

Applying to Oxbridge

UPREP 2026
TALK



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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International School

Oxbridge



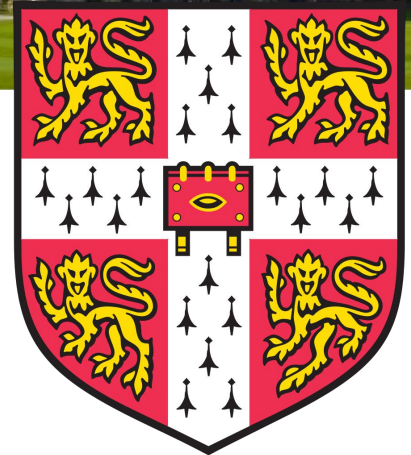
Oxford

1096



Cambridge

1209



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Guest Speaker

Dr. Siripattra Kusuwan Na-Ranong



Education

- Master of Biochemistry, University of Oxford, UK
- PhD. Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Medicine, University of Oxford, UK
- Master of Education, Harvard University, USA



*Dr. Siripattra Kusuwan
Na-Ranong*



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD



Oxford University comprises of 39 Colleges



**Balliol College,
1263**



Wadham College, 1610



**Christ Church,
1546**



St. John's College, 1555

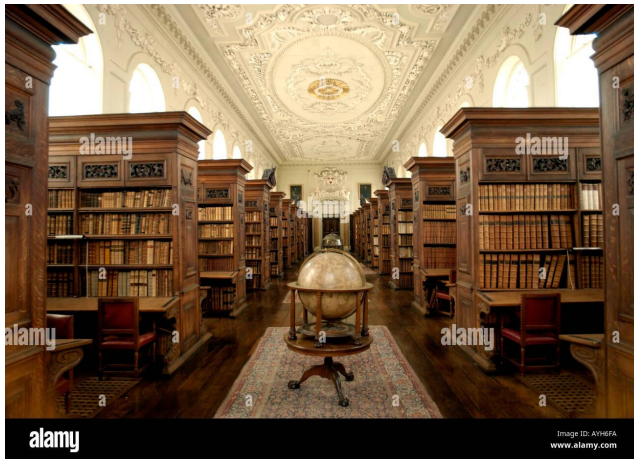
Each College has a dining hall, a library, a chapel, a garden, tutorial rooms, and student accommodation



Balliol



Exeter College



**The Queen's
College**



**Exeter
College**

More modern College buildings and facilities



**St. Anne's
College**



**The Queen's College
Library**



**Jesus College's new teaching & meeting
facilities**



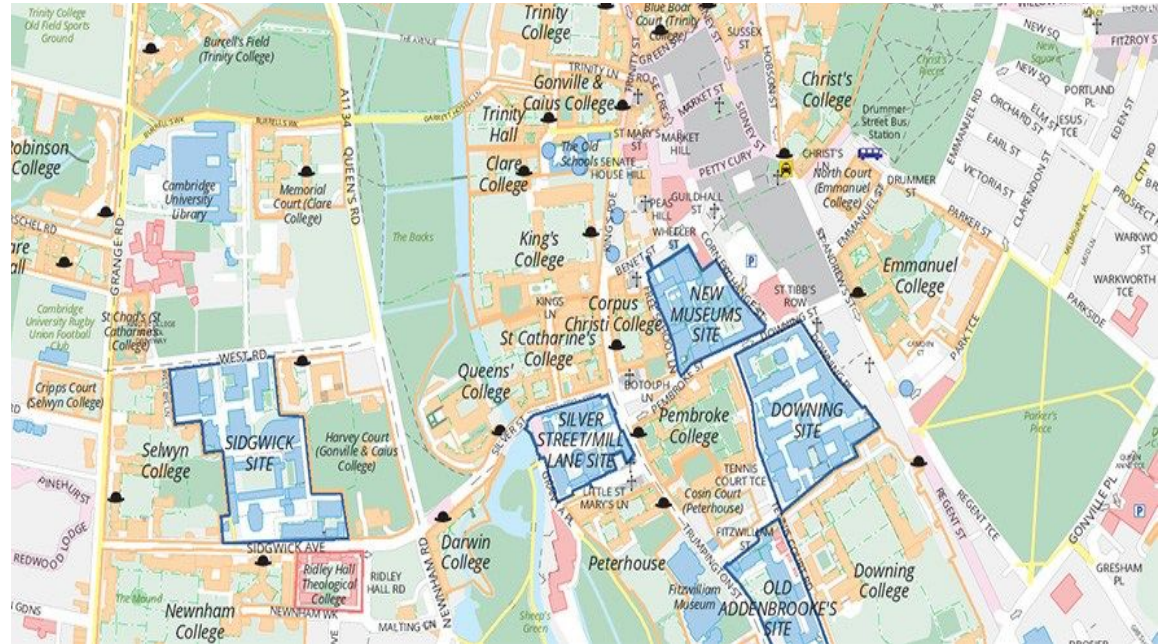
**Wadham College new
Junior Common room**



**Wadham College student
accommodation**

Colleges at Oxbridge

- Collegiate system
- Colleges make up the University
- Faculty based
- Multiple activities and social support



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Open or college specific application?

Aspect	College Application	Open Application
What is it?	Your child chooses a specific Oxford or Cambridge college	No choice made — assigned by the university's system
Who sees the application?	Tutors at the chosen college	Assigned to a college with fewer applications
Interview location?	Usually at the chosen college	At the college assigned by the system
Effect on interview chances?	Slightly less flexibility — if college is oversubscribed	Slight potential boost — avoids highly competitive colleges
Good for...	Students with a strong preference for a college's feel, size, or location	Students happy to be placed where demand is lower

Academic performance is the main factor, and all applicants are assessed fairly!



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If choosing a college...

- Big vs small
- Location
- Pastoral support
- Academic focus
- Consider undersubscribed colleges as there *might* be a higher chance of getting in.
- Oxford has groups of colleges - may be interviewed in a cluster - even if you apply for one college another college in group might choose you.

Department buildings of the University



**Biochemistry
Department**



**Oxford Law
faculty**



**Department of
Engineering**



**Said Business
School**

Many traditional ceremonies



**Sheldonian
Theatre**



**The Chancellor of Oxford
University**



Matriculation



**Graduating
students**



**Inside the Sheldonian
Theatre**

Oxford University has many central libraries scattered in the city with the underground system.



**The Radcliffe
Camera**



**Inside the Bodleian
Library**



**The Divinity
School**



**The Bodleian
Library**



**Inside the Bodleian
Library**

Student life in Oxford



**Sports
Complex**



**University
Park**



**Pubs and
restaurants**

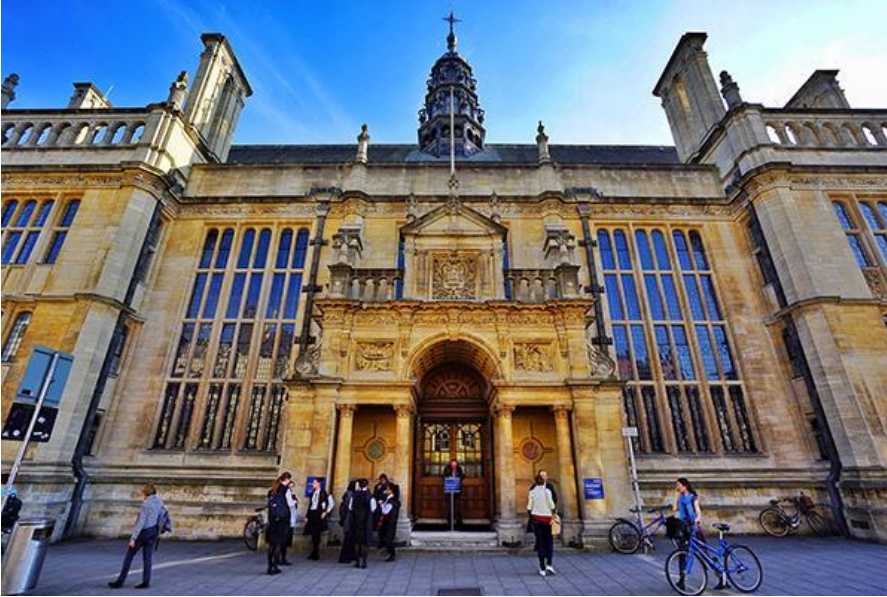


Punting



Shopping Centre

Students wear uniforms to take their exams



**The Examination
School**



**Final year students going to
Exams school**

Why are Oxford and Cambridge so different?

- 'Elite' institutions
- 'Traditional' courses
- Supervisions / tutorials - close teaching
- Short, intensive terms
- You cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge
 - Cost - tuition fees could be between 24,000 GBP (Humanities) -64,000 GBP (Medicine) per year

THE Times Higher Education

Home News Rankings Business Jobs Students Eve

Rankings < World University Rankings 2025 Rankings by subject Impact Rankings Reputation f

RANKING		KEY STATISTICS					
Rank	Name Country/Region	Overall	Teaching	Research Environment	Research Quality	Industry	International Outlook
1	University of Oxford United Kingdom	98.5	96.8	100.0	98.8	99.6	97.3
2	Massachusetts Institute of Technology United States	98.1	99.2	96.0	99.7	100.0	93.8
3	Harvard University United States	97.7	97.3	99.9	99.3	85.7	90.1
4	Princeton University United States	97.5	98.3	98.0	98.9	96.9	87.4
5	University of Cambridge United Kingdom	97.4	95.9	99.9	97.6	88.4	97.1

Guest Speaker

Conor Bowens - Year 13

**Head Boy and successful applicant to
Cambridge**



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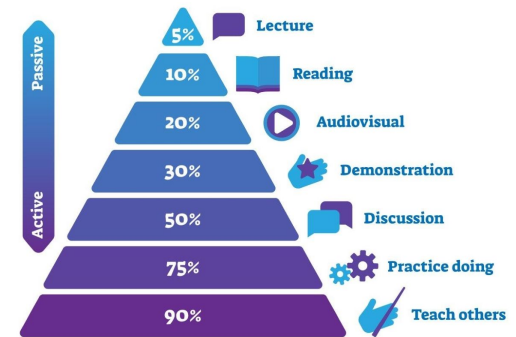
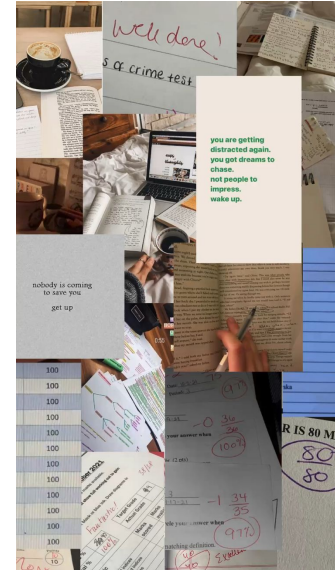
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Years 10-11

**I knew IGCSE grades evidence sustained
academic ability → I pushed for all A*s**

**But I also learned not all subjects are equal -
some carry more weight (even at A-Level!)**

**I explored interests and figured out *how I
actually learn best* (books, podcasts, lectures...)**



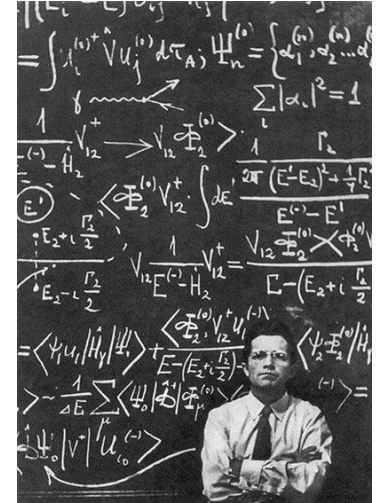
Looking back, this year was about keeping doors open

A-Levels – Calculated Risk

**I chose subjects I could realistically get A*s in,
but also ones that kept top universities open.**

For me (STEM), that meant:

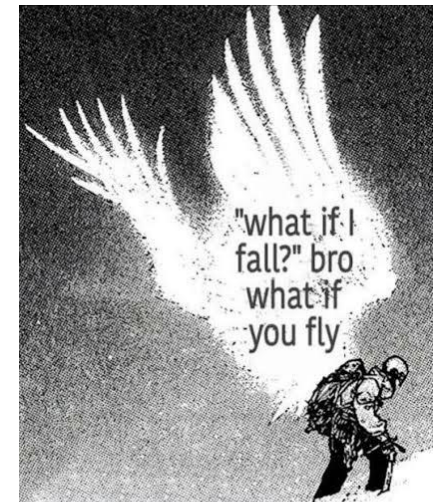
- **Maths, Further Maths, Chemistry**



I pushed myself and took 5 A-Levels + EPQ

I wanted to see what I could achieve.

6th Form mindset – “I will never regret trying”

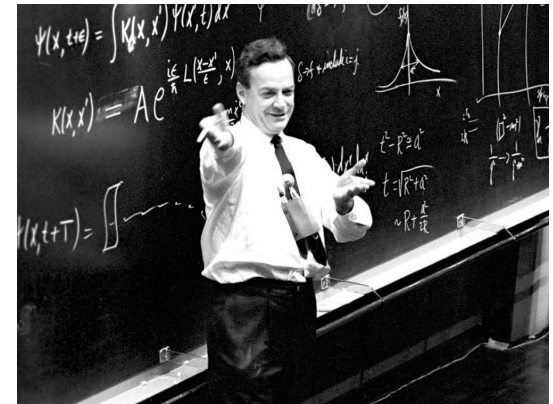


Year 12 – Anubis Mirabilis

Academics were the minimum. I knew Cambridge wanted evidence of sustained passion and interest.

So I focused on super-curriculars:

- **Reading beyond the syllabus**
- **Lectures, courses, textbooks**
- **EPQ, Academic Research**



I followed my interests → one topic led to another

At the same time:

- **Started STEM Olympiad prep early.**
- **I worked for strong AS grades (→ predicted grades)**



The Part No One Talks About

At one point... I burned out completely. I was overworked and during exams I hit a wall.

**This is a marathon, not a sprint
I was saved by the work I had already put in**



My advice:

- **The cure to burn out is renewing interest**
- **Surround yourself with people who uplift you**
- **Focus on just a few things (e.g. 1 subject)**



Year 13 – Pressure & Payoff

Hit the ground running:

- **Admissions tests, PS + Interviews**



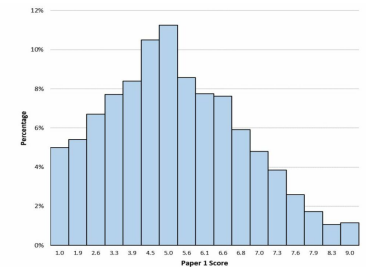
I prepared throughout summer by exhausting past papers, difficult problems, & building my problem solving skills for my tests and interview.

Admissions tests were the final screen of academic ability

- **Differentiates candidates and determines interview**

Interviews simulated their tutorial system. I had to...

- **Explain *how* I think, not *what* I know**
- **Verbalise complex arguments and solutions**
- **Creatively reason in novel scenarios.**

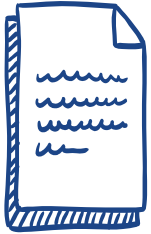


Additional Advice

- **Fail Fast. There is no blueprint, iterate over and over again.**
- **You cannot incentivize internal motivation.**
- **Achieving is not transformative, aspiring is.**
- **Be a delusional cheerleader.**
- **Do not waste money on “Admissions Experts”.**



Oxbridge Extras



Additional tests

University Admissions Tests (UAT)



Interviews

Online or in person in the UK.



Academic data

% achieved in AS exams, and class position is included in your reference.



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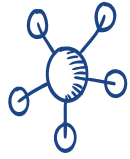


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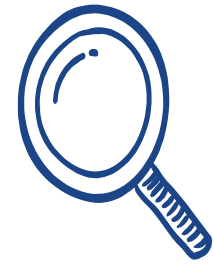


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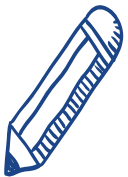
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Additional Testing



- To be a competitive applicant extension beyond A Level is essential, as well as a natural interest and passion for the subject.
- This is essential as due to the level of preparation needed to sit additional testing you have to really want to study that subject in depth knowledge , and be doing so in your own time, voluntarily!



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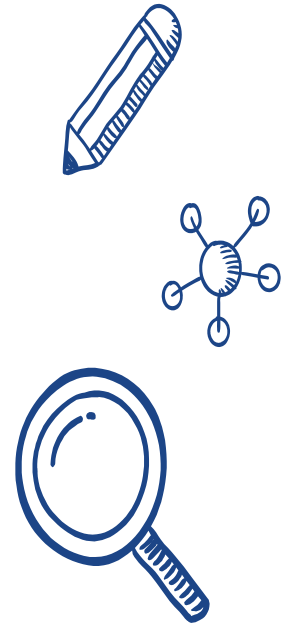
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Oxford and Cambridge Tests

University Admissions Tests (UAT) are replacing many of the previous tests:

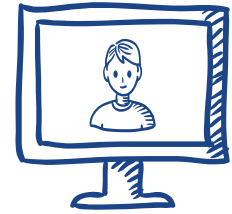
- **ESAT** – Engineering & Science
- **TMUA** – Maths / Computer Science
- **TARA** – Humanities / social sciences reasoning



[Oxford Admissions tests](#)

[Cambridge Admissions tests](#)

The Interview

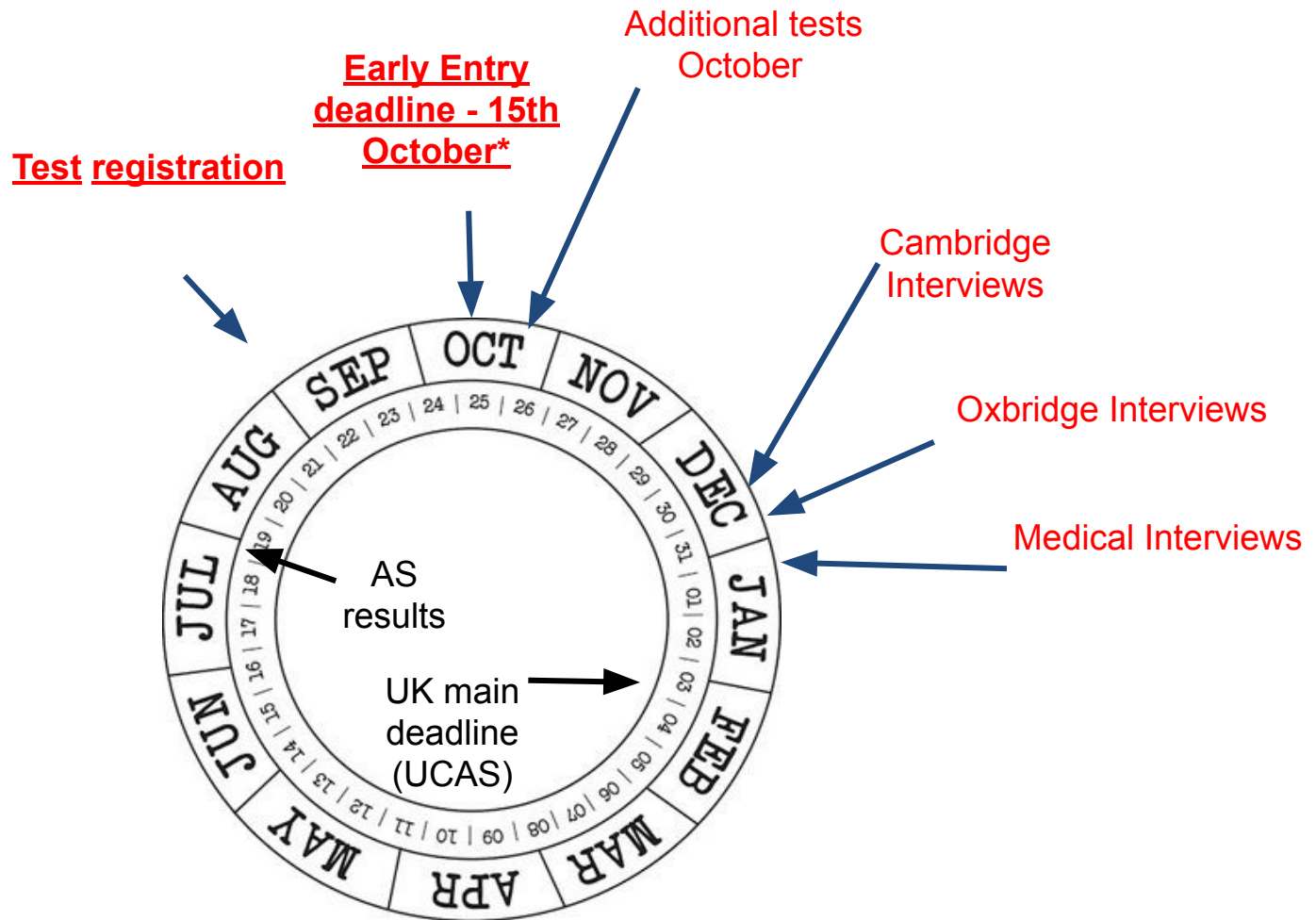


- The purpose of the interview is to find the answer to the questions:
 - ☐ Will this student get up and trudge through the pouring rain on a grey cold day, for a 9am lecture and not just endure it, but actively be looking forward to it?
 - ☐ Do they love this subject to the marrow of their bones?
 - ☐ Will they be enjoyable to teach and engage well with the class at all times?
 - ☐ Can they problem-solve? How do they think?
 - ☐ How would they fit in a supervision / tutorial? This is a core element of learning at Oxbridge which is largely collaborative, so you need to be able to respond to prompts when given.
- They want to know YOUR opinion, so whilst its good to know what other people think, it is imperative you know what you think! One of the most common mistakes is not saying what you think; they want you to be open to discussion even if your thoughts are half formed.
- They are looking for people who are intellectually humble.
- Key skills needed are **confidence**, critical thinking and **cognitive flexibility**

Preparing for the Interview/s

- Read and talk about your reading! Spend time explaining your subject to others from friends and family to teachers and other academics - you must be able to talk eloquently and with passion about your chosen subject.
- Look at the suggested reading for the subjects you are interested in, and start reading articles and books that take you beyond the A Level syllabus that have been specifically recommended by Oxford or Cambridge for the course you are interested in.
- We will set up interview practice with specialists.
- Find out who is interviewing you and read up on them, and read their books/journal articles!

Oxbridge timings



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Oxbridge - how to apply

- Students must **apply online through UCAS by 6pm (UK time) on 15th October**. The school submits the application so make sure your child meets the internal school deadline (two weeks before).
- At Cambridge, students must also fill out the **My Cambridge Application form sent via email, typically due by 6pm (UK time) on 22nd October**. See [Applying page](#) for information.
- Students may also need to complete supplementary information such as portfolios or examples of written work.

The Personal Statement

Three structured questions (new) with 4000 character limit:

Why do you want to study this course or subject?

- Demonstrate (show not tell!) genuine passion and interest.
- Highlight specific aspects of the subject that interest them.
- Mention any super-curricular activities (e.g., lectures, podcasts, relevant reading) that have deepened their understanding.

How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

- Discuss relevant coursework or projects.
- Showcase skills like critical thinking, research, or analytical abilities developed through studies.
- Explain how their academic journey has equipped them for university-level study.

What else have you done to prepare outside of formal education, and why are these experiences useful?

- Include extracurricular activities, work experience, or volunteering.
- Reflect on how these experiences have developed transferable skills.
- Connect these activities to the chosen course, demonstrating a well-rounded preparation.

The prerequisites to be competitive



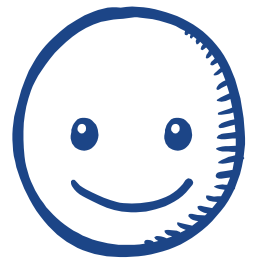
Excellent GCSE results

Mix of A's and A*'s, or 7-9's with at least 9 subjects.



Excellent predicted grades

A's in AS exams (and predicted A*/A)



A real passion for the subject

This will need to come through in the personal statement



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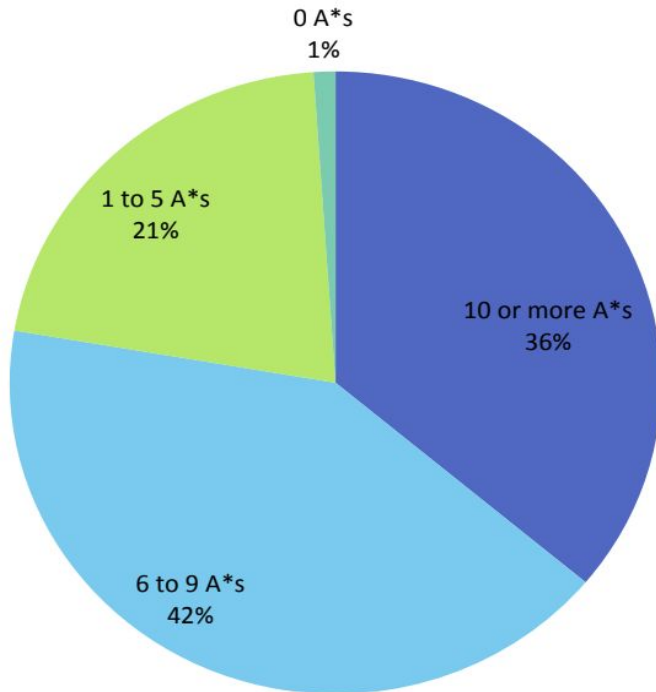


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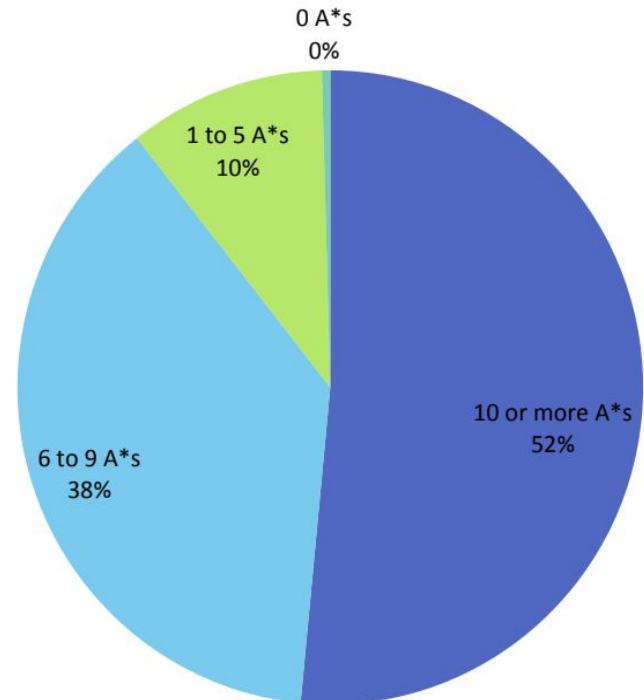
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Entry requirements

Number of A*s at GCSE (total applicants)



Number of A*s at GCSE (successful applicants)



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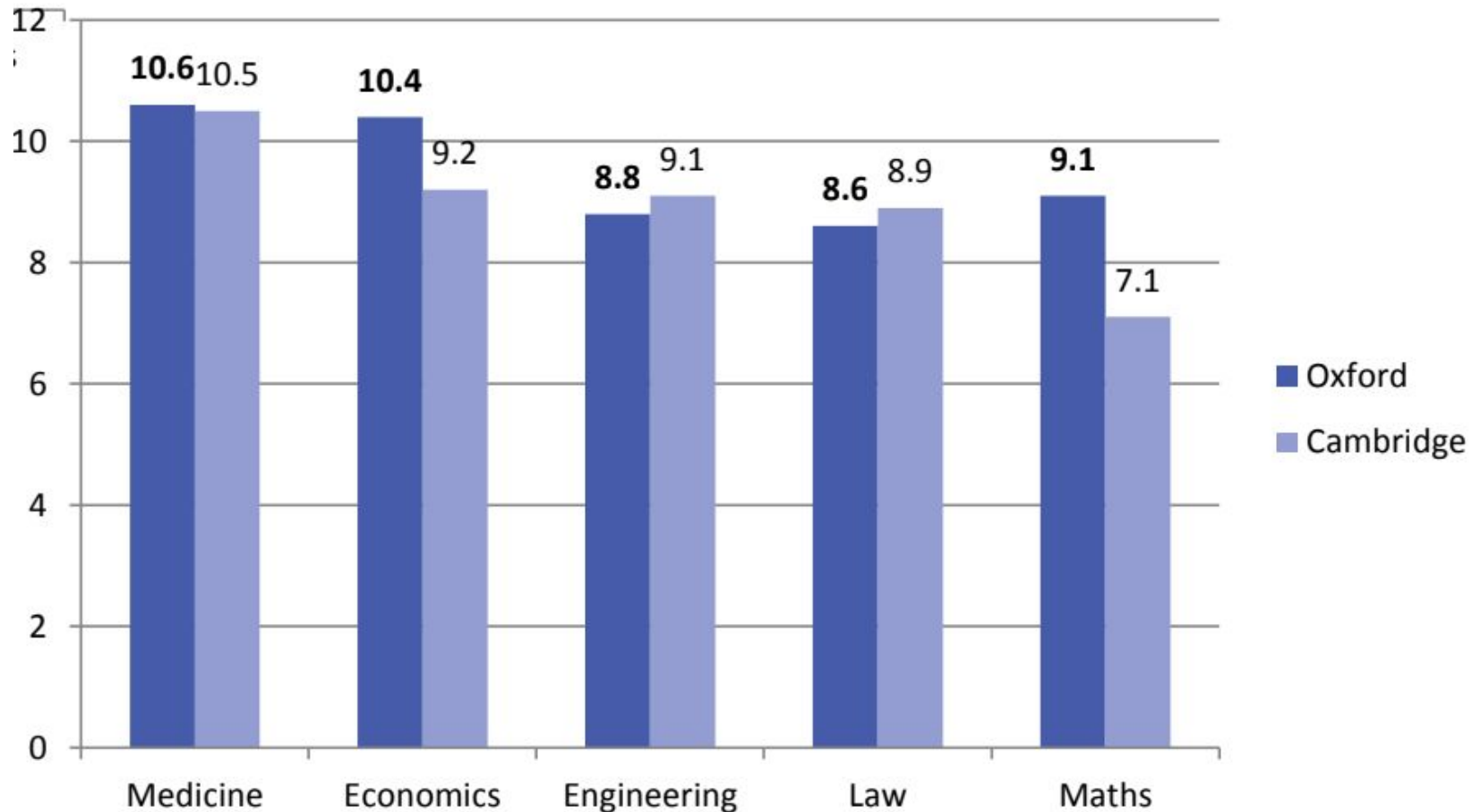


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Most popular subjects - number of IGCSE A*'s



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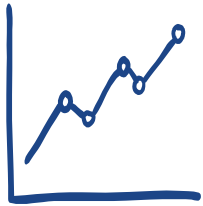
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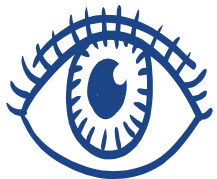
A Level requirements to be competitive



Applicants taking four subjects won't normally be at an advantage compared with those taking three, although competitive applicants for STEM courses often have Further Mathematics as a fourth subject.



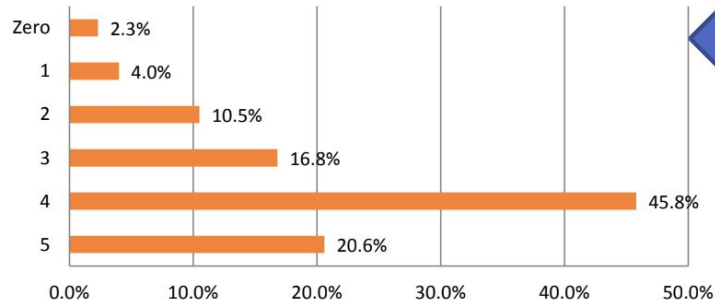
As a STEM applicant; to be competitive you **are advised to take Further Maths**, as a **4th A Level**.



As a Humanities applicant, 3 A-Levels and an EPQ is great.

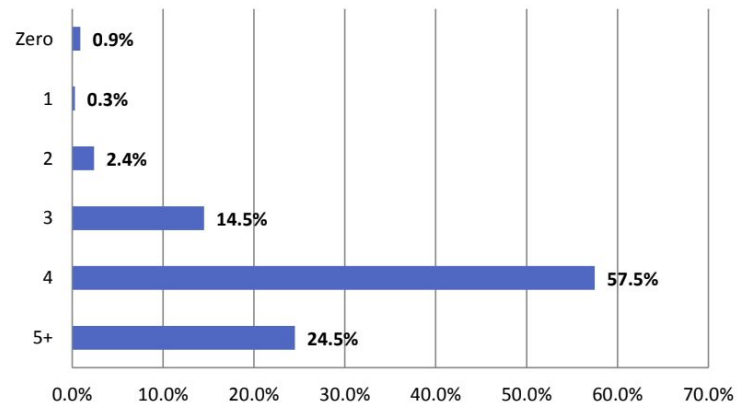
AS grades

How many A grades did you have at AS at the time of application?



← 66% of applicants applied with 4 or more As at AS level

Successful applicants: A grades at AS level



However, they account for 82% of successful applicants →



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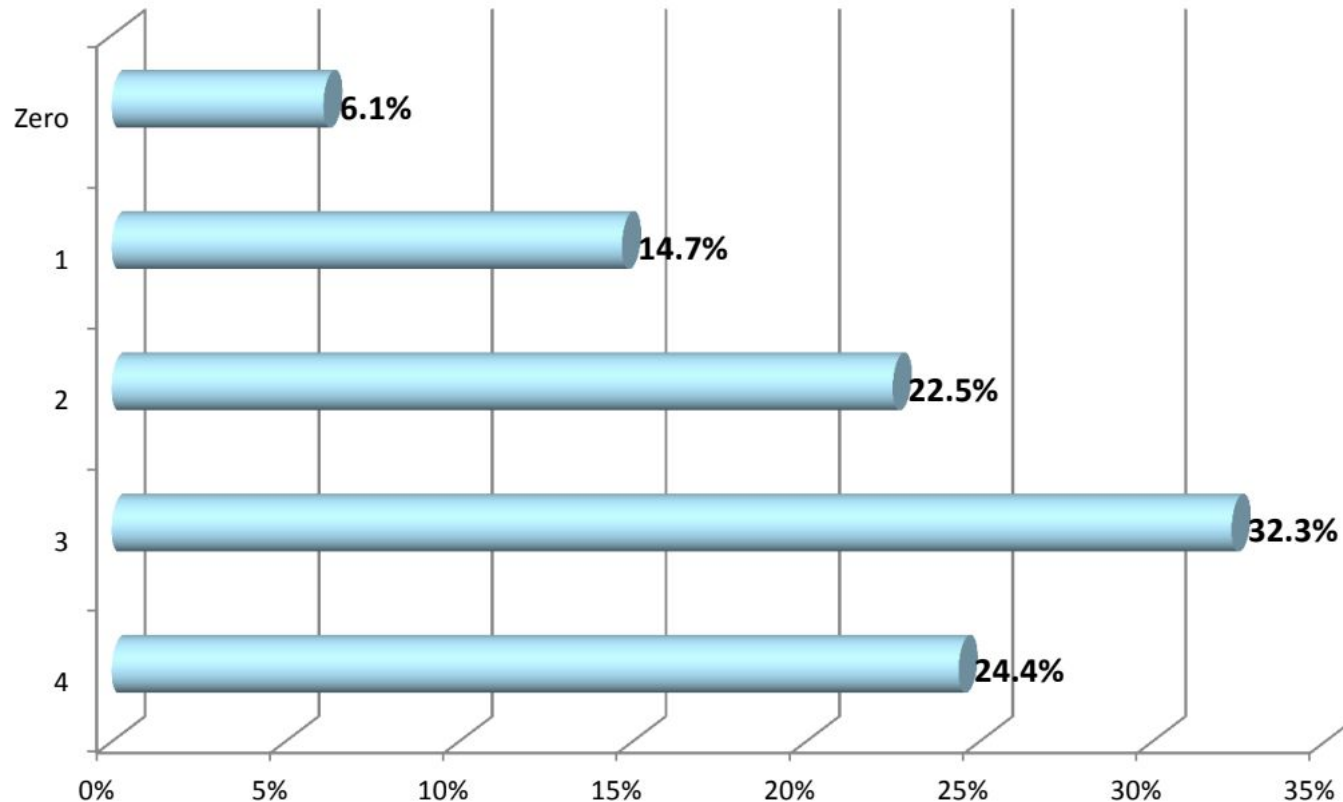
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A Level predictions

How many A*s are you predicted for A level?



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Useful websites

- [Higher Education Website Oxbridge page](#) (includes timelines and actual interview questions!)
- [Cambridge homepage](#); [Course Choices](#); [Colleges](#)
- [Oxford homepage](#); [Course Choices](#); [Colleges](#)
- [Cambridge entry tests and interview information](#)
- [Oxford entry tests information](#); [Oxford guide to written work](#); [Oxford guide to interviews](#)

Example reading links - [Oxford Maths](#) [Oxford History](#) [Engineering Cambridge](#)
[Economics Cambridge](#)

[NEW OXFORD READING GUIDE FOR ALL SUBJECTS](#)



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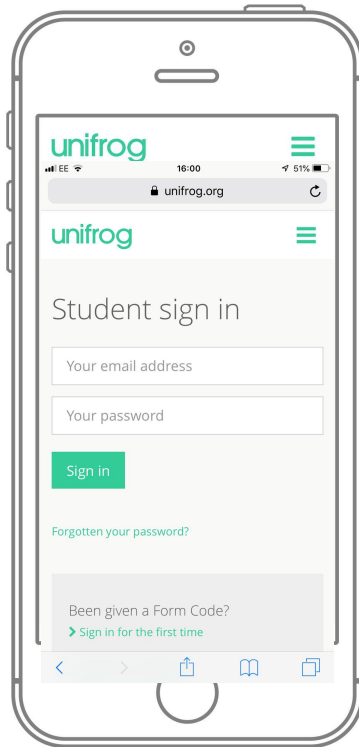


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Students, Parents & Guardians, Get signed up!



Go to www.unifrog.org/student and click 'Sign in for the first time'

You should be able to log in using the email address you provided to school.

What Next?

Need advice?

Have any questions or concerns?

Confused about what next?

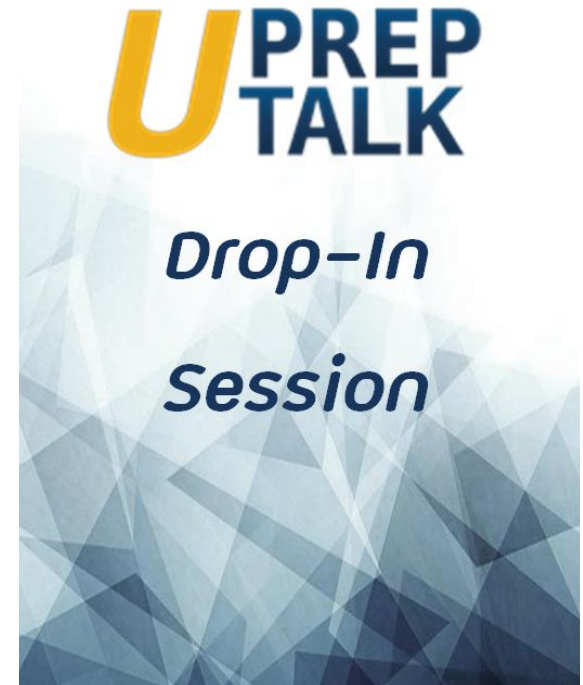
Ask us!

egraham@headstartphuket.com

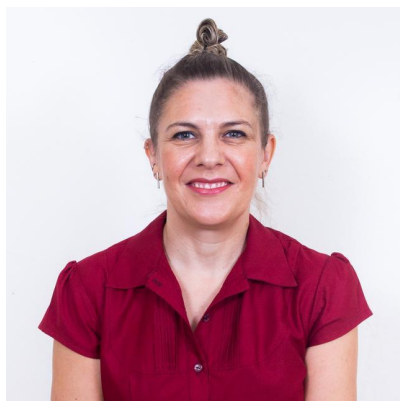
sthomas@headstartphuket.com

nroscoe@headstartphuket.com

toom@headstartphuket.com



To book an appointment, get in touch!



Emily Graham

Assistant Head of Upper
Secondary School
Management
egraham@headstartphuket.com



Pornkamon Roongsiri

Deputy School Director
Management
toom@headstartphuket.com



Neil Roscoe

University Counsellor
Secondary
nroscoe@headstartphuket.com



Simon Thomas

University Counsellor
Secondary
sthamas@headstartphuket.com