



THE BHASVIC OXBRIDGE PATHWAYS INFORMATION

These introductory notes do not seek to provide a detailed explanation of the Oxbridge Admissions process, nor do they set out all the many and varied nuances of a successful Oxbridge application. It is hoped, however, that they address some of the actual questions which parents/guardians have asked in previous years and dispel some of the myths and misunderstandings which can surround an Oxbridge application.

At BHASVIC, the approach to consideration of an Oxbridge application is **inclusive** not **exclusive**, definitively **non-elitist**.

BHASVIC Oxbridge applicants have secured 160 offers from Oxford and Cambridge in the last three academic years.

What support does BHASVIC offer applicants to Cambridge or Oxford?

Yr 12 students at BHASVIC have many opportunities to 'opt in' to Oxbridge Enrichment and Support. There is no minimum GCSE requirement (although the information below should be noted). These opportunities include:

- Visit the Oxbridge desk at Enrolment
- Sign on for Oxbridge Enrichment at the September Student Enrichment Fair
- Email Neil for a 1-2-1 meeting
- Drop in to Student Services and ask about Oxbridge
- Students with a strong GCSE profile will be emailed directly at least twice during Yr 12
- Students who perform very well in their Yr12 studies will be emailed directly during the summer between Yr12/13
- Subject teachers and Yr12 tutors can propose students

Uniquely, BHASVIC provides specialist tutor groups for Oxbridge applicants, these will begin in June 2022 and students can request membership if their GCSE profile is reasonably strong.

How many A*s at GCSE does a student need in order to apply to Oxbridge?

No fixed number. All universities look at GCSE performance in the context of the school attended.

Students do not need to have a certain GCSE profile in order to apply. A good simple 'rule of thumb': is your GCSE performance better than the average for your cohort at your school?

GCSE profiles are 'retrospective' and GCSEs are only one of several factors Oxbridge and other leading universities consider. Indeed Oxford and Cambridge do not consider GCSE performance to be a sound predictor of degree performance. The strongest Oxbridge applicants are those who have shown very significant improvement, a continuing 'upwards trajectory', during the first year at BHASVIC.

How important are extra-curricular activities?

Not at all. A student with a strong slate of extra-curricular activities will not be offered a place over a student with no extra-curricular experiences. Oxbridge are looking for 'super-curricular' – in other words self-motivated academic reading and thinking 'beyond A level' – showing a lively, engaged, thoughtful mind. Work experience is not a significant factor either ... other than for Medicine applications.

Do students taking four A levels have an advantage over those studying for three?

No. Oxford and Cambridge, along with all other leading universities, will be making offers in terms of three A levels. Three A levels with 'top' grades are far better than four with weaker outcomes. Perhaps the only exception to this general rule, for just a few students, may be for some Science students who are taking Double Mathematics. These students need to seek specialist advice at BHASVIC enrolment.

However, an appropriate A level profile is important; students should try to choose 3 A levels which will strengthen an application for a specific degree subject, they should begin looking at the leading universities' A level 'requirements' or 'preferences' now.

Is Oxbridge 'too posh' and public school for BHASVIC students?

160 BHASVIC students have gained offers over the past three years, comfortably eclipsing all the public schools in Sussex. The gap in terms of socio-economic privilege is, in general, far greater between BHASVIC and what Blair labelled as a 'bog-standard comprehensive' than the gap between BHASVIC and most public schools. It is a regrettable fact access to the leading universities in the UK is still significantly determined by social class background. Other leading UK universities have 'worse' (if that's the word) state v public school statistics than Oxbridge. It is worth remembering that Oxford and Cambridge are almost certainly the two cheapest leading universities to attend.

BHASVIC is especially pleased that 'widening participation' students gained over 75 offers last three years.

How do you apply for Oxbridge? What's the difference between an Oxbridge application and applications to other universities?

Very little is the quick answer to the last question. All applicants to UK Universities apply through UCAS and can choose up to five universities. Oxford or Cambridge is merely one of those choices. The closing date for submitting a Non-Oxbridge UCAS application will be mid-January 2023 (the internal BHASVIC deadline will be mid-November). However, one of the key differences between applications to Oxbridge as opposed to other universities is this timescale: it is necessary to submit the UCAS form by 15th October in the student's second year. Oxbridge applicants then need to undertake pre-interview admission assessments (first week in November 2022) and attend interviews at the beginning of December 2022. Oxbridge College choice seems to add a further layer of complexity, but in reality this is not so and BHASVIC will give thorough support over this aspect, indeed all aspects, of an Oxbridge application.

Isn't the whole process of applying just too time-consuming and stressful?

Not if the student is organised and approaches the whole process calmly, with a sense of perspective. The perspective being: Oxford and Cambridge are two outstanding universities but they are certainly not the be all and the end all.

'Yes' – there are other pieces of the Admissions 'jigsaw' to put in place, most notably the Admission Assessments and the interviews. Increasingly other universities are requiring pre-admission tests and interviews. In recent years the most challenging interviews have been at Imperial not Oxbridge. However, getting the whole UCAS form, Personal Statement, Reference etc completed by the end of September alleviates a good deal of pressure. Some students will have three or four offers by the October half term break ... that feels good and 'de-stressing'.

Most applicants now quite enjoy the interview process. No applicants in recent years have found the interview process ridiculously challenging and stressful.

Will a student's Oxbridge experience of university be too much hard work, leaving no time for extra-curricular activities?

There are so many variables here! These include subject being studied, self-discipline, capacity to 'work hard and play hard' etc. Sometimes students are inconsistent in their standards/judgments applying much harsher criteria to Oxbridge than other universities. The range of extra-curricular opportunities at Oxford and Cambridge is enormous. In both the Arts and Sports, students can participate at any level. BHASVIC students seem particularly keen on Ice Hockey at Cambridge!

Three terms of eight weeks do mean that the workload is heavy but the breaks are long. Other stresses such as accommodation, food, transport, academic resources are effectively non-existent at Oxbridge. In terms of value for money - contact hours, 121 tuition, practicals, teaching delivered frequently by leading experts not just postgrad students and so on – Oxbridge is outstanding. (It is worth students thinking 'what am I getting for my £18-20,000 a year?')

If you have any further queries regarding BHASVIC's Oxbridge 'offer' then email the Oxbridge Coordinator Neil Commin: n.commin@bhasvic.ac.uk. Students should be able to access all the information and support they require independently. Ultimately the decision to apply to Oxford or Cambridge, and to four other universities, must be a student's decision, they need to 'own' it. BHASVIC makes an Oxbridge application an option for many students; any student who is genuinely interested in applying can access all the expertise, guidance and support they need throughout their time at BHASVIC.