

Westminster Tutors



**UCAS APPLICATION POLICY:
OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE**

2026-2027

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy establishes the College's internal criteria for identifying students who are academically competitive for application to the University of Oxford or the University of Cambridge. These criteria do not constitute the universities' official entry requirements, and individual courses may impose additional subject, qualification, or admissions test requirements.

2. Minimum Level for an Oxford or Cambridge Application

- 2.1 A student who meets all the criteria set out below will be considered academically suitable to apply to Oxford or Cambridge, and the College will support their application.

GCSEs

- GCSE grades predominantly in the 7–9 range.
- No GCSE grade below 7 would normally be expected.
- Students should have particularly strong grades in subjects relevant to their intended degree.

A levels

- A level mock examination performance: AAA or better [mandatory].
- Predicted A level grades: A*AA or better [mandatory].
- Students should normally be taking the subjects required or strongly recommended for their intended degree course.

Admissions tests

- Where an admissions test is required:
 - i. Students should achieve at least 50% of available marks in a timed mock/practice assessment, or an equivalent level of performance on the current official test scale where an appropriate published comparison exists.
 - ii. Students should demonstrate sufficient preparation and a credible trajectory for improvement before the actual test.

3. Strong Oxford or Cambridge Applicant

- 3.1 A student would normally be classified as a strong applicant if they meet most or all of the following criteria:

GCSEs

- 8 or more GCSEs at grades 8–9, with the remaining GCSEs normally at grade 7 or above.
- Particularly strong GCSE performance in subjects relevant to the proposed degree.

A levels

- A level mock examination performance: AAA or better [mandatory].
- Predicted A level grades: A*AA or better [mandatory].
- Strong performance in the subjects most relevant to the intended degree.

Admissions Tests

- Where required:
 - i. Performance above the basic 50% benchmark in mock admissions tests.
 - ii. Evidence of the potential to achieve a competitive score in the actual admissions test.
 - iii. For particularly competitive courses, students should be encouraged to aim substantially higher than the minimum internal benchmark.

Academic Breadth And Super-Curricular Engagement

- Academic reading related to their intended subject;
- Lectures, seminars or university-level academic events;
- Relevant competitions;
- Academic projects or research;
- Subject-specific essays or independent study; and/or
- Relevant work experience where genuinely useful to the subject.

Additional qualifications

- Students may also undertake a fourth A level, an EPQ, or another substantial academic qualification or project. These are not requirements for an Oxford or Cambridge application. Three A levels, supported by exceptional performance and strong preparation for the chosen course, are entirely consistent with a competitive application.

4. Very Strong Oxford or Cambridge Applicant

- 4.1 A student would normally be classified as a very strong applicant and for the most competitive courses if they meet most or all of the following criteria:

GCSEs

- 8–10+ GCSEs at grades 8–9
- Few or no grades below 8
- Exceptional performance in relevant subjects

A levels

- Mock examinations at A*AA or higher
- Predicted grades of A*A*A or higher
- Appropriate subject choices for the intended degree

Admissions Tests

- Performance clearly above the college's minimum 50% benchmark
- Strong performance under timed conditions
- Evidence of being competitive against the wider applicant pool (ie in the top 20%)

Academic Breadth

- Sustained subject-specific intellectual curiosity
- Strong super-curricular engagement
- Strong evidence of ability to direct own learning
- Excellent academic references
- Strong interview potential
- Evidence of independent thinking rather than simply accumulating qualifications

Super-Curricular Engagement

- Four A levels, Further Mathematics, an EPQ or other advanced academic work may strengthen the profile where they are appropriate and do not compromise performance in the core subjects.

5. Oxford and Cambridge A Level Resit Applicant Viability

- 5.1 Oxford and Cambridge are careful not to exclude applicants who are retaking their A levels. However, the likelihood of being invited to interview or ultimately offered a place is very low, as first-time sitters will be ranked more highly. For this reason, the college has implemented the following viability criteria:
- Applicant is retaking no more than one A level;
 - The A level being retaken must be only one grade below the required grade;
 - Academic enhancement, eg offering a new fourth A level or similar;
 - Any extenuating circumstances must be evidenced and significant;
 - Strong support from previous school including academic reference; and/or
 - Excellent personal statement completed by 14 September.
- 5.2 Individual colleges and courses may also have different approaches to resit candidates, so checking the latest entry requirements is essential. In some cases, A level retakers will be automatically rejected unless they have at least achieved the minimum required grades on the first sitting. The applicant should accept responsibility for making enquiries and ensuring that they meet the specific criteria of their chosen degree course and college

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Document author (name)	Virginia Maguire, Sr Consultant and DoS (UCAS and Careers)

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