- Universities make offers (or not)
 - Unconditional
 - Conditional
 - Rejection
- Students make a first choice (firm) and second choice (insurance)
- Oxbridge offers come in January
- Medicine take longer depending on interview
- Possibility of long-listing and places in clearing

Academic Pathways overview – Mrs Ellis, Miss Lenton and Dr Watts

- Fortnightly group
- Support with application skills
- Academic discussion
- Guided research tasks
- Organised mock interviews
- Personal statement support
- Support with process



Application mindset

- Optimistic – as much chance as anyone else
- Realistic – a small chance – a minority will get in, often by quite random chance
- Humble – you may be among the best at X in all of PHGS... you may be up against the best at X in the UK!
- **The egg-basket fallacy**
- **Process, not product**
- Do the process right and make it something to be proud of... it *still will be*, even if you don't get in!

Therefore...

- Prepare for all eventualities: give serious thought to your non-Oxbridge options.
- Give serious thought to your fifth, non-medicine option and research alternative but related careers.

Make sure that **you** want it.

Do not think of Oxbridge/med as the be-all and end-all.

Do not define success by **this** alone.

Do not define **yourself** by this alone!

Take alternatives seriously.



Money

- Tuition fees £9,535 – Student loan paid directly to university
- First 4 years of Medicine/Dentistry is the same
- 5th Year may be eligible for NHS bursary to cover some costs
- Also grants and reduced rate NHS loans may be available

Maintenance Loans

Household income	Maintenance Loan	Household contribution
Under £25,000	£10,544	Nil
£26,000 - £45,000	£10,544-£7,304	£0 - £2,923
£45,000 - £62,347	£7,304-£4,915	£2,923 - £5,629
£62,347 +	£4,915	£5,629

Figures are approximate based on the 2025-26 loan amounts and may be subject to change.
Amounts will be calculated on exact household income, not in bands.

Students eligible for the higher levels of loan are likely to be able to apply for bursaries from their university.

Bursaries

Oxford

Household income	Bursary
< £32,000	Up to £5,290
£32,000-£37,500	£3,090
£37,501-£42,875	£2,060
£42,876-£50,000	£1,030

Cambridge

Household income	Bursary
< £25,000	Up to £5,600
£25,000-£35,000	£2,580-£5,600
£35,000-£45,000	£1,670-£2,580
£45,000-£62,000	£160-£1,670

Income assessment based on Student Loans Company assessment
 Additional bursaries and support may be available for students on FSM, Care Leavers and for particular subjects. Oxford also give a travel bursary for transport to and from university.

Cost of living – Oxford University estimates

	Per month		9 months	
	Lower range	Upper range	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£330	£515	£2,970	£4,635
Accommodation	£790	£955	£7,110	£8,595
Personal items	£200	£335	£1,800	£3,015
Social activity	£45	£100	£405	£900
Study costs	£40	£90	£360	£810
Other	£20	£40	£180	£360
Total	£1,425	£2,035	£12,825	£18,315

Maximum support from loans and bursaries: **£15,834**

Minimum support level: **£4,915**

National average student cost of living (Save the Student 2025 figures): **£13,248**



Loan repayment approx

Your income per year	Approx Monthly repayments
<£25,000	£0
£28,000	£22.50
£40,000	£112.50
£50,000	£187.50
£60,000	£262.50

Interest rate:

RPI – currently
around 7%

There are no early
repayment penalties

Any remaining loan
cancelled after 40
years



What will your debt be?

Total amount borrowed:

$£10,544 \times 3 = £31,632$

$£9,535 \times 3 = £28,605$

Total = $£60,237$

Plus interest

Repayment = 9% of income
over threshold

Earning per annum	Monthly repayment	Over 40 years
<£25,000	Nil	nil
£28,000	£22.50	£10,800
£40,000	£112.50	£54,000
£50,000	£187.50	£90,000

Student finance calculator

On the gov.uk website

Gives an estimate of support available

University websites for bursaries and extra support



February 2025

Any Questions?



Prince Henry's Grammar School
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TRUST

