



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Guide for Parents
and Supporters
2023 entry



Welcome

If you're supporting someone who's thinking about applying to university for 2023 entry, it's likely that you have your own questions about higher education and the University of Cambridge in particular. In the pages that follow you'll find information about the University, student support, student finance, our application process and more.

We hope that you'll find this booklet useful in helping to advise and encourage your prospective applicant. If you have any further queries just get in touch - we'll be happy to help. If you're a teacher or adviser, take a look at our Guide for Teachers and Advisers (www.cam.ac.uk/teachers).

Cambridge Admissions Office (CAO)
 ✉ admissions@cam.ac.uk
 🌐 www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk

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Why Cambridge?

Why Cambridge?

Cambridge is one of the best universities in the world, offering undergraduate degree courses in the arts and humanities, social sciences, sciences and engineering. We're a 'collegiate' university, made up of faculties/departments in different academic subjects, and Colleges (see p15), meaning our students have access to a wide range of support, facilities and resources.



Top 3 +
 in the *Complete University Guide 2022* and the *Guardian University Guide 2022*.



91% +
 of our students who responded to the Graduate Outcomes Survey were in work or further study with 15 months of graduating.¹



3 years +
 Cambridge guarantees most students College-owned accommodation for at least three years (see p3).



99% +
 of UK undergraduates continue or complete their degree at the University, compared to 92% nationally.²



121 +
 affiliates of the University have been awarded the Nobel Prize since 1904.



Top 10 +
 Cambridge is one of the top ten universities most often targeted by Britain's leading graduate employers (*The Graduate Market in 2021*).

¹ Based on responses to the Graduate Outcomes Survey. This records the outcomes of students who completed their studies between August 2018 and July 2019. 59 per cent of graduates responded to the survey.
² 99 per cent at Cambridge compared with 92 per cent nationally, Higher Education Statistics Agency; all UK domiciled full-time first degree entrants (March 2022).



Academic excellence

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

As well as being a member of a large university, students are also part of a smaller College community. While all courses are set and examined by faculties/departments, 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.

"I really liked the sound of the College system, because you have a smaller community within the university that makes it easier to get to know people. I was also excited about the supervision system, because I find small group teaching really helpful for understanding things better, both through talking to my supervisor and my coursemates."

Stella
Chester



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 p5-7). This commitment to the overall wellbeing of our students is reflected in our very high level of undergraduate student retention (see p1).

Accommodation guarantee

The Cambridge Colleges guarantee accommodation to single undergraduates without children for three years (many also provide for fourth-year students), and students won't be charged rent during the summer vacation if they are not in residence – most accommodation contracts are for 26-39 weeks, rather than a full year (www.cam.ac.uk/accommodation).



Flexible learning

Many of our degree courses (also referred to at Cambridge as Triposes) encompass several subjects – more than 65 subjects are offered within our undergraduate courses – and some options (usually called papers) are available in a number of courses where subjects overlap. Generally, our courses are broad in the first year and become increasingly focused in later years.

These aspects can offer students a high level of flexibility, allowing them to explore subjects widely, developing their interests and discovering their strengths. See online for more about our courses (www.cam.ac.uk/courses).

More personal tuition

In addition to lectures, practicals and seminars, students receive regular small-group tuition (most often for between one and three students). These more personal sessions, known as 'supervisions', allow students to explore course material in much greater depth, investigate new approaches and get individual feedback and support. Supervisions usually take place once or twice a week (depending on the course) and will generally last for about an hour.

"I had reservations about my ability to perform academically when I arrived, but my Director of Studies recognised my concerns and has helped me to improve – I feel like I am gaining a lot from my experience."

Jim
Hemel Hempstead





Low cost of living

Cambridge is a relatively inexpensive place to study. Study costs are kept low because we're fortunate to have excellent computing and library facilities (see p5), and transport costs in the city are minimal as it's possible to get around on foot or by bicycle.

Substantial financial support

The University and Colleges are committed to the principle that no suitably qualified Home fee status student should be deterred from applying to Cambridge by their financial circumstances, and that no publicly funded Home student should have to leave because of financial difficulties.

Therefore, an extensive programme of financial support – including non-repayable Cambridge Bursaries – is offered to help our undergraduates meet the costs of their Cambridge education, regardless of background. See p8-9 for more information.

Everyone is welcomed

We welcome students from every background 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, as our hundreds of student-run clubs and societies demonstrate. Whatever a student's interests are, there'll be plenty of others here that share them (see also p7).

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 in-depth subject knowledge and key transferable skills they develop and hone here (www.careers.cam.ac.uk).



"Cambridge surprises me almost every day, in the most weird and wonderful ways. It has so many quirks in its character. The atmosphere is so welcoming and down to earth, shattering all myths and stereotypes in just my first week here, and proving to be exactly the kind of uni experience I didn't realise I needed."

David
Portsmouth

Supporting our students

Our extensive welfare system helps students make the transition from school/college to the University. Throughout the University and Colleges there are numerous individuals and services that offer academic and personal support and guidance if and when students need them.

College welfare

The greatest strength of the College system is the personal teaching, support and guidance offered to students.

All undergraduates have a Director of Studies (DoS) looking after their academic welfare and monitoring their progress. The DoS will usually be in the student's College. Within the College, undergraduates also have access to a pastoral tutor who can advise on any personal or financial matters. Colleges also employ a variety of other staff – such as nurses, counsellors, and chaplains – as well as welfare officers on the College students' union committees.

University support

Lecturers and departmental/faculty staff are on hand to provide advice on course-related matters and the University's Careers Service facilitates careers events, alumni (former student) networks and wider training opportunities, helping both current students and alumni make informed career choices.

The University's Counselling Service offers free and confidential professional counselling to students wishing to talk through any personal circumstances or emotional concerns. The Cambridge Students' Union (Cambridge SU) represents students at a University level and provides a range of student-run welfare services, as well as employing professional Student Advisers to give impartial support to students.

Further information

www.studentwellbeing.admin.cam.ac.uk



Facilities and resources

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 free access to millions of books, journals and documents, as well as extensive electronic resources (significantly reducing the need to buy books).
- All students have access to up-to-date computing facilities in the departments and their College, and the University Information Services (UIS) 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/facilitiesandresources).



Care leavers

The University and Colleges are committed to supporting care-leaver students, and to encouraging and supporting prospective applicants who are (or who 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 (if they wish to stay in Cambridge during the vacations). Care-leaver students can also receive enhanced financial support, such as a higher level of the Cambridge Bursary. In order to ensure they get the support available to them as care leavers, students should indicate in their UCAS application that they've spent time in care.

www.cam.ac.uk/careleavers

Estranged students

There is also support available for students studying at the University who are estranged from their families, which includes 365-day accommodation. Estranged students can also receive enhanced financial support, such as a higher level of the Cambridge Bursary, which is non-repayable.

www.cam.ac.uk/estranged-students

If you're supporting a young person currently or previously in care or who is estranged from their family, please visit our website or contact the Widening Participation Team.

Further information

☎ 01223 766460

✉ access@cao.cam.ac.uk



Young carers

If the student you are supporting cares for a family member or friend, whether that's due to illness, disability, a mental health condition or addiction, they can access help and advice both before they apply to the University and once they join us as a student. Details about support available can be found on our website.

www.cam.ac.uk/young-carers

Refugee students

Refugees, asylum seekers or anyone from a forced migration background may have specific concerns when considering or starting university, and it's important to us that they feel supported during this time. More information about support available can be found at

www.cam.ac.uk/refugees.

Disabled students

The Disability Resource Centre (DRC) offers guidance, information and support for applicants, offer holders and students with disabilities, including:

- specific learning difficulties (including dyslexia, dyspraxia)
- physical/mobility impairments (including people with upper limb disorder/WRULD)
- sensory impairments (eg hearing, visual)
- mental health difficulties (eg depression, anxiety disorder)
- long-term health conditions (eg cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, HIV, diabetes, epilepsy)
- Asperger syndrome, autism and ADHD

Prospective students and their supporters are welcome to contact the DRC (see the back cover) for advice on building accessibility and facilities/resources, to arrange visits and discuss their support needs.

Students intending to apply 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 (see back cover for contact details). We also strongly recommend that they disclose their disability/disabilities and provide relevant information in their UCAS application so that appropriate adjustments to the interview process can be made, if needed.

www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/students/prospective-students



Settling in

Arriving in Cambridge

Once offer holders meet the conditions of their offer, their College will start to contact them about arrangements for their arrival in Cambridge. New undergraduates may also find it helpful to have a look at the Cambridge SU website for more details of events and support for freshers (www.cambridgesu.co.uk). Colleges and faculties/departments usually offer an induction or orientation programme in the first few days of students' arrival as well, to cover key information (eg finding their way around, facilities/resources etc).

Meeting people

One of the many benefits of a collegiate university is the ease of meeting people. Because our student body is so diverse – coming from a wide range of different backgrounds, and from across the country and world – all new undergraduates will find plenty of others with shared experiences. Our students also embrace opportunities to develop friendships with others who have similar interests to their own (academically and/or recreationally) but who may be from entirely different backgrounds.

Students get to meet others from different Colleges on their course who share their academic interests; through clubs, societies and sports they get to know people with similar recreational interests; and in their College they get to know students on different courses and in different years.

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 and recreational opportunities available here, as well as the academic ones.

During freshers' week, College students' unions and Cambridge SU offer activities for new undergraduates.

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 for the student you're supporting to understand that there'll be an initial adjustment period while they get to grips with the demands of their new timetable and workload, and that how long this takes naturally varies from student to student. At Cambridge there are plenty of people to advise undergraduates and we encourage students to access this support if they have any queries or uncertainties.

Safety

In general, Cambridge is a safe city 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'd use anywhere else.



Student finance

There are two higher education costs to consider – tuition fees and living (or ‘maintenance’) costs. The University has an extensive programme of financial support – including non-repayable Cambridge Bursaries – to help our students meet the costs of their Cambridge education, regardless of background.

The information that follows relates to Home fee status undergraduates starting a course in October 2022 (unless otherwise stated). Figures for 2023-24 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). Parents of international students can find information about costs and financial support at www.cam.ac.uk/uginternationalfees.

Tuition fees

The 2022-23 tuition fee for Home fee status students at Cambridge is £9,250 for the year. At the time of going to print, the tuition fee for Home students starting their first undergraduate degree¹ in 2023 has not been set. It may be different from the tuition fee for 2022 and details will be published on the Undergraduate Study website as soon as they are available: www.cam.ac.uk/ugtuitionfees.

You should check the website for the most up-to-date information on tuition fees before the prospective student you are supporting makes an application and prior to them accepting an offer from the University should their application be successful.

Tuition fee support

Currently, Home fee status students studying for their first undergraduate degree can take out a government loan for their tuition fees and defer payment of the loan until after they've left university and are earning a minimum salary, at which point they'll start to repay the loan in instalments. Please refer to the appropriate student finance award agency for details of tuition fee support (see opposite).

¹ Students undertaking a year abroad, where part of the course, pay a different fee during their year abroad (www.cam.ac.uk/ugtuitionfees). Students wishing to study for a second undergraduate degree should refer to the website for information regarding fees.

² Figures rounded up to the nearest £10.

Living costs

An individual's living costs as a student – food, accommodation, course costs/study materials, personal expenses – will obviously vary depending on their lifestyle and course. We estimate that in 2022-23 undergraduates should allow approximately £10,170² for living costs in Cambridge for the year (students should allow for increases in future years). Living costs for international students and for those who choose to stay in Cambridge during the vacation periods will be higher. Further details are available from the Undergraduate Study website.

Living costs support: government

As well as the Tuition Fee Loan, Home students studying for their first undergraduate degree are currently eligible for a means-tested government Maintenance Loan for living costs. Eligibility for other funding depends on individual financial circumstances. You should refer to the appropriate finance award agency website for the most up-to-date information and guidance.

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

Certain groups of UK 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.

Living costs support: University

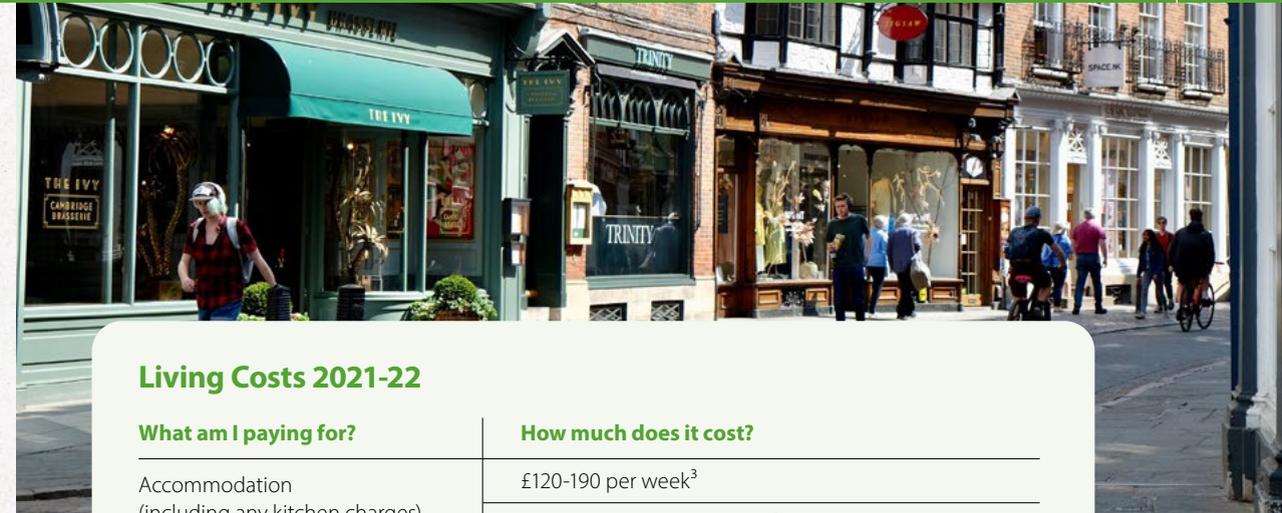
We don't want financial considerations to stop Home students applying to Cambridge and are committed to providing the financial support needed while here. The Cambridge Bursary Scheme is a long running initiative, which gives non-repayable bursaries for living costs to eligible students. Bursary values are dependent on household income, as calculated by the relevant student finance authority. Since October 2021, bursaries of up to £3,500 per year have been given to students with a household income of up to £62,215. You can find more details on our website:

www.cam.ac.uk/cambridgebursary.

Living costs support: College

There may be 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 to support students facing unexpected financial difficulties.

Information on any such funds is available from each College (www.cam.ac.uk/collegeawards).



Living Costs 2021-22

What am I paying for?	How much does it cost?
Accommodation (including any kitchen charges)	£120-190 per week ³
	£140-220 en suite, per week ³
College meals	£4-£7 per meal
Additional course costs	Dependent on course (see department/faculty websites)
Transport in Cambridge	Cheap or free!

Students should allow for increases in subsequent years. The weekly accommodation cost will vary across the 29 undergraduate Colleges.

Student finance award agencies

Government financial support arrangements for undergraduates studying in the UK differ depending on where they're from. Applicants should contact the relevant organisation for information and guidance. Details about government financial support are correct at the time of printing but are subject to change and/or government approval.

Students from England and outside the UK

Student Finance England
www.gov.uk/studentfinance

Students from Northern Ireland

Student Finance NI
www.studentfinancenl.co.uk

Students from Scotland

Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)
www.saas.gov.uk

Students from Wales

Student Finance Wales
www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Please note

Students are strongly advised to apply for financial support as early as possible. Applications for government support will open early in 2023. Students don't need a confirmed place at a university to apply for this. To ensure their funding is in place for the start of their course in October 2023, students should usually apply by April/May (dates may vary). See the relevant student finance award agency website for guidance on when and how to apply.

³ Figures based on the median room costs for first year undergraduate students in 2021-22. Students should allow for price increases in subsequent years of study. A choice of shared bathroom and en suite rooms is not available at all Colleges and figures do not include any deposits that may apply. Costs have been rounded up to the nearest £10. Please see individual College websites for further details.



What we're looking for

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

All undergraduate admissions decisions are the responsibility of the Cambridge Colleges. The Colleges are committed to offering admission to students of the highest academic ability and potential, 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
- school/college reference
- personal statement
- any written work submitted
- performance in any written assessment
- contextual data, such as school performance data (where available)
- performance at interview

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, which enable Colleges to compare the quality of their own applicants with those across the University before finalising decisions about offers. 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 p15).

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

Our general expectation is that students apply with three A Levels. We advise students to think carefully about their selection, and seek advice from their teachers, or talk to a College admissions office at Cambridge about the most suitable subjects to choose with a Cambridge application in mind. Please also see the post-16 subject choices advice on p14 and on our website:

www.cam.ac.uk/post-16-subject-choices.

If a student is applying for a maths or science intensive course, such as Physical Natural Sciences and has the opportunity to study Further Maths as a fourth A Level, this provides a strong basis for all the potential subject pathways within the degree. If a student's school doesn't offer Further Maths, the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme (AMSP) (<https://amsp.org.uk>) may be able to help.



Extenuating circumstances

If an applicant has experienced serious health or personal problems, disability or difficulties with schooling, their school/college referee (or GP or social worker) 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.

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)
- significant caring responsibilities, or recent bereavement or serious illness within close family
- serious disruption to educational provision at school/college, that is not COVID-19 related
- other circumstances where serious disruption has occurred, such as estrangement or time spent in care

If an applicant is unsure whether an Extenuating Circumstances Form should be completed they, or their referee, should contact a College admissions office as early as possible to discuss their case and get further advice. We encourage applicants to let us know about any circumstances we may need to take into consideration when assessing their application.

The student should apply in the usual way (see p12-3) and the Extenuating Circumstances Form should normally be completed and submitted by the school/college referee for receipt by 22 October 2022. In those rare cases where the applicant's school/college is unaware of the circumstances, a doctor or social worker may complete and validate the form on the student's behalf.

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

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

We understand that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused educational disruption for all students, so we ask that any disruption specifically related to the pandemic be included on a separate form (which will be provided to students) rather than the Extenuating Circumstances Form.

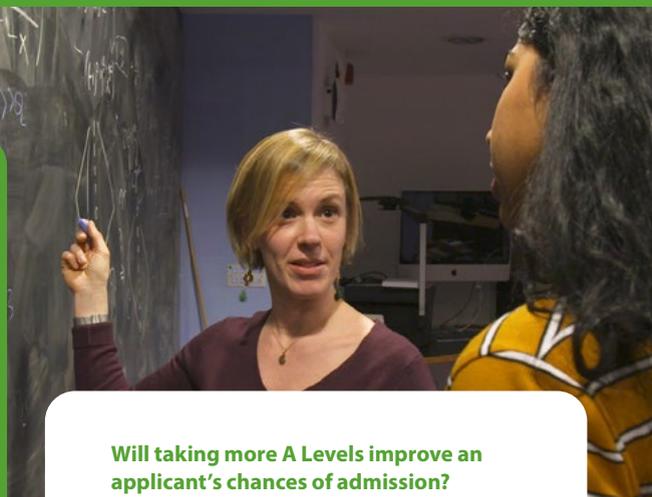
How many 8/9s (A*s) at GCSE do applicants need?

There are no GCSE (or equivalent) requirements for entry to Cambridge and we don't require a minimum number of 7/8/9s (A/A*s) at GCSE. GCSE results are looked at as a performance indicator, but within the context of the performance of the school/college where they were achieved. See the Undergraduate Study website for further guidance about entry requirements (www.cam.ac.uk/entrancerequirements).

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

No. Admission is based solely on academic ability and potential – we don't discriminate for or against applicants because of the type of school they attend, nor do we have quotas by school type

(www.cam.ac.uk/admissionspolicy).



Applying to Cambridge

Applications to universities in the UK are made online through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Your student's school/college should be able to provide advice on making a UCAS application and there's some information for parents and supporters on the UCAS website (www.ucas.com/parents).

To apply to Cambridge, the process 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. At Cambridge, our deadline for all courses is 15 October.¹ Students who are interested in applying should start their research as early as possible so they have plenty of time to prepare their application.

In addition, students are required to provide some information not covered by the UCAS application. The six steps below outline the application process (with further detail given on the following pages). If you come across any unfamiliar terms on the following pages, take a look at our application glossary on p21.



1 Course

Students should start researching our courses so they can decide what might be right for them. See p14 for more information.

www.cam.ac.uk/courses

2 College

Encourage students to consider where they'd like to live when they're here – applicants indicate in their UCAS application if they have a preference College or are making an 'open' application. Find out more on p15.

www.cam.ac.uk/choosingcollege

3 Apply

UCAS applications² need to be submitted online by 15 October. Students will need to complete a Cambridge-specific application form (My Cambridge Application) shortly afterwards. See p16 for more information.

www.cam.ac.uk/apply

¹ Other application deadlines apply for some applicants aged 21 or over (mature applicants, www.cam.ac.uk/mature) and applicants to the Organ Scholarship (www.cam.ac.uk/musicawards).

² As well as a UCAS application, an additional application must be submitted by students applying for the Graduate Course in Medicine, and/or applying for an Organ Scholarship.

4 Written assessment

Most applicants are required to take a written assessment, either before they are interviewed, or as part of the interview process should they be invited to attend. Advance registration may be required. See p17 for more information.

www.cam.ac.uk/assessment

5 Interviews

Interviews are usually conducted in December. See p18 for more information.

www.cam.ac.uk/interviews

6 Decision

Applicants will be advised of our decision before the end of January 2023. See p19.

Should students refer to extra-curricular activities in their personal statement?

Our admissions decisions are based on academic criteria (ability and potential) and we expect to see evidence of students' wider engagement with areas of academic interest, such as reading and other explorations relevant to the course for which they've applied. Extra-curricular activities which are of no relevance to the course will not increase a student's chances of receiving an offer.

If, however, particular extra-curricular activities have enabled a student to develop transferable skills, such as organisation or time management, then these can be included in their personal statement. Such activities might include significant caring responsibilities or paid employment, which can help us fully contextualise an application, as well as sport, physical activity, music, drama and volunteering.

Super-curricular activities

Super-curricular activities allow students to take the subjects they study further, beyond what they have learnt at school or college. Super-curriculars can help make a competitive application, and prepare students for a challenging academic environment, so we strongly recommend them. More information and examples of super-curricular activities can be found on our website (www.cam.ac.uk/super-curriculars) and on the My HE+ website (www.myheplus.com).



1 Choosing a course

Post-16 subject choices

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

Many Cambridge courses require qualifications in certain subjects and the Colleges expect such subjects to be passed, normally with an A* or A grade at A Level/grade 7 or 6 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 and whether their combination offers the most suitable preparation for their chosen course (www.cam.ac.uk/entrancerequirements).

Students who are 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 on our website (www.cam.ac.uk/post-16-subject-choices).

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 considering their degree course choice(s), there are some questions you can encourage your student to think about to make sure they are choosing the right course for them.

- **What are 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. It's crucial that they have a genuine personal interest in their subject to be motivated and successful at university.

- **Have they considered less familiar choices?**

Encourage the student you are supporting to 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 enjoy courses that incorporate all these areas, such as Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic; Archaeology; Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Classics; Linguistics; and Modern and Medieval Languages, as well as English and History.

- **What would they like to do when they graduate?**

While a small number of professions do require certain qualifications, most employers don't specify degree subjects, so students shouldn't make assumptions about their career prospects. If the student you're supporting has a particular occupation in mind, encourage them to research if there are any requirements they'd need to fulfil (eg accreditation and/or professional qualifications), and what people currently in that profession studied at university and their subsequent career path – they may be surprised at the range they discover.

- **Have they done their research?**

To understand fully what a course entails, it is vital that students research course outlines at all of their chosen universities. Courses with the same title at different universities can vary greatly, with different entrance requirements, content, structures, options, and teaching and assessment methods.

Please note that students can't apply to both the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford in the same year. If the applicant you are supporting is struggling to decide which university will be best for them, have a look at our online guide to the similarities and differences between the two which may help them firm up their choice (www.cam.ac.uk/parents-and-supporters).



Further information
www.cam.ac.uk/courses

2 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 in their UCAS application if they have a preference College or are making an 'open' application (see right).

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 settle in quickly whichever they attend, so applicants shouldn't agonise over which College to choose (see also information about the 'pool' system, p19).

It's the University (not the Colleges) that sets course content and students from all Colleges studying the same course attend the same lectures/practicals and sit the same exams together. For equally well-qualified students, making an open application or indicating a preference College makes no difference to their chances of being made an offer.



How do students choose a College?

Some Colleges don't take students for some courses so applicants should check availability for their course first (listed in the course and College information). Otherwise, we suggest students think of choosing a College in terms of choosing where they'd like to live. They may find it useful to consider:

- their age – three Colleges are exclusively for students aged 21 or over (mature students)
- College size – number of students
- type of accommodation (eg on-site or College owned houses around the city)
- particular facilities (eg for certain sports, performing arts etc)
- personal instinct/preference – it just 'feels right'

Please note that two of the Colleges (Murray Edwards and Newnham) consider applications from female students only. Information about the different Colleges is available online. www.cam.ac.uk/ugcolls

Open applications

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

After the closing date, each open application is allocated to a College which happens to have received fewer applications per place for that course than the average number across all Colleges.

Once allocated, open applications are treated exactly the same as any other – interviewers aren't told 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 outcome of the allocation as once an application has been allocated it can't be changed.

A few extra notes

- Students can also find advice about how not to choose a College (eg based on application statistics, specialisms of College Fellows) on our website.
- It's advisable for applicants with unusual qualifications/particular considerations 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; once the UCAS deadline has passed, this choice can't be changed.



Further information
www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacollege

Are some Colleges better for particular subjects?

Regardless of their College, students on the same course are taught together by and in the University's academic faculties/departments, attending the same lectures, seminars and practicals and sitting the same exams.



3 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 for their preference College, 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 form if they're:

- 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 disruption or disadvantage, the applicant's school/college referee (or doctor or social worker) should complete and submit the Extenuating Circumstances Form (see p11) by 22 October.

Students should note the separate registration deadlines for courses requiring a pre-registration written assessment (see opposite).

Additional application form

In order to ensure that we have complete and consistent information about applicants, all students will be asked via email to complete an additional application form following receipt of their UCAS application.²

This questionnaire collects information that's not part of the UCAS application but is useful when assessing applications. Applicants will have the option to complete a Cambridge-specific personal statement, giving them the opportunity to detail their interest in their chosen Cambridge course.

You can find out more on our website (www.cam.ac.uk/apply).

4 Written assessment

Most applicants are required to take a course-specific written assessment, which they will either need to register in advance for, or which will be registered by their College if shortlisted for interview.

These are designed to supplement the information in each student's application and provide a gauge of their existing abilities – to assess skills (such as writing and language skills) and, where appropriate, levels of current knowledge and understanding relevant to the course applied for.

The course information online (www.cam.ac.uk/courses) provides details of any associated written assessment. Students should note that their written assessment performance isn't considered in isolation, but taken into account alongside the other elements of their application (see p10).

Written assessment: pre-registration required

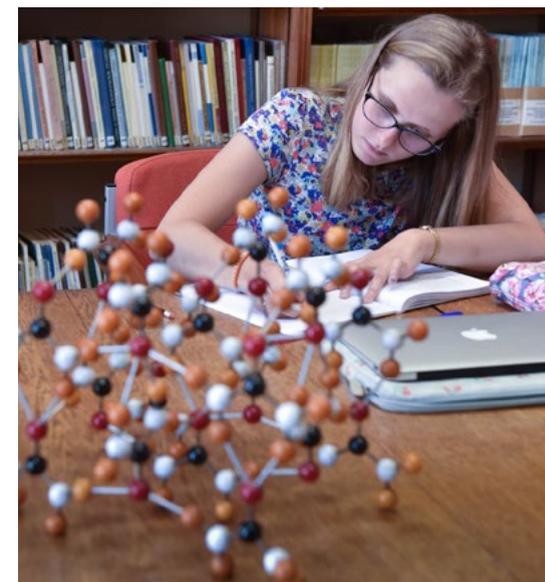
Most of our pre-registration assessments are organised by Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing (CAAT), with the exception of the National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT, see below for more details), and taken at an authorised centre local to applicants. For most students this will be their school/college. Applicants should check this with their teacher/exams officer, as students who won't be able to take their pre-registration assessment at their school/college must find an authorised open centre instead (www.admissionstesting.org/find-a-centre).

With the exception of the Biomedical Admission Test (BMAT, for Medicine) and the Test of Mathematics for University Admissions (TMUA, for Computer Science and Economics), there's no entry fee for the CAAT pre-registration written assessments, but some assessment centres may charge candidates an administration fee.

Applicants must be registered in advance by their assessment centre for the relevant pre-registration assessment. The assessment registration deadlines and dates can be found on the CAAT website (www.admissionstesting.org/administering-our-tests).

LNAT

Students applying for Law are required to take the LNAT before applying to Cambridge. The LNAT is organised by Pearson VUE and the dates, deadlines and test venues are different to the CAAT organised assessments. Students must have taken their LNAT on or before 15 October 2022. There is an entry fee for taking the assessment. Details can be found on the LNAT website: www.lnat.ac.uk.



Written assessment: Cambridge College-registered

In 2022, for courses requiring a Cambridge College-registered written assessment, these will usually be taken in advance of the interview. Many of these may take place a week or more in advance of the student's scheduled interview. Details for 2023 entry will be published online in due course.

There are no charges associated with taking any Cambridge College-registered written assessments, and students don't need to pre-register for them – the Colleges provide details of arrangements in the letters inviting applicants to interview.

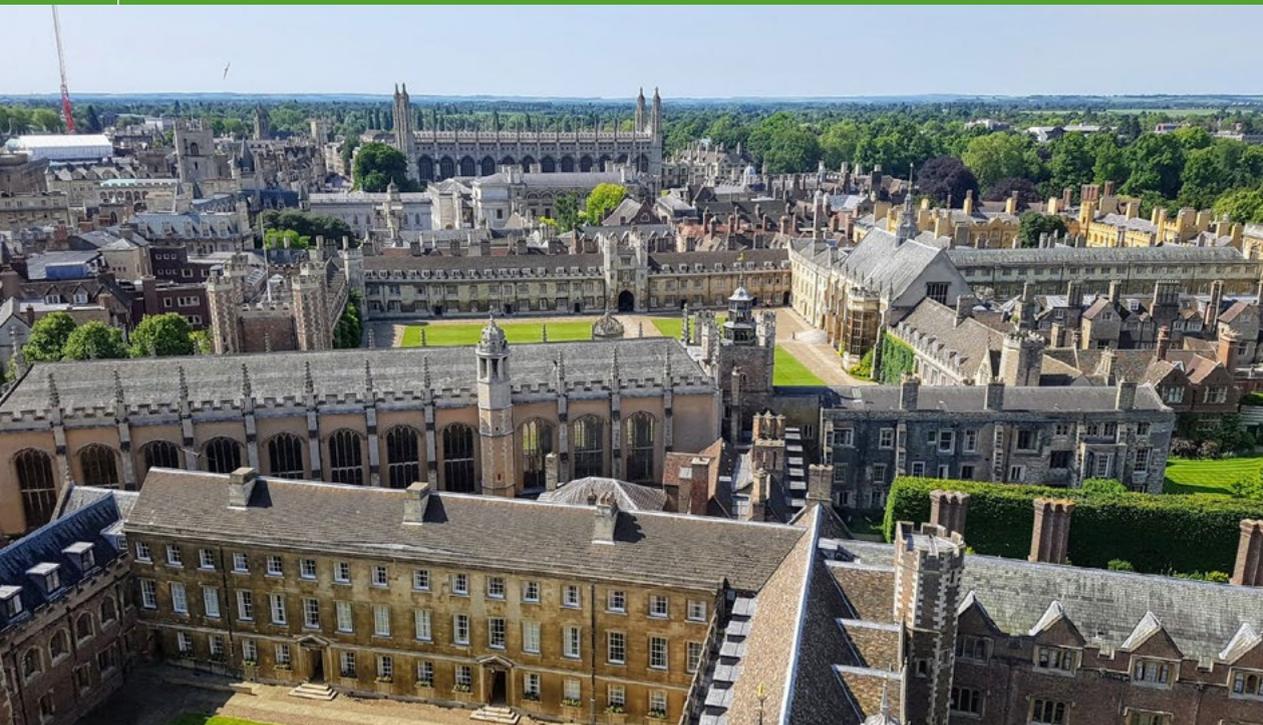
If you or the student you're supporting are in any doubt about what to expect, please contact the College to which the student has applied/been allocated and ask.

 **Further information**
www.cam.ac.uk/assessment

¹ Other deadlines apply 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.





5 Interviews

Interviews are an essential part of the admissions process, and no one is made an offer without one. Every applicant with a chance of being offered a place is invited to attend an interview.

When the interviews take place

Most interviews take place during the first three weeks of December and applicants should avoid making 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, with a total interview time of 35-50 minutes.

If the student you're supporting is invited for interview, the College will send them full details, including what the student will need for interview, details of how to access the interview on the day and arrangements for any written assessment (if relevant).

The format of interviews for 2023 entry is currently under review. Please refer to the website which will be updated once more details are available.

What are interviewers 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 unfamiliar 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.



Further information

www.cam.ac.uk/interviews

6 The application outcome

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

- 1. The student may be made an offer.** This might be from the College they applied/were allocated to, or from a different College as a result of their application being 'pooled' (see right). If they're still studying, an offer will normally be conditional and dependent on them achieving particular grades in their qualifications (the University makes unconditional offers only to those who have already met the conditions for entry to their chosen course).
- 2. Their application may be unsuccessful.** With around six applications per place, every year there are many students with good grade predictions who we aren't able to make offers to. Disappointing though this may be, we hope that all applicants find the process a useful experience, providing 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 as their firm choice they must meet any conditions of the offer by 31 August of the admissions cycle in which they applied.

Clearing and the August Reconsideration Pool

The University of Cambridge doesn't enter Clearing. However, we may have places available for some widening participation applicants during our August Reconsideration Pool. You can find out more information at www.cam.ac.uk/august-reconsideration.



The pool system

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

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 Directors of Studies in each subject discuss the overall standard of applications during the admissions period to so they can see how their own College's applicants compare. 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, a small number of applicants may be asked to attend another interview at a different College, usually in January. Alternatively, applicants 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.

Typically, one in five applicants is pooled and, of these, around one in seven is made an offer by a different College than the one they applied/were allocated to (680 for 2021 entry and deferred entry in October 2022).

A second smaller pool (of offer holders who narrowly miss the conditions of their original offer and some widening participation applicants through our August Reconsideration Pool) takes place in August after examination results are released and places are confirmed. This again helps to ensure that the best applicants secure places.



How you can help

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.

Students should also be encouraged to engage broadly and critically beyond the range expected for their current courses – particularly in the areas of their A Level/IB Higher Level (or equivalent) subjects that they find most interesting – and should have an awareness and understanding of subject-related issues (relevant to their current and university courses) visible in the wider world. Applicants to science and maths-related subjects should try to engage in deeper subject immersion such as through participating in Olympiads or similar, and those applying for arts and humanities subjects should engage with reading outside of their school curriculum; EPQs and College essay prizes are among the many effective ways of doing this.

Guidance on suggested reading and other preparation can be found in the course information on our website (www.cam.ac.uk/courses), and the HE+ website (www.myheplus.com) provides subject enrichment for Year 12 and 13 students considering research intensive universities. See also Super-curricular activities (p13).

Find out more at the Cambridge Open Days

We organise a range of virtual and in-person events each year, including the University-wide Cambridge Open Days in July and September. For the 2022 Open Days, we're planning a hybrid approach with both in-person and virtual elements. Prospective applicants from Year 12 (or equivalent) can find out all about the University and Colleges by viewing presentations about our courses, the Colleges and departments, University facilities, the application process, student life, and finance. They will also have the opportunity to ask our current staff and students any questions.

Students can also sign up to our newsletter for regular emails with details about applying to and studying at the University. You can find the registration form on our website: www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/events.

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. The summer break is the perfect time to think about what to include in their personal statement (www.ucas.com/personalstatement) and to build up evidence of subject engagement. 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 around very quickly. You could help the student you are supporting 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 take part in an interview, you can support their preparation by encouraging them to talk in detail about the course they've applied for and explain what attracted them to their subject, as well as discuss their wider subject interests.

The student's school/college may be able to arrange a mock interview. These can be useful for giving students experience of discussing their ideas and responding to questions with an interviewer they're unfamiliar with, rather than as an opportunity to guess which questions may come up or to prepare responses.

See p18 for more information about the interview process and visit www.cam.ac.uk/interviews for further advice about how students can prepare for a Cambridge interview, as well as updates on how interviews will be held for 2023 entry.

Please note

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

We DO NOT support or encourage any of these commercial enterprises. None of these companies/individuals has access to any information that's not already available free of charge to all schools, colleges and individual students from College admissions offices, the Cambridge Admissions Office, Cambridge SU and student-led websites such as Inside Uni (www.insideuni.org); and we're unable to verify the accuracy of the information these companies/individuals may provide.

All applicants should be aware that sharing of admissions assessment or interview questions either during or after the admissions cycle is strictly prohibited. Applicants could inadvertently disadvantage their own application by engaging in this practice.

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

Glossary of terms



You might come across many new and unfamiliar words and terms when helping the applicant you are supporting apply for university. We've explained some of these below, however if you come across anything else that isn't clear or you simply want to find out more about life at Cambridge, have a look at our website or contact the Cambridge Admissions Office (admissions@cam.ac.uk).

August Reconsideration Pool – a process that takes place in August to reconsider previously unsuccessful widening participation applicants. Visit the August Reconsideration Pool webpage for more details (www.cam.ac.uk/august-reconsideration).

Cambridge Bursary Scheme – this Scheme gives non-repayable bursaries for living costs to eligible students (www.cam.ac.uk/cambridgebursary). The Cambridge Colleges also offer a range of bursaries and grants to help students manage the cost of their studies.

Clearing – the UCAS Clearing period begins after applicants receive their results and offers an opportunity for late applicants or those who have missed their predicted grades to be matched with a university that still has spaces available. The University of Cambridge doesn't enter Clearing.

Conditional offer – this type of offer is dependent on the applicant achieving certain grades in the qualifications they are taking.

Contextual data – this is used to help us obtain a more in-depth profile of an applicant. Contextual data includes information such as the academic performance of an applicant's school or college. You can read more about contextual data online (www.cam.ac.uk/applying).

Deferred entry – some students applying in 2022 might choose to apply for deferred entry and join us in October 2024. Applicants should state their intention to defer entry in their UCAS application and should be prepared to talk about their proposed year out at interview.

Maintenance loan – the government provides maintenance loans to eligible students to help them cover their living costs. This loan is given based on household income.

Pools – if a College is impressed by a student's application but does not have a place for them, they may 'pool' their application for other Colleges to consider.

Pre-registration required assessment – some of our courses require applicants to take a pre-registration assessment, usually taken at an authorised assessment centre local to the applicant. Other courses may ask applicants to take a written assessment if shortlisted for interview.

Tuition fee loan – all UK students can apply for a tuition fee loan to cover the cost of their course (excluding any cost that sits outside of the main tuition fee).

UCAS – the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. Students should make their application online using the UCAS website (www.ucas.com).

Unconditional offer – we only make unconditional offers to those who have already met the conditions of entry to their chosen course, so if an applicant has already received their results and they have achieved the grades we require, we may make them an unconditional offer.



Further information and resources

If you'd like more 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.

Parents and supporters resources

www.cam.ac.uk/parents-and-supporters

Cambridge Admissions Office (CAO)

admissions@cam.ac.uk

www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk

Cambridge Colleges

www.cam.ac.uk/choosingacollege

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.

Other useful contacts

Cambridge Students' Union (Cambridge SU)

0808 1641 222

www.cambridgesu.co.uk

Disability Resource Centre (DRC)

01223 332301

disability@admin.cam.ac.uk

www.cam.ac.uk/disability

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

0371 468 0 468

www.ucas.com

Please note

This guide covers application and admission procedures for Home fee status applicants and should be used alongside our full *Undergraduate Prospectus* and Undergraduate Study website (www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk). Information for international students can also be found on the website. If you're unsure whether the student you're supporting qualifies for Home fee status, guidance can be found here: www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/international/fee-status.

COVID-19 pandemic

We may need to make changes to the information in this publication due to the pandemic and/or Government guidelines and restrictions. It is very important that the student you are supporting checks the University and College websites for the most up-to-date information before applying and accepting an offer to study at the University.