



The Knights Templar School

Aim Higher Programme

2020 – 2021

**Questions? Please Ms. Thompson in the History Office
or email ethompson@ktemplar.herts.sch.uk**

What is Aim Higher?

If you have a love and a flair for your subject(s) and the will and potential to pursue it to the highest level, you should be aiming to study at a **research-intensive university** where you will:

- be taught by the leading researchers in your field,
- have access to the best-equipped libraries and laboratories, and
- the opportunity to learn from – and even contribute to – cutting-edge research.

These universities include, but are not limited to, the University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, and other members of the Russell Group. They are also **highly selective**. KTS graduates are studying at Britain's leading research-intensive universities. They got there by studying their chosen subject(s) in depth, inside and outside of lessons, talking about it with their teachers and each other, and researching and preparing for their university applications throughout the sixth form.

KTS Aim Higher will help you to:

- explore and **develop your academic interests**
- **research highly-selective degree courses**, including **degree apprenticeships**
- **prepare competitive applications** to research-intensive universities
- make a successful **transition to undergraduate study**

A programme of events will run throughout the academic year and will include:

- Half-termly research seminars: KTS sixth formers and staff meet to hear and debate short presentations on research in all subject areas
- Introduction to Oxford and Cambridge universities
- Q&A with KTS graduates studying at Oxford, Cambridge, and other top universities
- Help applying to / signing up for masterclasses / summer schools
- Visit(s) to Oxford and / or Cambridge
- Personal statements workshop
- Support in registering / preparing for admissions tests
- Interviews workshop

How do I get involved?

- Come along to as many **Aim Higher events** as possible, even when you can't immediately make the connection to your own academic interests. Universities are looking for flexible and critical thinkers, who can link their own field of study to other disciplines and current affairs.
- Take every opportunity to **talk about your subject(s)** with your teachers and each other, to build your knowledge, understanding and your confidence in academic discussion. Be prepared both to ask questions and to answer them.
- **Make your own opportunities.** Aim Higher could encompass any activity which helps you to explore and develop your academic interests and prepare for university, for example debating, mooting (mock trials), Model United Nations, or a book club. If you spot an opportunity for you and your fellow sixth formers and you're ready to get involved, we'll help you to make it happen. The more KTS sixth formers participate in and shape this programme, the more useful and successful it will be.
- Email ethompson@ktemplar.herts.sch.uk to be added to the Aim Higher email list.
- Follow **@KTSAimHigher** for details of the latest Aim Higher events and links to university masterclasses, open days, summer schools, and online resources.
- Follow **@KTS_SixthForm** for regular updates on your post-18 options.

What can I do to explore and develop my academic interests?

In broad terms...

- **Follow your interests:** it is your love and flair for your subject(s) which will sustain you through three or four year's hard work at university.
- **Start with what you know and make connections:** relate your subject to current affairs / your extracurricular interests / your personal experience / your local area.
- **Be open minded:** it is natural for your interests to change and develop as you study, so be prepared for them to take you in unexpected directions! A Level and undergraduate study will introduce you to new subjects and / or new approaches to existing subjects.
- **Consume thoughtfully and critically:** there is (too?!) much information available to you in a digital world. Your task is to identify the most relevant and rigorous resources. You should be prepared to disagree with some of what you find. Aim for quality rather than quantity in your research; it is better to pursue a particular topic in depth, than try to cover too many bases.

In practical terms...

- Dip into **undergraduate lectures**; it's a great way of trialling a new subject or learning more about an existing subject:
 - Local universities will have a programme of public lectures, for example see '[what's on](#)' at the University of Cambridge which is only a short train ride away.
 - Universities often upload lectures online, for example [Cambridge Video and Audio](#).
 - Many universities upload their content to iTunes U, which promises you 'can learn anything, anytime, anywhere'! For example, [Oxford's Apple podcasts](#) have had 28 million downloads so far, reaching a worldwide audience of 185 countries.
 - Universities are increasingly offering Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) such as [Stanford](#). Engineering Everywhere. [FutureLearn](#) is a platform which offers free online courses in a wide range of subjects from a wide range of universities. Search for MOOCs across platforms on [unifrog](#).
- Get involved with **subject associations**, which bring together specialists in their field. These groups make it their mission to share their subject as widely as possible, with the aim of helping young people into degree courses and careers. For example, the British Science Association...
 - Run [National Science and Engineering Week](#) in March every year. The [University of Cambridge Science Festival](#) offers a programme of events in and around this week.
 - Accredit [Crest Awards](#), which allow you to develop and complete your own scientific project.
- Immerse yourself in high-quality **television, film, and radio**:
 - BBC 4 TV: offers documentaries across a range of disciplines, including, but not limited to:
 - BBC's long-running [Horizon](#) science series
 - BBC Radio 4, including, but not limited to:
 - [In Our Time](#) is a regular radio programme which effectively recreates a university tutorial; presenter Melvyn Bragg debates topics across a wide range of disciplines with two or three leading academics in their field. The [archive](#) has more than 1,000 programmes to choose from.
 - [A Good Read](#) brings together two public figures to share and discuss their favourite books.
 - In [A Life Scientific](#), presenter Jim Al-Khalili interviews a leading scientist about how they forged a career in their field.
 - Sociologist Laurie Taylor showcases recent research in [Thinking Aloud](#).
- **Talk, debate, discuss your subject** at every opportunity:
 - Engage with your teachers and class mates as your fellow subject specialists.
 - Teach your subject to a younger student or someone outside of your field.
 - Take any opportunity to gain your confidence in public speaking and academic discussion, e.g. debating, mooting (mock trials), Model United Nations, school council, Youth Parliament, etc.

- **Get hands on:**
 - Volunteer, for example...
 - You need a mastery of your subject in order to teach it, so mentor students in younger years, become a form prefect, assist in Year 7 – 9 lessons, or run a lunchtime club.
 - If you’re thinking of medicine or another health profession, volunteering in a care home will demonstrate your commitment and develop your bedside manner.
 - KTS has an active branch of Interact – the youth wing of the Rotary – which run community projects, including a Christmas party for our elderly neighbours.
 - Campaign, e.g. [Engineers without Borders](#).
 - Write, e.g. keep a journal, publish a blog.
- Last, but very much not least, **read, read, and read some more**:
 - Ask your teachers for recommendations / a reading list for your subject.
 - Our KTS library carries journals for each subject and offers a wide-range of digital resources. Don’t forget to ask for help from the wonderful Mrs. Evans and her team; they will show you around the collection.
 - Your local library will have an inter-library loan service; if they don’t have the book you want / need they will order it from another library for a small fee.
 - Take a look at a daily newspaper; aim for the broadsheets – the *Guardian*, the *Times*, the *Telegraph* – and make sure you mix them up for a wide range of perspectives.
- You can explore and develop your academic interests in your own time and in your own way, but the **Extended Project Qualification** offers the structure, resources, and support in doing so. Whilst universities do not always include an EPQ in any offer they might make you (and Oxford and Cambridge certainly don’t), they definitely recognise and appreciate the skills it gives you. You will find that the EPQ gives you lots to write about in your personal statement and talk about in any interview.

Universities will offer lots of online resources to help you explore and develop your academic interests. The following links provide just a few examples / starting points:

- University of Cambridge’s [Super-Curricular Suggestions](#)
- University of Cambridge’s [HE Plus](#)
- King’s College, Cambridge’s [Subject Resources](#)
- Downing College, Cambridge’s [Discover Downing Resources](#)
- University of Oxford’s [Suggested Reading and Resources](#) by subject
- University of Oxford’s [Oxplore](#)
- University College, Oxford’s [Staircase 12](#) including its [Reading Bank](#) of book reviews and [Resource Hub](#)

Why Oxford or Cambridge?

As a student who is aiming high, you may want to consider applying to and studying at Oxford and Cambridge as two of Britain's leading universities. There are two features which make the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge different to other research-intensive universities.

1. The tutorial / supervision system

Both universities teach you in small groups – called ‘tutorials’ at Oxford and ‘supervisions’ at Cambridge – throughout your degree course. This means that as well as attending the lectures, seminars, and practicals which you would expect at any university, you also meet regularly in a small group (sometimes even one-to-one) with a member of teaching staff. You are given work to complete in advance – an essay for an arts subject or a set of problems in the sciences – which you will then discuss in detail in the tutorial / supervision. This opportunity to talk to a specialist in your field and receive their feedback on your work is uniquely challenging and rewarding. It is highly personalised; it allows you to double-check and advance your understanding of a subject and explore it in a level of detail which is not possible in a lecture or a seminar.

2. The college system

As an undergraduate at Oxford and Cambridge, you are both a member of the university and one of its colleges.

The university, via its faculties and departments:

- determines course content
- organises lectures, seminars, practicals, and projects
- sets and marks examinations
- awards degrees

This means that you will study the same course and receive the same degree certificate at the end of three or four years as any other undergraduate in your subject at the university.

Meanwhile, the colleges:

- receive and assess undergraduate applications and decide which students to admit
- organise small-group teaching
- are responsible for academic and pastoral care
- provide accommodation, places to eat, and recreational facilities

The college system can be difficult to understand as an applicant, but offers you additional opportunity and support as an undergraduate student. Your college will allocate you a personal tutor – known as a ‘Tutor’ in Oxford and a ‘Director of Studies’ in Cambridge – who is responsible for your academic progress and welfare; he or she is likely to be someone you will get to know very well over the course of three or four years and who you will probably stay in touch with long after you leave the college. He or she will arrange your tutorials / supervisions. It may be that these are held in your college, especially in your first year, but as you progress through your degree course and you begin to specialise, it is more likely that you will be sent to tutors / supervisors in other colleges who have expertise in your particular choice of papers. Your college will also provide your home and your immediate social circle; you will always find someone you know in the college library or bar who you can chat to. Each college also has its own sports teams, choirs, bands, societies, etc., so it’s easy to get involved and pursue an existing interest or take up a new hobby. If you are particularly talented you may go on to represent the university in your sport / artistic endeavours, or if your interest is particularly niche you will find like-minded students in a university club or society.

Overview of Oxford and Cambridge Admissions Round

Oxford and Cambridge have an earlier application deadline and a more involved application process, which means that you will need to do more research, and we will offer you specific support, in making an application.



Timeline for applying to Oxford and Cambridge / (Veterinary) Medicine / Dentistry

Year 12

Autumn Term	Information Evening – ‘Oxford Explained’ – for students, parents, and teachers <i>Whilst this event is specific to Oxford, much of the information will be relevant to Cambridge.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is given by representatives of Balliol College Oxford – link college to Hertfordshire. This takes place at a Hertfordshire Secondary School, last year’s event was hosted by Stanborough School. This usually takes place during the last week of September and includes a formal talk and presentation, followed by an informal opportunity to ask questions
Spring Term	Initial one-to-one meeting with Ms. Thompson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Please signal your interest in applying for Oxford or Cambridge and / or (Vet) Medicine / Dentistry to your form tutor and Ms. Thompson ▪ This is an early opportunity to discuss which degree courses / universities might be right for you
Spring Term (continues into Summer Term for June – August events)	Registration for / applications to masterclasses and summer schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School advertises Sutton Trust and UNIQ Summer Schools / other Oxbridge masterclasses (March and April and June – August) ▪ School prioritises nominations for bookings that must be made via school ▪ Pupils make own individual bookings for other events
Summer Term and holidays	Research / prepare your application, including developing your academic interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is your opportunity to research your application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cambridge or Oxford? ○ Which college? ○ Which course?

- Any entrance tests?
 - Work submission?
 - Explore and develop your academic interests:
 - Open days
 - Summer schools
 - Masterclasses
 - Read widely
 - Work experience
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Summer Term and holidays Personal Statement

- Several drafts of Personal Statement
 - Bring a full draft of your personal statement back to school with you; time will run away with you once you get back to your A Level studies!
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Year 13

Autumn Term

Second one-to-one meeting with Ms. Thompson

- Review of UCAS application, including personal statement
 - Outline the interview process leading into mock interviews at school
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Deadline for Oxbridge Applications

Apply by 6pm on 15 October
(Organ Scholarships have an earlier deadline of 1 September)

- UCAS form
 - Cambridge will then send out Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ) for completion once the UCAS application is submitted for completion by **22 October**
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Admissions Tests

- Most tests you will register for through Mrs Merrell, our Examinations Officer, and then sit in school on Wednesday 31 October.
 - Others such as the LNAT and UCAT you book at a local Testing Centre (e.g. Stevenage). Register for an early test to make sure that you have completed it ahead of the course deadline(s)
 - You will need to prepare and practise for these
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Written Work

- You may be asked to submit some samples of written work. Deadlines for this will generally be in November/December. These are generally essays that you have already completed in school as part of your curriculum work
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Interviews workshop

- In addition to the mock interview which all sixth formers have in October, we will also arrange an interviews workshop for Oxbridge / (Vet) Med / Dentistry candidates
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Oxbridge Interviews

- If called, interviews are ordinarily held in the first few weeks of December
 - Pool interviews are held in Oxford at the same time as the main interview
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Spring Term	Decisions / pool interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both Oxford and Cambridge will send you letters with the outcome of your application in the first week or two of January. ▪ Cambridge candidates may be pooled and called for interview at another college during this period
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Which course and which university?

You can only apply a single degree course at **either** the University of Oxford **or** the University of Cambridge in any one admissions round, so you will need to choose between the universities.

The only reason to apply to any university is because it has the right **degree course** for you. As the [Cambridge Admissions Office](#) says:

The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge agree that the most important decision a prospective applicant has to make is the course they wish to study, and that they should use this decision to direct and inform their choice of university.

Start with [Oxford](#) and [Cambridge](#)'s course directory and you'll see that some courses appear very similar, for example both universities offer History degrees. However, if you look at the detailed specification of each History course, you will spot key differences, for example [Oxford's Faculty of History](#) asks you to choose at least one paper from each of three periods – early, middle and late – over the course of your degree in order to give you a broad historical perspective, whereas [Cambridge's Faculty of History](#) allows you to specialise in a particular period – for example in ancient and medieval papers, or almost entirely in the twentieth century – from the outset. Some courses are only available at one of the universities, for example you can only study Fine Art or Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) at Oxford, whereas you can only study Architecture or Veterinary Medicine at Cambridge. At first glance, it appears as though Oxford offers more degree courses, although this is because it offers more joint honours degrees where you can combine two or more subjects, for example Computer Science and Philosophy, or Classics and English. Cambridge offers several very broad courses, which offer you an opportunity to study a wide range of fields at the outset before specialising as you move through your degree. For example, Natural Sciences offers a choice of sciences from sixteen departments, from Astronomy to Zoology, although most students will choose to work mainly within the broad fields of either the Biological Sciences or Physical Sciences. Meanwhile, Human, Social, and Political Sciences is a broad-based social sciences course, which draws on Politics and International Relations, Anthropology, and Sociology. So be open-minded – there may be a subject or a combination of subjects that you've never considered before. If your subject doesn't appear in the university's course directory, double-check [Oxford](#) and [Cambridge](#)'s listings by subject to see which degree course(s) cover your discipline. Once you've narrowed down your search to one or more degree courses, remember to look at the detailed course specifications to find out more about the **content, teaching, and assessment methods** to make sure they suit you. If the course outline in the prospectus doesn't offer enough detail, go directly to the departmental website and check out the undergraduate handbook for more information.

It may well be that neither Oxford nor Cambridge offers your chosen subject(s) – for example you can't study Dentistry at either institution – or that another university has an equally or more prestigious department – for example Neuroscience at University College London, or Zoology at Exeter. If this is the case, then Oxford and Cambridge are not the right universities for you. It is important to prioritise your choice of degree course over your choice of university, since it is your love and flair for your subject which will sustain you through three or four year's hard work.

If you've found the right degree course for you, double-check that you're on track to meet the **entrance and course requirements**. At Cambridge, the standard A Level offer is A*AA for most arts subjects (and Psychological and Behavioural Sciences), or A*A*A for most maths and sciences courses (and Economics). At Oxford, the standard A Level offer varies from AAA to A*A*A depending on the degree course. Some degree courses – especially in the

sciences – will have subject-specific requirements and this may vary between the universities, or even between colleges. For example, to study Mathematics at Oxford you need to be taking A Levels in Mathematics and Further Mathematics, but to study Mathematics at Cambridge you will also need to sit STEP extension papers at the end of Year 13. Whilst all Cambridge colleges will require A Level Mathematics for Economics, some will also require an AS Level in Further Mathematics.

If both Oxford and Cambridge have an equally suitable degree course for you, then consider the **location** and character of the cities. It is worth visiting both universities – ideally whilst attending a college or department open day – and taking a look around the cities at the same time. Both universities and cities offer a wide range of **extracurricular opportunities**, but if you have a particular interest you want to pursue during your degree course, you may find one better equipped than the other.

Which college?

Once you've decided on a course, you will apply through UCAS to a college, which will receive and assess your application and decide which students to admit on behalf of the university. However, both Oxford and Cambridge moderate applications between colleges, to make sure that they offer their places to the best candidates across the university and that you have the same chance of getting a place no matter which college you apply to. Moreover, the degree is the same, regardless of which college you apply to. So whilst you have more research to do and another decision to make, you should not agonise over your choice of college. Some factors to consider include:

- **Course** – colleges will offer most, but not all, courses. This will immediately narrow down the colleges you are choosing from. You should then check whether any of the colleges have different **course requirements**. For example, whilst all Cambridge colleges will require A Level Mathematics for Economics, some will also require an AS Level in Further Mathematics.
- Your **gender** – whilst all Oxford colleges are now mixed sex, there are still two Cambridge colleges which are open to women only: Newnham, Murray Edwards (Lucy Cavendish, which is open to students over 21 years only, will admit men from 2021). If you choose not to apply directly to a single sex college, you may nonetheless be offered a place at one through the pool, in which case take the opportunity to visit before you make any decisions. Be reassured that whilst the college is single-sex, the degree course is mixed, so you will study and socialise with men and women regardless!
- The **size** – colleges vary significantly in how many undergraduates and graduates they admit, for example Peterhouse is the smallest of Cambridge colleges with just 246 undergraduates studying with them at any one time, whilst King's is mid-sized with an undergraduate community of 430, and Trinity is the largest with 695 undergraduates. This, of course, affects the dynamics of the community, so consider whether you'd like to be in a college barely bigger than our sixth form, where you have a good chance of getting to know most students, or whether you'd prefer to be part of a larger cohort.
- The **location** of the college: you may prefer a college in the thick of things in a busy (and sometimes touristy) city centre, or one on the outskirts of the city in calmer and more spacious grounds. You might choose a college based on how convenient it is for your faculty / department / lecture halls but don't allow distance to play a big factor in your decision. Neither Oxford nor Cambridge are big cities and as [Fitzwilliam College's bicycle map](#) of Cambridge shows, all colleges, departments are within an easy bicycle ride of each other and the city centre.
- The **age and architecture** of the college: you are also looking for a home for three / four years! Some colleges, such as University College in Oxford, are centuries-old and dominated by medieval architecture; some have been founded much more recently and enjoy purpose-built architecture. It's up to you where you feel most at home!
- The **accommodation** on offer: all colleges will offer you a room in your first and third years of your degree, either in the college or in nearby college-owned houses; whilst all Cambridge colleges can provide accommodation throughout your degree, some Oxford colleges give you the opportunity to 'live out' in private rented accommodation. Again, the decision is yours.
- The **particular facilities**: all colleges will have a library, a bar and common room, and canteen. You may want to find out more about the catering arrangements; can you 'pay as you go' on a card, or do you have to sign in / out of meals? What self-catering arrangements are available? All colleges will have sports grounds and social facilities, but exactly what they can offer will vary. For example, King's College, Cambridge, has an art studio, a

music library, kayaks and allotments, but other colleges will have other facilities which may appeal more to you and your interests.

- The **feel**: perhaps the best way to make a decision is to visit during the University Open Days, when all colleges will be open and you can look around and chat to current students. Click here to find out the dates and register for [Oxford](#) and [Cambridge](#).

Making a competitive application

You will want to consider carefully whether or not Oxford or Cambridge is for you and how realistic your chances are of being offered a place. Ask yourself:

- Does Oxbridge offer the course you want?
- Do you learn best in small groups?
- Would you like to live in a college?
- Are you studying a suitable combination of subjects?
- Are you on track to achieve As and A*s in your A Levels?
- Are you ready to work hard on your degree course?
- Are you prepared to be examined mostly by exam and mostly at the end of your degree course?

Oxford and Cambridge actually have fewer applications per place than other leading universities and are in a position to assess each application individually and in full. They are looking for academic ability and potential, motivation, and commitment.

They will look at:

- Your academic record from your GCSEs onwards, in the context of our school and your personal circumstances
- Personal statement
- School reference
- Test results, where required
- Submitted written work, where requested
- Interview

No one part of the application is any more or less important than another and you will need to commit considerable time and thought into preparing every element of it.

Personal Statements:

- Pippa Rogerson, Gonville and Caius College, recommends that you see your personal statements as an opportunity for 'self-examination': essentially, the questions to answer is why this degree course and why me? Be specific: write about your particular interests within your subject and what you have done to explore and develop your academic interests inside and outside of school.
- It is important to show your ability to reflect on, and develop further, academic points that you have come across in the course of your A Level studies or in wider reading, lectures, exhibitions, and masterclasses. You do not need to describe what your subject of choice is – your statement is being read by one of the top academics in the field and they know far more than you do! Also, they do not want just lists of things that you have done. Instead, you need to relate everything you talk about back to how it demonstrates your interest in your chosen area of study or how it shows a particular skill or attribute key to that area or being an independent learner. You need to show an ability to think about a point and draw some further personal academic inference from it, e.g. taking a specific topic from an academic article or lecture that particularly surprised you or intrigued you, explaining why it did and what further research or thoughts it may have provoked in you.
- At least two-thirds of your application, and ideally four-fifths, of your application should be academic and subject-specific. Oxford and Cambridge students have wide-ranging interests and talents outside of their degree courses, and lots of opportunity to pursue them. However, neither university consider extracurricular activities as part of their admissions criteria, unless they can be directly related to your subject, or in the case of vocational subject such as Architecture, Law, and Medicine, your future career. Still, you are writing your

personal statement for all five universities, not just Oxford or Cambridge, so you can dedicate the remaining third of your statement to your extracurricular activities.

- Keep a copy of your personal statement and reread it the night before your interview; interviewers often use content from it as a ‘warm up’ question!

Admissions Tests

- Find out here whether or not you are required to take an admissions test as part of your application for your chosen degree course. **You must take responsibility yourself for checking for current information, since the information given below may go out of date once it has been published.**
 - Oxford: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/tests?wssl=1>
 - Cambridge: <https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/admission-assessments>
- Most, but not all, Oxford and Cambridge courses now require you to take an admissions test before interview, which is used to help decide which candidates to invite to interview and also to inform the final decisions. They are not pass / fail tests; your performance in these tests will not be considered in isolation, but taken into account alongside the other elements of your application.
- You will need to register for these tests in advance. **Registration isn't automatic and just completing your UCAS application won't register you for the appropriate admissions test(s).**
 - Most Oxford and Cambridge pre-interview admissions tests are administered by Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing. Our school is a registered test centre. **Please see Mrs. Merrell, our Exams Officer, to register yourself as a candidate and receive your candidate number between 1 September and 15 October.** Please don't leave it to the last minute! These tests will be taken in school on **Wednesday 4 November**.
 - Applicants for Medicine at Oxford and Cambridge must take the **Biomedical Admissions Test (BMAT)**. Again, Mrs. Merrell can register you for the test and you will take it in school on Wednesday 31 October, but please note it has an **earlier registration deadline of 1 October** (otherwise it incurs a late entry fee).
 - Applicants for Law at Oxford must take the Law National Aptitude Test (LNAT) between 1 September and 20 October.
 - To guarantee a test slot, you must register by 5 October (i.e. before the deadline for your UCAS application!)
 - You can find out more and register for the LNAT here: <https://lnat.ac.uk/>
 - You will take the LNAT in a local test centre; our nearest one is currently in Stevenage.
- Some, particularly Cambridge, courses will require an admissions test during the interview day(s).
- These tests are designed to assess aptitude, so they are not something you can easily prepare for. However, you do need to take the time to familiarise yourself with the format and timings of the test:
 - Review the sample papers for your tests, which are published on the university websites. This will help you to feel familiar with the test paper and know what to expect.
 - Sit at least one past paper in test conditions, as this will help you to practise your timing.
 - If there is a published syllabus for a test, you should check the details and ensure that you have covered the relevant material. Providing that you are taking the required A Levels, this should not be a problem.
 - Watch this [Webinar](#) on admissions tests and assessments, which was co-presented by representatives from both Oxford and Cambridge.

Written Work

- Find out here whether or not you are required to submit written work as part of your application for your chosen degree course. **You need to take responsibility yourself for checking for current information, since the information given below may go out of date once it has been published.**
 - Oxford: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/written-work?wssl=1>
 - Cambridge: <https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/admission-assessments/submitted-work>
- After you have submitted your UCAS application – and usually before the end of October – the college considering your application will get in touch to tell you how to submit your written work.

- You will usually be asked to send in original schoolwork, marked by a teacher, which has not been rewritten or corrected in anyway. You will need to complete a written work cover sheet, which has to be countersigned by a teacher, for each piece of work that you submit.
- Make sure you choose work that you are proud of and which you're prepared to discuss at interview.
- Make sure you keep a copy of the work you submit and reread it before your interview, as your interviewers may ask you about it.

Interviews

- If you are called for interview, it will be in the first few weeks of December. You should make sure that you are available for these interviews – they sometimes do run into our Christmas holidays so don't book holidays too soon. At Oxford you may well be asked to attend interviews at another college following those at your college of first choice, and so you may be required to stay in Oxford for a few days. You will be able to stay in college free of charge, with other applicants and current students, so try to enjoy it and take it as an opportunity to try out university life. Cambridge tends to just hold interviews on one day at your chosen college. They may then pass your details into the Pool for other colleges to consider if they decide that they do not wish to make you an offer.
- Each of the colleges will conduct the interviews in their own way and so there are no set rules on what to expect. However you should be prepared for at least two interviews at a college.
- Interviews are wholly academic and subject-related and are usually 20 – 30 minutes long. You will meet with one, or more usually two, subject specialists. They will want to find out what you know and how you are able to apply that knowledge more broadly. They will try to find out your strengths and weaknesses, and your interest in the subject. It is not unusual for them to ask you something you could not know the answer to in order to see how you think around a problem. They are not trying to catch you out but want to assess how flexible and adept you are at applying your knowledge and understanding to unknown situations. They expect you to ask for clarifying information and show how you are thinking around the problem and will help guide you and direct you as necessary.
- This [video](#) from Cambridge includes clips from mock interviews with four successful interviewees and gives some great advice. Oxford offers some [sample interview questions](#) which will make you think and help you understand why they ask the questions they do.

The outcome of your application

- Notification of the outcome of your application is made in early January; all colleges coordinate so that they will communicate with you on the same day. If you have been successful you will receive a conditional offer, dependent on the grades you get in your A Levels.
- For Cambridge applicants, if you are initially unsuccessful at your chosen college, but they deem you to be a suitable candidate, you may well be “pooled” and other colleges may then request an interview in early January. Alternatively, they may rely on all the elements of your application plus the feedback from your interviewing college and make you an offer without actually seeing you. If you receive an offer from a college you didn't apply to, there will normally be an opportunity to visit and look around before you make up your mind.
- Remember, your application is a two-way process! Hopefully, by the time you've received your offer, you will have all the information you need to make a decision about where you will be happiest.
- If you choose to accept the offer and then secure the grades in the Summer, your place at the university will be confirmed in writing by both the college and UCAS in August on A Level results day. If you miss the offer, there may be some room for negotiation, especially if there have been extenuating circumstances, but lower grades are rarely accepted and you are more likely to be released to your insurance choice.
- Each college will have a policy about providing feedback on your application, interview and their final decision. You may be able to request this directly from the college yourself or sometimes the request needs to be made by your form tutor or referee.