



GUIDE TO OXFORD UNIVERSITY

PARENTS, CARERS AND TEACHERS

**IS UNIVERSITY
THE RIGHT CHOICE?**

**HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT
STUDENTS' ASPIRATIONS?**

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

**WHAT DOES THE OXFORD
APPLICATION PROCESS
INVOLVE?**



**St Edmund Hall
University of Oxford**

schools.liaison@seh.ox.ac.uk

Why UNIVERSITY?

WHAT A UNIVERSITY DEGREE GIVES STUDENTS:

INDEPENDENCE

University allows students to experience living away from home but within a supportive community. They will also learn the self-discipline of organising their own time and studies.

CAREER PROSPECTS

On average, graduates of university go on to earn around £9,500 more per year than non-university employees¹. This is not just for vocational subjects like Medicine or Law; degrees like History, Languages or English also equip graduates with highly desirable 'soft skills'.

CONNECTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

University is a chance to meet people not just from all over the country, but from all over the world! Not only do graduates come out with friends for life, but they also make new connections and networks of people that may prove valuable in the future. There are hundreds of opportunities at a university to participate at a high level in activities beyond subject-specific study - from music, to internships, to sports.

¹ Source: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/graduate-labour-markets>

Why OXFORD?

WHAT AN OXFORD DEGREE GIVES STUDENTS:

A WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION

In 2023, The University of Oxford was ranked number 1 in the Times Higher Education World Rankings for the eighth year in a row! This does not just reflect exam results, the ranking also factors in teaching quality, research and industry, as well as international diversity.

CAREER PROSPECTS

We are ranked 7th in the world for graduate employability.² In fact, employers often seek to recruit straight from Oxford in part because of the skills we equip our students with. Students at Oxford have lifetime access to our careers service, offering support, advice and opportunities at all stages.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Oxford's style of study provides a personalised learning experience and a robust support network for our students:

The Tutorial System

Although we still offer lectures, laboratories and seminars like most other universities, we also teach through 'tutorials'. Students meet, usually once a week, with an expert tutor in their field and 1 or 2 other students. They discuss their essays or ask questions about problems they didn't understand.

The College System

Oxford university is split into different 'colleges' where students live, sleep, eat and socialise. Each college has its own facilities and system of support from catering to counselling to social events.
(SEE PAGE 7)

²

Source: <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/employability-rankings/2022>

MYTH BUSTING

**'THERE IS AN 'OXFORD TYPE'.
IT IS MOSTLY PRIVATE
SCHOOL STUDENTS.'**

MYTH

FACT

Once upon a time, it was definitely true that Oxford tended to over-represent privileged members of society. Today however, Oxford simply would not maintain its standing as one of the best universities in the world if it didn't pride itself on a diverse community of students, researchers and teachers.



FILM NEGATIVE

FILM NEGATIVE

Contrary to some beliefs, the majority of UK undergraduate students attended state schools. In fact, the current intake of UK students sits at around 69% from state-educated backgrounds and continues to rise. Around a quarter of our undergraduates are international students, and so come from all around the globe. Our application process is designed to assess how students think, not what they know, or how well they have been taught. As such, there is no real Oxford type!



FILM NEGATIVE

FILM NEGATIVE

You might recognise photos like the top one (and even some faces in it!) from images of Oxford in the 1980s. More recently, and perhaps less widely seen, some elected student representatives got together to recreate these photos. They wanted to share something that represented the Oxford that exists today.

MYTH

BUSTING

**'STUDYING AT OXFORD IS
MORE EXPENSIVE THAN
OTHER UNIVERSITIES.'**

MYTH

FACT

Oxford and Cambridge charge the same tuition fees as most other universities across the country - at the current rate of £9,250 per year. This is covered by the government's student loan system. For a full breakdown of student finances please see page 9.

Oxford is also one of the most generous universities when it comes to extra financial support, as we believe money should never be a barrier or distraction during a student's time here. Around 1 in 4 Oxford students receive some form of non-repayable bursary, scholarship or grant from the university. (SEE PAGE 10)

Additionally, because Oxford terms are so short (8 weeks), our students are only studying here for less than half the year and have months of holiday. During this holiday time many students who live in college accommodation are not paying rent and lots choose to take on part-time work or paid internships facilitated by our careers service.

MYTH BUSTING

**'STUDYING AT OXFORD IS ALL
WORK AND NO PLAY.'**

MYTH

FACT

Degrees at Oxford do rely on students undertaking a lot of independent study. Whilst you'll have lectures, seminars or labs to attend, you are free to structure your work around these as well as extra-curricular activities you might be involved in.

Oxford is like any other student city (with two universities!) full of clubs, bars and shops. On top of this, the collegiate system provides students with an immediate community of peers to socialise with. At St Edmund Hall, for example, we have our own choir, sports teams, creative writing society, 'BOPs' (college parties), movie nights and much more.

At the university-level, there are over 400 societies to be a part of from ice-hockey to the Taylor Swift Appreciation Society. Students can carry on their existing hobbies to a high level or pick up something they've never done before!



MYTH BUSTING

**'YOU HAVE TO BE THE BEST
AT YOUR SUBJECT IN THE
COUNTRY TO GET IN TO
OXFORD.'**

MYTH

FACT

Whilst we are keen to see students who have a good academic ability and are on track to do well, we don't tend to rank students just by their grades. Many subjects use admissions tests or written work which allow applicants to demonstrate academic ability and potential, beyond achieved grades.

For UK students, we use contextual data to give us a better understanding of an applicant's background. This allows us to take into account things like school performance, socioeconomic background, and average rates of progression to university in their area. We consider this data when we look at things like GCSE grades and predicted A-levels - considering each applicant in light of how we might expect a candidate from their context to perform. We are looking for students who are doing well for their school, rather than just those with the highest overall grades.

Find out more about the application and admissions process on page 14.

The College System

EXPLAINED



City



Campus



Collegiate

Oxford and Cambridge are collegiate universities, made up of over 30 colleges. They are where you live, sleep, eat and socialise! Regardless of which college you're based at, you'll go to your department to attend lectures, labs and seminars. The main differences between colleges is just how they look, where they are in the city and how many students they have.

For example... Our college is St Edmund Hall

Founded: circa 1278

Location: Oxford City Centre, just off the High Street with easy access to departments, libraries, museums and shops.

Students: ~420 undergraduates

Best bits!

The 'Hall Spirit' has built our reputation among students as one of the friendliest colleges in Oxford. We are known for all your peers coming out and supporting you regardless of whether you're in a football match or a theatre production.

We have one of the biggest dining halls in Oxford and pride ourselves on some of the best Hall food in the city.

Plus, our library is in a beautiful converted 12th century church, complete with churchyard and gardens.



The College System

EXPLAINED

How to choose?

A student's college makes up a key part of their life at Oxford. When thinking about which college to choose, students should consider what sort of place they want to live in:

- Do you want to live in the city centre or further out in a quieter part of town?
- Do you want a lot of green space?
- Do you want an historic, traditional-looking college or somewhere more modern?
- Do you want a college with a bigger or smaller student body?
- Do you want to be close to your lecture halls/department?
- Do you want a college where you live on-site for all years of your degree or one where you have the chance to 'live out' some of the time?

Can't decide? Come have a look around at our Open Days!

BUT... You don't have to choose.

Students don't have to put a preferred college when they make an application. Many students make 'Open Applications' where the university will allocate college choice.

Either way, around 40% of our students end up at a college different from the one they originally applied to, as students are often reallocated during the admissions process. Everyone still ends up thinking their college is the best (and why did they ever apply anywhere else) regardless!



STUDENT FINANCE

*Figures correct for 2024/25 entry



Tuition
£9,250
per year



Living Costs
£500-£1,000 per month (during term)

How do you pay it back?

Student loans don't work like other debt - they won't stop you getting a mortgage, or count against your credit score. They work like a 'graduate tax' coming straight out of your earnings only when:

You are in a job

It is past the first April after you graduate

You are earning over £25,000



You only pay a small proportion (9%) of what you earn over £25,000.

Maintenance Loan

This secondary loan from the government is designed to go towards living costs at university. It is paid back as part of your student loan.

Everyone is entitled to the minimum loan of £3,516, but many are entitled to more depending on:



Whether or not you live at home whilst at University



Whether or not you are studying at a University in London



Your household income

STUDENT FINANCE

Other sources of financial support...

Oxford terms are only 8 weeks long so students have generous holidays in which they can take on part-time jobs if they would like to. You may choose to support your child financially if you feel comfortable doing so. Oxford also has very generous financial support available for its students. One in four of our students currently access some form of non-repayable bursary or scholarship.



**Low-income
Scholarships**
Up to £5,920

Bursaries & Grants

e.g. for creative
pursuits, for
'study-related'
travel



College Hardship funds

For unforeseen financial
difficulties e.g. laptop
needs replacing, parent
becomes unemployed



Student Finance Calculator
gov.uk/student-finance-calculator
Save the Student Finance Guide
savethestudent.org/student-finance

Student Life

LIVING AWAY FROM HOME

ACCOMMODATION & LIVING

1



FILM NEGATIVE

At our college, first year undergraduates are guaranteed on-site accommodation with breakfast and dinner included. All the rooms have plenty of storage space and a sink area, with kitchenettes, toilets and showers nearby. One of the best things about living on-site in first year is that everyone is so close together, you quickly get to know your whole year!

2



FILM NEGATIVE

Everyone at St Edmund Hall 'lives out' in their second year, renting houses privately or from college. Most people opt to live along the bustling, cultural Cowley Road.

3

Most accommodation is only a 15 minute walk or 5 minute cycle from the College. Living out is a fantastic experience as you get the opportunity to live more independently.

4

Third and fourth year students tend to return to college accommodation (living in some of our most beautiful historic bedrooms) or one of the college annexes which are just a few minutes away by bike. The annexes at Norham Gardens and the William R. Miller Building are very modern with well-equipped kitchens and en-suites.



FILM NEGATIVE



FILM NEGATIVE

FILM NEGATIVE

Student Life

LIVING AWAY FROM HOME

SUPPORT NETWORKS

STUDENT WELFARE

One of the benefits of the collegiate system is that most support is accessible and shared only between the students at your college. At the Hall we have:

- Peer Supporters (counselling-trained students)
- Welfare Leads on-site
- College Nurse
- College Counsellor



ACADEMIC SUPPORT

As well as the collegiate system, Oxford also differs from other universities in its teaching style. The 'tutorial system', where students meet regularly with an expert tutor in their field and usually 1 or 2 other students is a personalised way of teaching. It means students get the chance every week to meet with someone who knows what they're struggling with, what they're good at and if they need extra support.



COMMUNITIES

Our college is widely known for what we call 'Hall Spirit': the idea that whether you put on a play, sports match or campaign, your peers are sure to turn out and support you.

Students can be members of both university and college 'societies' - from Oxford University Islamic Society, to the Teddy Hall LGBTQ+ socials, to the Northerners' Society to Oxford African and Caribbean Society. Wherever you come from you will find people with the same interests or background as you at Oxford.



HOW DO THEY GET HERE?

WHAT NOW?

Post-16 Choices

- Three A-levels is absolutely sufficient to make a competitive application, and offers will normally only be made for three A-levels regardless of how many you are taking.
- The offer may specify in which three subjects we want the required grades, however.

Explore your subject!

- Although some universities will look for 'extra-curricular' skills, we encourage applicants to focus on 'super-curricular'.
- This means exploring their subject interests beyond what they learn in school.

Ideas:

- books, podcasts & documentaries
- competitions
- magazines & journals
- Summer schools e.g. UNIQ

These help us see that a student is passionate about a subject without them having to tell us!

UCAS Application

- In Year 13, students can choose to apply to up to five universities. Oxford and Cambridge, and some Medical courses all have an earlier deadline of 15th October.

What information do we use?

- Contextualised GCSE scores
- Predicted A-level grades
- Postcode & School
- Personal Statement (this is where students should talk about all their super-curricular interests!)
- Teacher's reference

HOW DO THEY GET HERE?

WHAT NOW?

Admissions Tests

- Some of our courses require subject-specific Admissions Tests (you can find out if yours does on the university course pages).
- They're usually sat in October of the year of application.
- These tests are designed to push pupils beyond the curriculum in their subject of choice.
- They provide a common set of data for us to compare applicants.

For example...

The Maths Aptitude Test uses A-level content, applied in ways students may not have seen before. These more open-ended questions require problem-solving skills.

In the History Aptitude Test, students are presented with an historical source from an era they are unlikely to have studied. They are asked to make inferences and use their creative inquiry skills rather than drawing on prior knowledge.

How to prepare?

- Past papers. Many of these are online along with mark schemes. Students can try talking these through with teachers too.
- A lot of these tests are about understanding, not just retention of information. When going through Year 12 work, students should make sure they are reasoning through things (understanding 'why', not just 'how').

Interviews

Looking at all the information in an application so far, tutors make decisions on who to invite to interview.

What is an Oxford interview?

- 20-40 min conversation with subject tutors
- Purely academic
- Simulating a tutorial (we interview to see if our special teaching style will suit students)

What is an Oxford interview NOT?

- About non-academic skills e.g. extra-curriculars, 'leadership' skills, organisation.
- A personality or presentation test (no need to wear a suit!)
- A quiz where it's just about giving the right answer.

How to prepare?

- There are plenty of mock subject interview videos on the university website.
- Don't memorise speeches - focus on answering what's in front of you.
- Practice responding to unseen material e.g. a poem not previously studied.
- Talking to parents, teachers, even pets about their subject and learning to vocalise their thought process is one of the most important skills.

PARENTS AND TEACHERS



**STILL GOT QUESTIONS?
GET IN TOUCH...**

**OUTREACH -
SCHOOLS.LIAISON@SEH.OX.AC.UK**

**ADMISSIONS QUERIES -
ADMISSIONS@SEH.OX.AC.UK**

**TEACHERS' MAILING LIST -
SEH.AC/SCHOOLSMAILING**

**ST EDMUND HALL WEBSITE -
SEH.OX.AC.UK**

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY WEBSITE -
OX.AC.UK**



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