



# Fusion Education Ltd.



Prepare for the future with Fusion Education!



## **FUSION EDUCATION - OXBRIDGE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

### **1. Make sure students understand what interviewers are looking for**

The most essential thing that our Oxbridge applicants will need to understand as they begin their preparation is why Oxford and Cambridge interview their applicants, and what qualities they are looking for when they do.

Possibly the first, and most unhelpful myth surrounding the interview process is that there's a "typical" Oxford or Cambridge student, and that there's a "one-size-fits-all" approach to interview preparation.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Instead, our students need to think about how they can impress and engage with their interviewer in a way that is unique to them.

Here's what the University of Cambridge's own interview guidance page has to say about what students can expect from the process.

"We assess everyone individually, which means we look at – and for – different things in different people for different courses. Consequently, there's no magic formula that will guarantee you're offered a place."

Likewise, Oxford's guidance for interview preparation offers the following insight from a Medicine tutor.

"Interviews tell us important things about a candidate which are not captured by grades or test scores. We can see candidates think, not merely parrot information."

As we can see, the most essential quality that our Oxbridge applicants need to possess is the ability to think critically and to approach difficult questions in an original way.

Interviews are also an important assessment for Oxbridge admissions tutors because they are a means of evaluating how well applicants will fit into the unique learning environment which they can expect from an Oxford or Cambridge degree. A lot of teaching at both universities is comprised of tutorials and smaller classes – our applicants need to prove they can cope with the demands of this kind of learning.

### **2. Students should be able to talk about their Personal Statement**

As well as being asked interview-specific questions, our applicants to either Oxford or Cambridge will be expected to talk about their Personal Statement.

They will already have had the chance to give an individual account of why they want to pursue their chosen degree in their Personal Statement. Our students Oxbridge interview will be an opportunity for them to build on this, and it's important that they have a firm grasp of the content and narrative of their written UCAS application.



**Students should also remember that Oxbridge admissions tutors will have read a lot of well-written Personal Statements, which is why it's so important for our applicants attending an interview to really think about how they can shine as an individual.**

Again, the ability to think critically and analytically about what they have written in their Personal Statement is crucial to a student's success in an interview setting. As your tutor we will encourage our tutees to review every detail of their written application, specifically any authors, books, articles, theories or academic writing which they have talked about in their Personal Statement.

This will ensure that, by the time our students attend an interview, they will be able to talk about their Personal Statement with confidence.

### **3. Prepare for the interview questions**

Theoretical interview questions are arguably the component of the Oxbridge application process that are most surrounded by myths and preconceptions. It is thought that some interview questions are specifically designed to catch them off-balance, or make them feel ignorant.

Again, both Oxford and Cambridge admissions departments are on the record saying that the reverse is true – the theoretical questions which our applicants may be asked in their interview are designed to provoke a more meaningful response to any discussion.

Examples of Oxbridge interview questions

***What are the different ways you listen to music? How does that change the way you think about what you're listening to? – Music.***

***How many different molecules can be made from six carbon atoms and twelve hydrogen atoms? – Chemistry***

***What can historians NOT find out about the past? – History***

As you can see, the questions above are testing a mix of different skills, dependent on the chosen course.

For instance, the interview question for a Chemistry applicant is more about testing problem solving and subject knowledge. Meanwhile, the History question is more openended, and is aimed at encouraging an applicant to think creatively and critically, and to talk about how they might engage with historical evidence.

The whole point of the interview process is to encourage our applicants to engage in open discussion about their chosen degree course – this means that our students shouldn't get too caught up in looking for the 'right' or 'wrong' answer. The focus should instead be on their ability to respond to difficult questions, and use analytical skills along the way.



**Ultimately, the interview questions that our Oxbridge students will be asked are designed to promote discussion and debate – it's an academic conversation, not a boxticking exercise.**

#### **4. Run mock interviews**

Since Oxford and Cambridge interviews are ultimately designed to test the ability to problem solve and think independently, any interview preparation that we conduct with our students **will** focus on these qualities.

The mock interviews are a really effective way to make our students more comfortable and confident in an Oxbridge interview, especially if we can recreate the conditions of an interview as closely as possible.

##### Review the Personal Statement

We will start by spending time with our students to ensure they have the necessary grasp of the key components of their Personal Statement. For example:

- We should encourage our students to break down the Personal Statement into its component parts – can they talk about every aspect of it in detail, and with articulacy?
- We should also review whether the passion they demonstrated in their opening and closing paragraphs translate into an interview setting?

##### Provoke conversation

There's no point trying to prepare students to deliver a fixed set of responses – it's impossible to plan for every eventuality in an interview. The best kind of Oxbridge interview preparation that we can do at Fusion Education is to encourage students to talk widely and openly about their subject, as this will encourage them to think on their feet.

With this in mind, it's also important that any our students preparing for Oxbridge interviews don't over-prepare or over-rehearse. **The Interviewers aren't interested in students who simply rely on facts and figures – spontaneity is everything.**

##### Prepare them for the unfamiliar

Our students need to be confident and well-informed in front of course leaders and admissions tutors they've never met.

So, we will **pair our students up tutors they don't normally interact with**, and who may be more likely to ask tough or unpredictable questions?



## 5. Encourage students to enjoy themselves

The most important thing to remember is that both Oxford and Cambridge are looking for intelligent, passionate and dedicated students who want to make a contribution to their chosen academic discipline. They will want to encourage our students to enter into an academic dialogue with their chosen college and subject, and they want applicants to enjoy the experience.

Finally, don't forget that even receiving an invite to be interviewed at either one of these UK destinations is a fantastic achievement, and it's important for students to make the most of it.

Tips –

The starting point for conducting our Oxbridge admissions interview is the personal statement.

This should be used to frame both initial 'ice-breaker' questions, and more probing subjectmatter questions.

It follows that the more our students have thought and talked about the things they have mentioned on the personal statement, the better the performance in your Oxbridge interview will be.

*What should I do if I don't understand a question in my Oxbridge interview?*

Explain that you don't understand the question, and ask if it might be rephrased. Before attempting to answer, you might try paraphrasing the question back to the interviewer to make sure you understand.

If you're still at a complete loss, then say so. But don't panic, you wouldn't be in the room unless you deserved to be; so there is a very good chance that the question was a bad one that the interviewer regrets asking!

*Is the Oxbridge interview an examination?*

Yes and No: yes, insofar as obviously it's an important part of the Oxford and Cambridge selection process; but no, there is no corpus of knowledge that the interviewers will be specifically probing you on.

Rather, think of the interview more like a conversation with someone who shares your passionate interest. In this respect the interview is much more like a tutorial.



### *How should I prepare for my Oxbridge interview?*

You should certainly be prepared to answer questions arising from your personal statement. For example, if your statement refers to a book that you've read, you would be well-advised to re-read it before the interview.

You should also be prepared for standard 'ice-breaker' interview questions such as: 'why this course?', 'why this university?', etc.

But consider more probing variants of these questions: 'why go to university at all?'

<https://sites.google.com/site/oxbridgeinterviewquestions/>