

Making a competitive application



Coming up

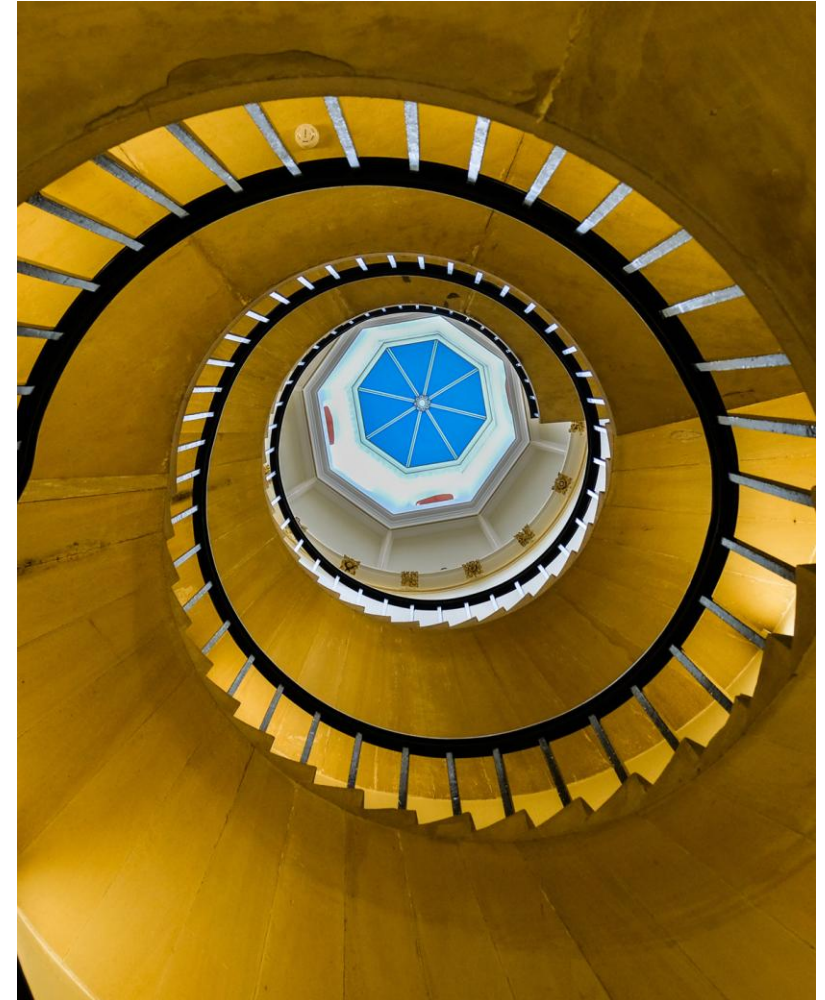
What we offer

What we look for

Teacher reference

What we offer

- **Exciting, challenging courses**
 - Inspired by cutting-edge research
 - Range of teaching and assessment styles
 - (NB can be worth delving below course titles)
- **Supportive, diverse environments**
 - Local, national, global
 - Exceptional facilities
- **Good career prospects**
 - Often irrespective of course attended



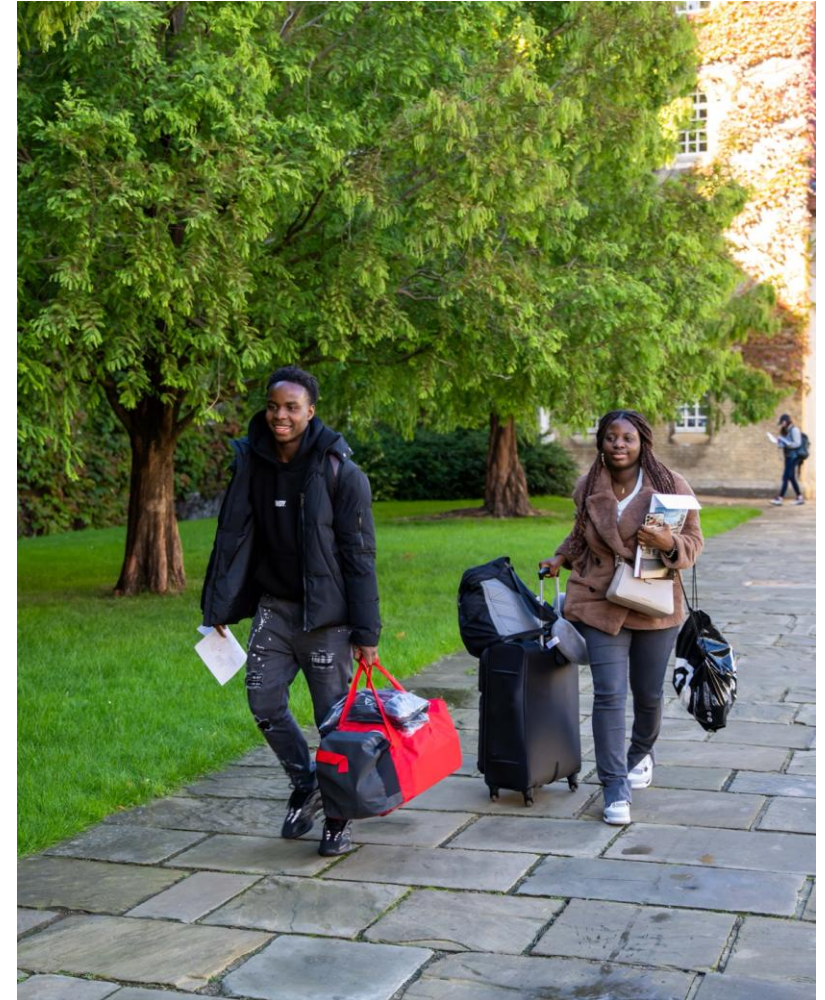
What we look for

- **Genuine, informed subject interest**
 - Core knowledge, technical fluency
 - Vocational commitment (if appropriate)
- **Evidence of exceptional ability**
 - Track record consistent with likely offers
 - Independent, critical thinkers
- **Motivated and organised students**
 - Hard workers



What we look for

- **Application components can include**
 - Exam results and predictions
 - Personal statement
 - Teacher reference
 - Admissions tests
 - Submitted work
 - Interviews
 - Contextual data (applicants/schools/colleges)
- **Component weightings vary**
 - At Cambridge, selection is holistic



Teacher reference

- **The most competitive courses seek truly exceptional candidates**
 - Cambridge, for example, aim to admit students who are academically in the top 1-2 percentiles, nationally and within their school/college cohorts
- **Attainment data is valuable, especially if considered contextually**
- **However, references are imperative to help distinguish good from outstanding**
 - You're experienced, expert colleagues, and we trust your judgement!

Teacher reference

- **Sections 1 and 2**

- Help us understand each applicant's educational and personal contexts
- Sheds light on attainment, predictions, and HE progression prospects
- We can't know what we aren't told (!)

- **Section 3**

- Comparative, metrical, detailed information – by subject – is appreciated
- Evidence of work ethic and independent learning ability can be helpful
- Terse statements work well

- **Example Section 3 statements**

- ‘In tests at the end of Year 12, Neha ranked second out of our 23 Physicists.’
- ‘Our Head of Geography ranks Jack among the top three students he has taught in his 25-year career.’
- ‘In her three A Level subjects, Emily is 1/25 in Economics, 2/23 in History, and 9/31 in Mathematics.’
- ‘Mo has attained the highest grades on most of his Biology essays this year. He is among the top three students in a strong cohort.’
- ‘Although Sophie is naturally reserved and less voluble in lessons than some students, her written work is exceptional: fluent, clear, incisive, extremely well informed, and relentlessly focused on the question.’

Teacher reference – Sample 1

She is highly motivated and conscientious, with outstanding intellectual ability. She is exceptionally well rounded, with great personal charm. She is an outstanding geographer with the potential to succeed at university, having developed excellent cartographic, graphical, and statistical skills. She contributes well to discussion and has made good presentations to the group. She is highly organised and expresses herself well in both oral and written English. Essays are always submitted on time. In our internal examinations at the end of Year 12, she produced the best response to the question on glaciation. She is an exemplary student with an excellent academic record and impressive commitment to the school, as Deputy Head Girl, as well as to the wider community.

Teacher reference – Sample 2

She is an exceptionally gifted student – one of the most intelligent and committed to have passed through this school. Her decision to study History is eminently appropriate given her long-held fascination with the subject. Our Head of History says that she has in abundance the clarity of thought and meticulousness that are needed for her intended degree and ranks her as clearly the best student in a strong cohort – a judgement confirmed by her performance in Year 12 exams, in which she was ranked first in History. She is scholarly and forensic, responding to sources with enthusiasm, imagination, and common sense. Her analytical and evaluative skills are acute and her knowledge – built through reading – extensive. She is also very highly rated in her other subjects. She was placed second in exams in a large English Literature cohort and first in Sociology. It is easy to trot out platitudes in a UCAS reference, but she is a superb student of immense potential, easily capable of obtaining a First at university.

Pitfalls

- **Wrong subject or course**
- **Flaws in academic track record**
- **Limited reading and/or super-curriculars**
 - Possibly evidenced by thin personal statement
- **Disappointing interview performance (? mainly Oxbridge ?)**
 - Insecure subject knowledge
 - Insufficient analytical ability or clarity of thought
 - Intellectual inflexibility

Questions?



admissions@joh.cam.ac.uk ~ admissions@cam.ac.uk



www.joh.cam.ac.uk/apply ~ www.cam.ac.uk/apply



x.com/stjohnscam ~ x.com/cambridge_uni



instagram.com/stjohnscam ~ instagram.com/cambridgeuniversity

