

# OA



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## SCHOOLS MAGAZINE

Issue 2 September 2014

# Diversity

**Why uniformity is not  
for university**

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How encouraging diversity  
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St Clare's College	Oxford	20 <sup>th</sup> September
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City of Sunderland College	Sunderland	24 <sup>th</sup> September
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**LUCINDA FRASER** Managing Director of Oxbridge Applications

“The key behind these magic moments in teaching is finding something unique in each student, and coaxing that part of them to shine.”

## Celebrating Diversity

One of the greatest joys of working with young people is inspiring one of those 'light bulb' moments – where you can see a new idea growing that could change the course of a student's future. The key behind these magic moments is finding something unique in each student, and coaxing that part of them to shine. This issue focuses on the power of that uniqueness, something that every student possesses regardless of the school they went to, the country that they grew up in, or the subject that they apply for.

It is no secret that grade requirements are rising, not only in the offers made but the average achieved by students in their A-Level years. Where it was once possible to receive an Oxbridge place with AAB at A level, a typical offer today will often include at least one A\*, with most candidates achieving 5-7A\*s at GCSE. With such high academic hoops to jump through, it is so easy to see the university application process as surmountable only by scrupulously trained automatons, churning out identical answers.

In reality, the process is very different. Beyond the grade requirements, it is passion and personality that will win the day. Such inimitability cannot be achieved in isolation – our feature articles highlight the importance of learning from others in order to achieve excellence, particularly those from different experiential backgrounds. As we expand our support to students and schools in the UK and abroad, we find that diversity strengthens not only an academic application, but a future career.

We hope you enjoy our exciting new issue.

Happy reading!

Lucinda Fraser,  
Managing Director,  
Oxbridge Applications



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# Joining forces

By Katie Draper, Schools Manager for Oxbridge Applications

Too much has been made of the 'divide' between state and privately educated students. In this article we focus instead on what can be achieved by bringing different educational experiences together – focusing on what can be mutually learned from one another.



It is hard to find an article on Oxbridge admissions which does not reference some form of 'divide' between state school and private school applicants. Whether the topic under discussion is the quality of preparation for interview and admissions tests, or commenting on the high ratio of independent to state-educated students that are accepted each year (the total of privately educated students currently stands at 39% at Cambridge and 43.2% at Oxford). Time and again, the focus has been on holding the two groups apart for comparison.

The fact remains, however, that Oxbridge is a mix of both privately- and state- educated students, and that this combination of minds, ages, interests and backgrounds is an essential part of what makes both universities outstanding institutions. The Oxbridge interview, and indeed the whole Oxbridge experience, revolves around placing oneself in unfamiliar situations to work on challenging new material, whether this is justifying an essay's argument in a one-on-one meeting with a tutor or debating with fellow students about a project or the contents of a recent lecture. The skills this requires – confidence, love of a challenge, passion for learning and academic excellence – can be fostered anywhere and in many different ways.

The opportunity to sample such an environment before university can be a harder thing to come by, but is a powerful learning curve when encountered. Whether the students have come from a very experienced support system, are part of a group, or arriving alone, the chance to meet bright, motivated strangers has an automatic and immediate levelling effect. With the launch of our 'hubbing' schemes this year on our Oxbridge Preparation Days (which have allowed schools with large numbers of

Oxbridge applicants to host those from schools with far fewer), we have been able to witness, first-hand, the advantages that such a mix can bring. Those involved tend to come away both inspired and galvanised by what they have learned and often freed from misconceptions about the process – significantly, as a result of the other students they meet, as well as the tutors and graduates teaching them.

For students with few peers considering Oxbridge, the aspirational environment

the competition and getting a sample of the pool of applicants that they will be interviewed alongside. On one hand, applicants can see that the students applying alongside them are human – just as nervous and hopeful as they are. On the other, it can be a reality check for those used to being a big fish in a small pond.

For those who have benefitted from a large and established culture of Oxbridge applications, this gives them a chance to step beyond the 'bubble' of their peers. Whilst fantastically effective in so many ways, most in-house preparation remains within the comfort zone of familiar classmates and teachers. In some cases, this can lead to shock or a lack of confidence when applicants are faced with the unknown. Speaking to pupils from different backgrounds brings a new range of opinions and thinking styles with which to contend; excellent preparation for the think-on-your-feet, lateral-thinking style of interview questions at Oxbridge.

Joining forces with those from different educational backgrounds (be this state, grammar, private scholarship and international etc.), is an opportunity to showcase what bright, motivated and aspirational students can learn from each other.

Most importantly, it is so valuable for all applicants to see not how different they are, but what they have in common; namely, the ability to think originally and intelligently when faced with new challenges, forming, defending and debating

their opinions on a variety of subjects and, above all, love for their subject and desire to improve and learn at an elite (not elitist) institution – something which makes them all equally nervous and equally excited. ■

## 7 tips for pushing students out of their academic comfort zones:

### 1. Speak to strangers

Talk about your subject with new people; teachers that you do not know well, neighbours, family friends etc.

### 2. Read widely

Your A-Levels are fascinating, but they barely scratch the surface of your subject. Pick your favourite module, or text or period, and see what else you can find out.

### 3. Seek out new sources

Go beyond the books and the news sites. Try TED talks, the Economist, the New Scientist, even BBC iPlayer!

### 4. Defend your views

Practice debating with those who do not share your opinions. Make sure that you get your facts straight and understand your opponent's point of view.

### 5. Play devil's advocate

Choose a subject that you feel strongly about and attempt to argue the opposite point at a high academic level. Do you find yourself agreeing with certain areas? Seeing beyond black-and-white is an essential skill for university.

### 6. Make mistakes

Never be afraid to be wrong, or to take a guess. If you are unsure, say so, but have a go anyway.

### 7. Know your strengths

The key to all of this is confidence. When mixing with other applicants, it is not uncommon to meet some that are impressive, perhaps even intimidating. Think of yourself as one of them, and have clear examples to hand to remind yourself.

created through meeting other like-minded students can stir up their natural desire to aim high, as well as reminding them that they are in good (and numerous) company. These are gateways to understanding

Source: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures> Oxford University facts and Figures.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/may/27/oxbridge-state-school-numbers-falling> for Cambridge.

# OA CHRONICLES

A behind-the-scenes glimpse into this year's focuses and expanding horizons

## THE ARCHITECTURE OF AN EDUCATION

One of the famous questions asked by confused tourists in Oxford and Cambridge is "Where is the University?" The answer is, "all around you", as the university is the combination of all the individual colleges. It works on a federal system like the USA (where the 50 states are independent in most matters yet still governed ultimately by Washington). Most undergraduates will live in college or college annexes throughout their university life so the college becomes their "home from home", where they can eat, study, play sport etc.

There is great significance in the collegiate system: there are no undergraduate colleges which specialise in any subject, so students are constantly mixing with those studying a very wide variety of subjects, a most rewarding intellectual experience. The

medieval colleges were deliberately designed to encourage this inter-social life, being built around squares (quadrangles in Oxford; courts in Cambridge), with living quarters (staircases) leading off them. When leaving a staircase, one was almost always meeting someone entering or leaving another staircase and thus building contacts and friendships. Not all modern colleges have the traditional design but the principle of encouraging social and intellectual mixing remains firmly in place. The combination of social, intellectual and academic interaction flourishes under the unique collegiate system. ■

See the full article at [www.oxbridgeapplications.com](http://www.oxbridgeapplications.com)

Barry Webb is a former admissions tutor for Oxford, regular speaker at Oxbridge Applications' in-school courses, and acts as a member of the board.



## HORSES FOR COURSES



Selecting the right route is a crucial first move in an application. Choosing a less well-known course can offer a better fit for a prospective student, better odds, a stronger application and an altogether academically happier undergrad experience.

If you have a student in your class who is caught between Law and Economics, point out that Land Economy at Cambridge offers a fascinating mix of both. Maybe someone is set on applying to Medicine, yet is more interested in the intricacies of molecular biology and neuroscience than talking to patients – direct them towards Biomedical Sciences (Oxford) or Biological Natural Sciences (Cambridge).

A linguist who is looking for a new challenge outside of Europe, or a Historian wanting to reach beyond a rather Euro-centric curriculum? Try Oriental Studies at Oxford. Archaeology and Anthropology (Oxford) offers an incredible blend of History, Sociology, Theology, Pathology and more, and HSPS is available for the politically-minded at Cambridge, CAAH for those with a Classical leaning, or Anglo-Saxon Norse and Celtic for those with a passion for the origins of the English language. ■

Want to know more? Why not flip through our book *Tell Me About A Banana*, which offers an easy digest of course summaries.



## OA ON TOUR

In 2014 OA ventured out on its annual trip to Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Dubai and met, inspired and informed over 400 international students, parents and teachers in free talks entitled ‘Oxford and Cambridge: Should you Apply?’

Our mission was to inform and engage overseas audiences, find out what was holding them back and to emphasise all the advantages that an Oxbridge education can bring, debunking myths and inspiring minds in the process.

We found clear patterns among students in each new place we went. Did you know, for example, that Cambridge applications are much more common in Asia than Oxford, and that Singaporean and Malaysian students benefit from a large number of scholarships and sponsorships available from national institutions and firms?

There were so many memorable moments, from speaking to 200-strong gatherings as far afield as Kuala Lumpur and Dubai, to liaising with the British Council, to the highly scientific experiment of seeing how many Oxbridge consultants we could fit into a lift! What a great way to usher in our brand new global outlook and 2015 mission of bringing fully informed, comprehensive support to international applicants the world over. ■



## DISCOVERING AMERICA

Last year, over 4,200 UK students chose US universities for their undergraduate studies. Whether it is for the flexibility of academic programs at a wide range of academic institutions or the chance to experience American university life, or simply the desire to gain a more international view of the world, there are many good reasons for students to want to study in the US.

With so many colleges to choose from, it's important that students start the process by carefully considering what they are looking for – thinking about location, size, academic offerings and cost.

The best place to begin is on The College Board's Big Future website: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>. Here, students will be able to research universities, majors and scholarships. It really is a one-stop-shop! Another great resource is The Fulbright Commission, a US-government funded organisation to promote US education around the world: [www.fulbright.org.uk](http://www.fulbright.org.uk). Their website provides a wealth of helpful information. ■

Eileen Penman is an independent consultant for Ivy and US applications. To see the full article log in to [www.oxbridgeapplications.com](http://www.oxbridgeapplications.com) and visit our resources.

## NEW: STAR LETTER & STAR TWEET

We love hearing from you and your students and regularly receive fascinating letters, emails and tweets that open our eyes to new insights into the world of education, always helping us to improve the support we can provide to schools and students alike. With this in mind, we are launching a brand new section in our Schools Magazine to reward the Star Letter & Star Tweet of the issue! ■



**Star Letter winner** will receive this champagne hamper with a course pack, admissions test pack and personal statement pack.  
Email: [schools@oxbridgeapplications.com](mailto:schools@oxbridgeapplications.com)



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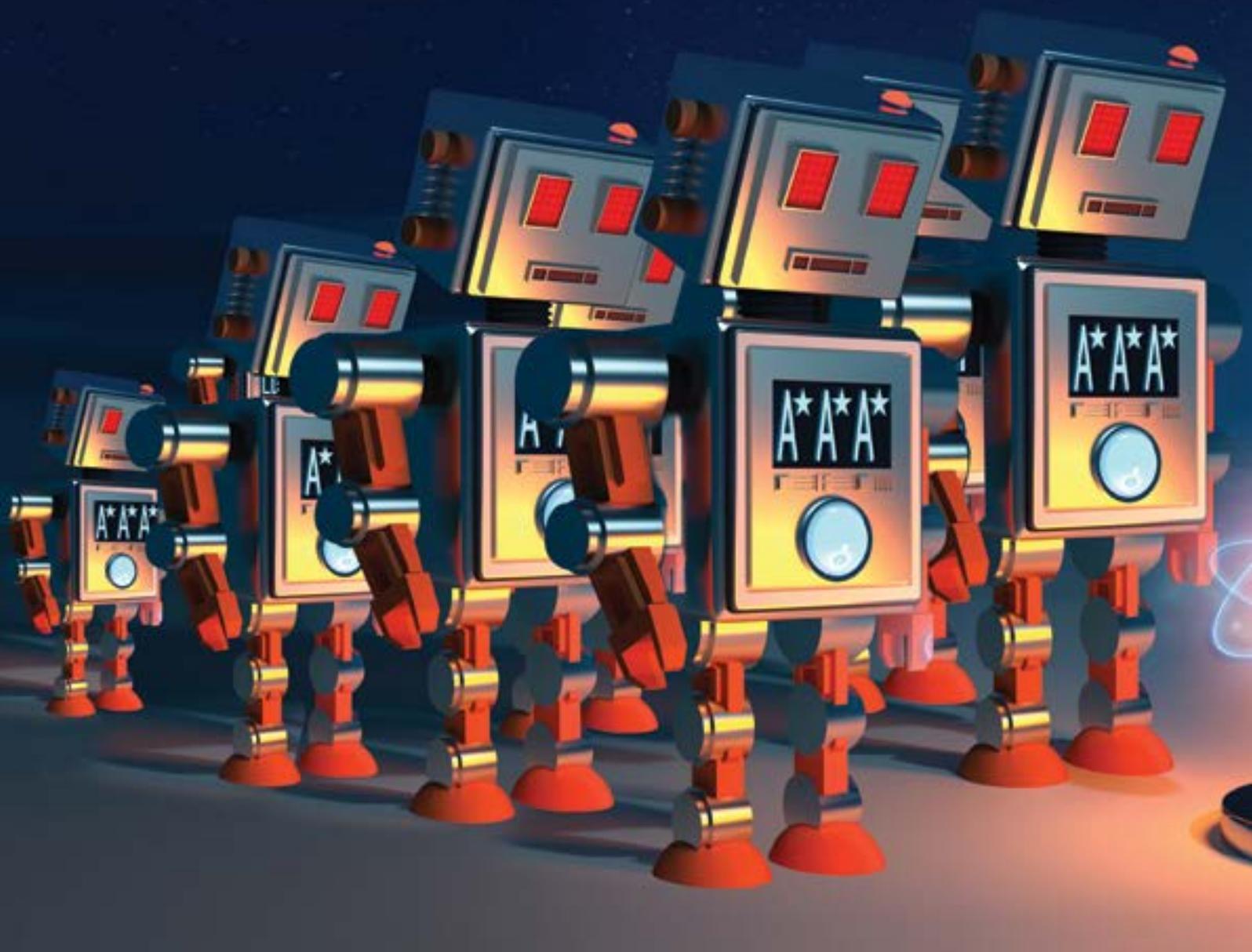


**We look forward to hearing from you!**

# ROBOFLOP

## Hanging on to our humanity

A recent study from the University of East Anglia has concluded “Secondary education has become increasingly politicised, which involves greater emphasis on testing and results of tests.” The study has highlighted ways in which the A level syllabus is failing students when it comes to university study. Olivia Haywood, tutor and consultant for Oxbridge Applications, comments...



I remember my English A level well; Hamlet, in particular. I knew what I had to cover and I was going to get full marks. If 'the madness theme' cropped up, I needed to make sure I got in this scene, that quotation...there were five things to which I had to refer in order to get that top grade.

All I had to do was make sure I demonstrated (downloaded) a full knowledge of the text. And that was English, where, as everyone knows, there are 'no correct answers', right? Biology was a walk in the park! A combination of a thorough teacher and fanatic mock-taking had taught me the answer for every little point and, on exam day, I went through the paper like a computerised Super Mario, collecting the little gold tokens by memory. Results day came, and there were my shiny full marks.

At Oxford, students quickly discover that a First, the new A\* goal, is 70 marks. One can achieve the best possible grade with 70%. Suddenly, the concept of full marks is no more, as is the idea that the robotic relaying of memorised answers will enable one to achieve them.



This simple readjustment demonstrates a huge gap, a pointed difference, between the way learning is often understood at sixth-form level and at university level. Those 30 remaining marks between a First and 100% represent the idea that 'perfect' is a

fiction, and that 'full marks', if they are ever awarded, are

only very occasionally given as a kind of gesture to mark generation-changing excellence and achievement. You

step through the university doors and the message is clear:

the limitless potential for learning and discovery in

one's discipline means that your best is probably around 7/10.

Every year, we read another story of a student showered with glittering constellations at GCSE and

A level, and yet for some mystical reason, the

miserly gate keepers at Oxbridge have

barred their doors to this

rising star. The fact is, 30,000

applicants for 7,000 places allows

Oxbridge the luxury of choosing

unique, outstanding and interesting candidates.

A syllabus that rewards robotic answering by rote does not necessarily generate this kind of scholar, so the A\*s cannot be taken as a definitive marker of excellence, but only as an indication of a student who may well show promise at interview.

We must not be too unkind to the current sixth form syllabus options. I am routinely surprised by my capacity to read in French despite not having practised it since I pelted out of my final oral exam and into the pub in late May 2008. Indeed, it wasn't until my English teachers took me beyond the syllabus to reveal the intricate, rhetorical gameplay

of Shakespeare, or the sharp pain of Sassoon that I decided to depart from the family tradition of Medicine and make a go of it with English. However, I can't help feel that this was very much the work of my teachers, who managed to achieve this in spite of all the mark collecting required to score highly in the exams.

This, then, is your struggle, perhaps made all the more challenging when you too are faced with prescriptive government assessments of what makes a lesson "outstanding". Last year, reports hit the headlines that up to 1 in 10 students attending university had failed to complete the degree they started on – 27,000 students drop out.

A contributing factor is no doubt the shock of the academic independence one is expected to demonstrate from day one of an undergraduate degree. Alongside everything else, students are depending on you to help bridge

the gap between robotic mark chasing and the

kind of independent, exploratory study

top universities are looking for.

So if the exam syllabus is too

prescriptive, what can you do? Firstly, I think, it is crucial

to make students aware of the fiction of

full marks, and to show them that far from demoralising,

this liberates them from the fear of getting it wrong. Almost every student who comes through our doors expresses a worry of not 'knowing the answer' when asked a difficult question at interview. Our first step is to break down this concept. It is the human creativity in them, the mental pathway that leads them to a conclusion that is the most engaging thing for a tutor to witness; not the conclusion itself. If it were all about remembering the right answer, Google would be able to get

100% in Oxbridge Finals. As far as we know, the human brain is still building robots, and not the other way around. ■

**“The fact is, 30,000 applicants for 7,000 places allows Oxbridge the luxury of choosing unique, outstanding and interesting candidates”**

**“If the exam syllabus is too prescriptive, what can you do to help bridge the gap between robotic mark chasing and the kind of independent, exploratory study students will be expected to demonstrate?”**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-28014519>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/9946149/Warning-as-27000-university-students-drop-out-in-a-year.html>

# UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS TESTS



## HOW WOULD YOU REPLY?

PULL  
OUT &  
STICK UP!



**TSA Oxford**  
Thinking Skills Assessment

A cyclist averages 7.5 miles an hour on level ground but only 4.5 miles an hour when going up hill. If the ratio between flat ground and hills were 1:3, what was the cyclist's average mph over 60 miles?

- a) 6mph
- b) 5.5mph
- c) 5.25mph
- d) 4.75mph
- e) 6.3mph



**LNAT**  
National Admissions Test for Law

*How would YOU reply?*

Should individuals and companies that fail to conform to sufficiently 'green' methods of waste disposal be subject to criminal sanctions?



**BMAT**  
BioMedical Admissions Test

All Staphylococci are Bacteria and all Bacteria are Prokaryotes. No Staphylococci are Archaea. Which of the following must be true?

- a) Some Bacteria are Archaea
- b) Every Staphylococcus is a Prokaryote
- c) All Prokaryotes are Archaea
- d) No Archaea are Staphylococci



**ELAT**  
English Literature Admissions Test

*How would YOU reply?*

Compare and contrast John Donne's 'Elegy 5 - His Picture' and Thomas Randolph's 'Upon Hist Picture' in any ways that seem interesting to you.



◀ *Could you answer 49 more like this in 90 minutes?*

FAST

# FACTS

- 93%** of students surveyed last year prepared for their test
- 85%** sat mock papers
- 47%** said timing was the toughest part of the test
- 44%** struggled with content the most

## UKCAT

### The UK Clinical Aptitude Test

Five students sit a biology test. Oliver gains a lower score than Connor, who gains a lower score than Natalie. Emma gains a higher score than Connor, but a lower score than Wendy. Wendy's score must be higher than:

- a) Connor, but not necessarily higher than Oliver or Natalie
- b) Natalie, but not necessarily higher than Connor or Oliver
- c) Connor and Oliver, but not necessarily higher than Natalie
- d) Oliver and Natalie, but not necessarily higher than Connor
- e) Connor only



For answers, see our website [www.oxbridgeapplications.co.uk](http://www.oxbridgeapplications.co.uk)

▲ *And could you answer 26 more questions in just 30 minutes?*

## HAT

### History Aptitude Test

*How would YOU reply?*

Discuss the development and/or effects of a unifying national or community identity in a society or period with which you are familiar.



## TSA Cambridge

### Thinking Skills Assessment

A daisy wheel printer prints 20 characters a second and is 4 times as fast as the average printer. If the average printer is 5 times as fast as an electric typewriter, how many characters can an electric typewriter print?

- a) 3.5
- b) 4
- c) 5
- d) 1
- e) 2.5



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# FACING THE UNKNOWN

Alicia Luba, Oxbridge expert, talks tricky interview questions

## **What do I do in an interview if someone says, 'Tell me about a banana'?!**

Relax! Then think about how the banana relates to your subject area. For instance, if you're studying the sciences, think of the nutritional value of the fruit. If Geography or Anthropology is your area, think of the importance of the banana to certain cultures and communities.

## **But that's still a crazy question! Why have they asked me that?**

Oxbridge interviews are meant to challenge you to think about your subject. They want to test your thinking skills and give you a chance to show off your knowledge and experience. So with the banana question, they have just given you a focus point for you to talk about what you know, from the environmental impact of food transportation, to the correlation between fruit and heart disease. You're in control of the discussion – make the most of it!

## **So how can I possibly prepare for this kind of question?**

You can prepare in the same way you prepared your personal statement, by reading around what you're applying for, doing further research and developing a genuine enthusiasm for your subject. It's not about writing out model answers in advance, but having model experience that you can draw on in an interview. Jot down every extra book you read and everything you do in your work experience, so your week shadowing a surgeon, for example, will then provide you with plenty of anecdotes and examples to answer a wide range of questions, such as the role families should play in organ donations or the impact of NHS cuts on waiting lists.



## **Alicia Luba**

As an expert in the application process, Alicia meets with parents and students to provide full assessments and guidance. She also ventures abroad for missions in the Middle and Far East and attends major global education conferences worldwide, providing talks and one-to-one consultation. Alicia read English Literature at St. Hilda's College, Oxford.

Visit [www.oxbridgeapplications.com](http://www.oxbridgeapplications.com) for more top advice and practical resources to help you prepare for tricky interviews.

## **How should I prepare for questions beyond my own experience, such as current affairs?**

For a great many subjects, the importance of regularly reading a good quality newspaper cannot be underestimated. It's not just about knowing the main stories, but also being able to analyse them. Why has that happened? Who are the key players? Watch international media channels such as Russia Today and Al Jazeera beforehand, so that you are able to comment on world affairs with an international perspective.

## **Do I really need to practise interviewing? Why can't I just work on what I know?**

It's not just what you say at interview, but how you say it. Growing your confidence will allow you to show your true academic self in the interview, rather than have it obscured by nervousness or a lack of practice in communicating difficult academic ideas. Make a video of yourself answering questions and see if you think your body language is open or closed to those on the other side of the desk from you.

## **What do I do if I change my mind halfway through an answer?**

When you're first asked a question, it's best to avoid a dogmatic yes/no. If the question has more than one component, take each in turn and outline the considerations for that part of the question. So if you are asked whether we should abolish jury trials, think first about the role of the jury. What would be an alternative – and would that alternative be an improvement? If you do find you want to change your mind halfway through an answer, this is fine as long as you explain why. ■



# TEST YOURSELF...

## COULD YOU PASS THE OXBRIDGE ENTRANCE TESTS?

# 1. TRY THE TSA (THINKING SKILLS ASSESSMENT)

A team of magistrates presides over court cases on a regular basis. With a surge in cases following some recent rioting in major UK cities, their workload has increased exponentially and recently retired magistrates are being brought back into service.

Currently, 120 magistrates preside over 40 trials in one day. How many additional magistrates are needed to preside over 735 trials in seven days, assuming they are as productive as the existing ones?

- A) 245      B) 195      C) 125      D) 35      E) 155

Therefore, B is the correct answer.

Firstly, find out how many magistrates it takes to preside over 1 trial in 1 day, which is  $3 (120/40 = 3)$ . Next, find out how many trials there need to be in one day if there are to be 735 trials in 7 days, which is  $105 (735/7 = 105)$ . If it takes 3 magistrates per trial per day, then you would need 315 magistrates to preside over 105 trials in 1 day ( $105 \times 3$ ). There are currently 120 magistrates in service, so 195 more magistrates would be needed to get through the extra trials per day and hence 735 trials in 7 days ( $315 - 120 = 195$ )

WHICH COURSES REQUIRE WHICH TESTS?

To find out visit [www.oxbridgeapplications.com](http://www.oxbridgeapplications.com)



# 2. BEAT THE BMAT

(BIOMEDICAL ADMISSIONS TEST)

## Inference

---

Studies have shown that there is, relatively, a much higher occurrence of heart disease among people living in the North of England than people living in the South of England. However, there is little, if any, difference in the rate of heart disease between northerners and southerners who have the same income levels. The average income of southerners in England is considerably higher than the average income of northerners.

For each of the following statements, select one of these five options:

1. True    2. Probably true    3. Inadequate data    4. False    5. Probably false

- A. The easiest way to eliminate heart disease in England would be to raise the general standard of living.
  - B. People in high-income brackets are in a better position to avoid developing heart disease than people in low-income brackets.
  - C. There is a lower rate of heart disease among northerners with relatively high incomes than among northerners with much lower incomes.
  - D. Whether northerners have high incomes or low incomes makes no difference to the likelihood of their developing heart disease.
- 

These questions are taken from our BMAT mini-paper online – for full explanations of why these answers are correct, log on and check out the answer paper.

- A. Inadequate Data
- B. Probably True
- C. True
- D. False



# 3. LICK THE LAW TEST

Read the following passage and answer the question below:

**Negligence:** a failure to exercise the care that a reasonably prudent person would exercise in like circumstances.

**Contributory negligence:** this applies where someone, through their own negligence, has contributed to the harm which has been suffered.

Nicky has invited her friend Beth round for morning coffee. Beth arrives, bringing her 3 year old daughter Emma. Nicky goes to fetch the coffee, leaving Beth and Emma in the sitting room. Emma begins to play, running around the room pretending to be an aeroplane. By mistake, she knocks over an antique china clock that was displayed on a low-standing glass table. It smashes.

Later that evening, Nicky has invited John round for dinner. She has been cooking all afternoon and has spilt some oil on the floor. She is in a rush, so she hurriedly cleans it with a lot of floor cleaner, leaving the floor slightly slippery. John arrives, and after several drinks they have dinner. He helps her clear the table, but slips on the floor and injures his head.

**Advise Nicky.**

A full answer for this, demonstrating how to approach the question and what kind of conclusions you should come to, is available online when you download our free Cambridge Law Test mini-paper.

# 4. MASTER THE MODERN LANGUAGES TEST

## Translate into English

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### French

- a) Qui qu'il soit et quoi qu'il puisse penser, je ne considérerai pas ce qu'il dit comme allant de soi.
- b) Elle a beau être intelligente, elle ne peut pas compléter cet exercice de vocabulaire.
- c) Je savais toujours que je n'aurais jamais dû leur parler.

### Italian

- a) Bisogna bere il prosecco freddo.
- b) A me hai detto che saresti partito, ma a lei hai detto che rimarrai!
- c) Si stava rendendo conto che non sarebbe stato un compito facile.

Italian into English:

a) Prosecco must be drunk cold.

b) You told me that you were leaving, but you told her that you'll stay!

c) She was beginning to realise that it would not be an easy task.

French into English:

a) Whoever he is and whatever he may think, I will not take what he says for granted.

b) However intelligent she may be, she cannot complete this vocabulary exercise.

c) I always knew I should never have talked to them.

# Are you smarter than an Oxbridge tutor?



We asked some of our best tutors to share their favourite brainteasers with us in this issue. Think you can wrap your head around course conundrums from English to Economics? Grab a pen and let's get started!

**1** A census-taker knocks on a door, and asks the woman inside how many children she has and how old they are. "I have three daughters, their ages are whole numbers, and the product of the ages is 36," says the mother. "That's not enough information," responds the census-taker. "I'd tell you the sum of their ages, but you'd still be stumped." "I wish you'd tell me something more." "Okay, my oldest daughter Annie likes dogs."

**What are the ages of the three daughters?**



**2** Your favourite performer is playing a concert but it is sold out. On the night of the concert, you go anyway to try and find a ticket tout. You find one who has her last ticket to sell but lots of people want to buy it. She says she will sell it to the highest bidder, for the price of the second highest bid (and all buyers must bid secretly in a sealed envelope). You think the ticket is worth £60.

**Should you bid less than £60, £60 or more than £60?**



**3**

Mice are used in many important experiments for human medical health, but one of the main challenges is working out if they experience non-visible side effects.

**How would you design an experiment to see if mice experience tinnitus in response to aspirin?**

**4**

A chessboard is 8 squares by 8 squares.

**How many squares are there on a chessboard?** (clue: it's not 64!)



## Think you've solved them?

Why not post them on our Facebook page or on Twitter (#OAMag)?

**Want to check your answers?** Visit our resources online at [www.oxbridgeapplications.com](http://www.oxbridgeapplications.com)

# Life after Oxbridge



## TUTOR FOCUS

RESHAM KOTECHA, ECONOMICS GRADUATE FROM CAMBRIDGE, SPEAKS ABOUT LIFE AFTER OXBRIDGE



“My degree has instilled in me a solid work ethic and a strong interest in how politics and economics interact.”

### What did life after Oxbridge hold for you?

After graduating, I started working at the Financial Services Authority (now the Financial Conduct Authority). Whilst there, I spent my free time as a member of a semi-professional dance troupe and I also spent a lot of time working as a mentor in Tower Hamlets and helping to establish a mentoring programme for local schools. I left the FSA and started working part-time in the House of Lords for a Baroness and for two Conservative Party organisations. I began tutoring A level Economics as well and I became the Governor for a Special Needs school in my local area. I also joined the Management committee for the Conservative Friends of India. I joined the board of a large charity promoting female and child empowerment and I started writing political and economic blogs and

opinion pieces for newsletters and websites, including for Oxbridge Applications!

### And what are you up to now?

In July 2013, I began working as an Economic Advisor for a Member of Parliament and I continued to work for one of the political organisations – Women2Win which promotes women in Parliament and Public Life. In December 2013 I became an approved member of the Candidates' List for the Conservative Party and hope to fight a seat in the 2015 General Election.

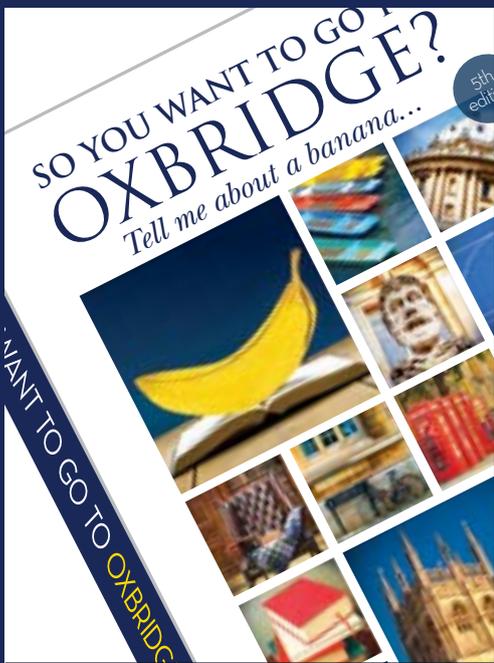
### How did your degree help you in your career?

My degree has instilled in me a solid work ethic and a strong interest in how politics and economics interact. It also gave me great practice at juggling various commitments and at dealing with deadlines.

### What would you advise a student aspiring to a career in Politics?

My advice to anybody wanting to pursue a career in politics would be to make sure you're informed about political and economic events and try and gain work experience through your local MP. Try and read about issues from different news sources so that you understand all points of view, even if you strongly disagree with them. Consider all routes in, whether that's through your local MP or joining APPGs (All Party Political Groups), working for a political think-tank or even simply joining your local association. ■

All views and ideas represented in this article are exclusive to Resham, and do not represent those of any other third party.



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