

University interviews

- Most subjects at most universities select on UCAS application only
- Oxford & Cambridge interview in all subjects. Interviews also common in Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, Social Work
- Interviews take variety of formats, ranging from highly selective and formal to relaxed and largely non-selective
- Most applicants called for interview will already have passed some form of pre-selection; interview gives them a further chance to demonstrate their abilities and commitment

The advantages of interviews

- To the university
 - It can distinguish among students who are otherwise very similar
 - It finds out relevant information not on the application form
 - Tests your communication or other skills
 - Explores your subject interest, personality
 - It can look for potential
- The candidate
 - Gets another chance to demonstrate knowledge, commitment and skill

What to expect

- There is huge variation from one course or college to another
 - Note carefully any information given in invitation, prospectus or website; ask others; schools could keep files
- How many interviews?
 - Usually just one but there may be two at Oxford or Cambridge
- How many interviewers?
 - 1 or 2 usually, but could have more and include observers
- How long?
 - 20-45 minutes would be norm, but longer or shorter might be possible

- What structure?
 - Q&A, scenario discussion, group task, audition
- What content?
 - Mostly academic or course-relevant
 - “Questions designed to encourage you to think for yourself and develop an argument”, “challenging discussion”, “how you think rather than how much you know”, “think beyond the school syllabus”
 - Extra-curricular discussion may depend on shared interests or may be to test sincerity or communication skills or to provide challenge

- Variation in rationale of interview
 - Exploring UCAS application in more detail (challenge and stretch)
 - Providing separate & additional information from the UCAS application (fuller picture)
 - Testing relevant skills (crucial attributes)
- Individuality of interviewer and interview
- The possibility of work within the interview
 - Maths ‘... something interesting about this number’
 - English – exploring a text (read and discuss)
 - Electronics – explaining how something works
 - Written test

Advice

- Prepare well for interview; do your homework
- Present yourself well
 - Dress smartly but **comfortably**
 - Establish eye contact
 - Shake hands appropriately
 - Adopt a confident posture
- Be honest
 - Don't lie
 - If you don't understand the question, say so

Advice

- Pay attention to whatever information you've been given about the format and purpose of the interview
 - Hull York Medical School publishes questions on the web similar to questions that will be used at interview. Other medical schools do the same.
- If interview is likely to be based on your UCAS form, re-read it and question spot
 - Where could you provide examples, detail?
 - Any aspect of the UCAS form could be followed up

Advice

- Practice *telling* someone your answers to obvious questions (Why X? Why here?)
- Look at Heap's *Degree Course Offers* for some sample questions
- Re-read the prospectus and any other information you've been sent about the course and university
- Anticipate additional questions on your replies and have further detail available if asked

Advice

- Consider your reaction to any sample questions or scenarios provided and discuss with family and friends
- Be alert to issues in the news, especially those related to your subject
- Decide how to respond to “Do YOU have any questions?”
 - If you have questions be alert to whether they are sensible or have already been answered
 - It is OK to ask about non course matters, but...

Do not

- Take umbrage: questions may be deliberately provocative or challenging
- Be flippant or casual: the interview is a formal situation
- Bluff: they'll probably be able to tell
- Panic!