

Applying to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge - beginners

Rachel Lister, Head of Student Recruitment and Information, University of Cambridge

Dr Elizabeth Peachey, Head of Student Recruitment (UK and International), University of Oxford

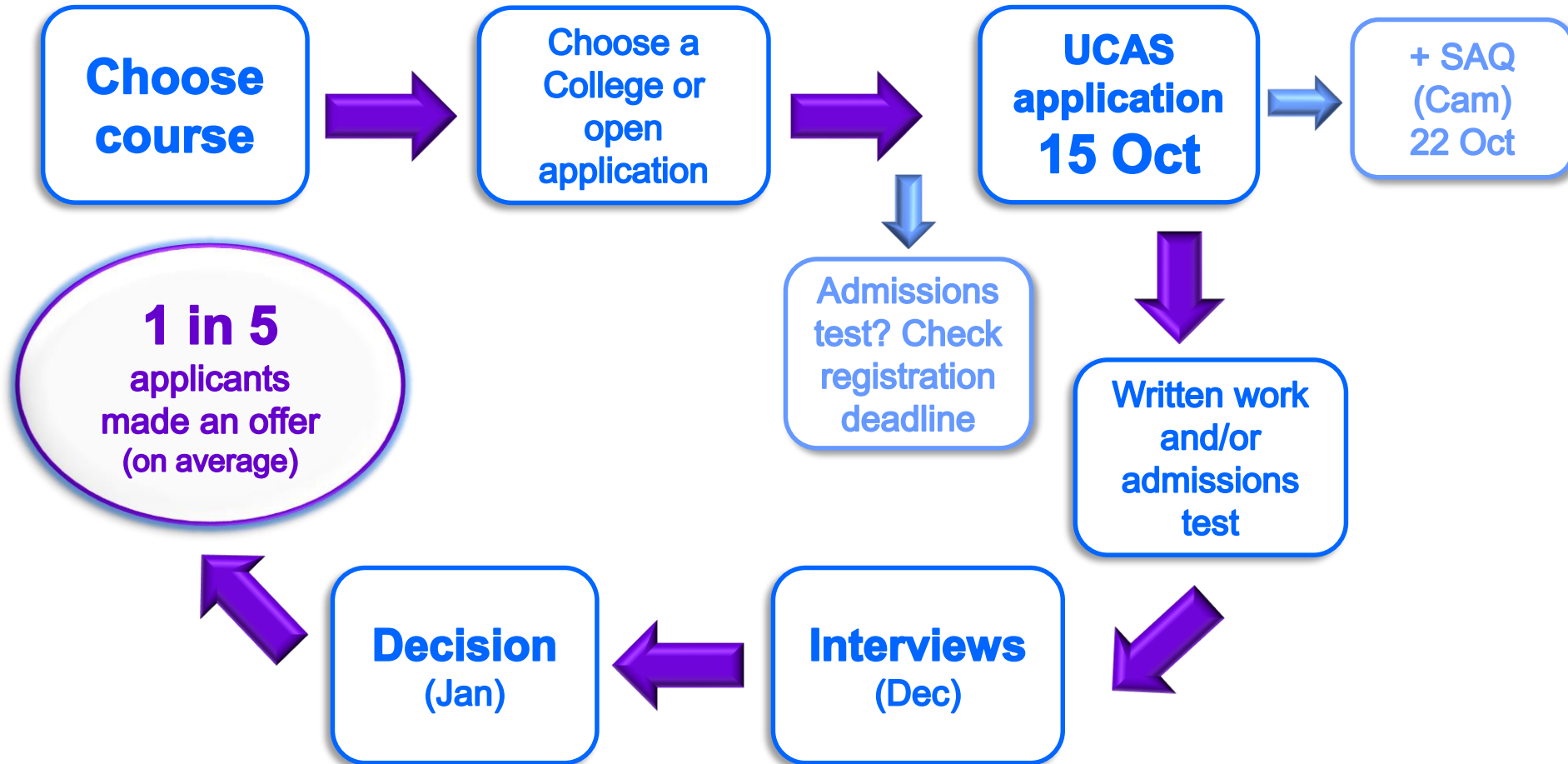


Why Oxford or Cambridge?



- Broad range of courses
- World-class teaching and facilities
- Small-group teaching – tutorials/supervisions
- Collegiate structure
- Academic and pastoral support
- Wide range of extra-curricular options
- Excellent graduate opportunities, irrespective of degree discipline
- Extensive financial support combined with subsidised living

The application process



GCSE Grades

AS Grades
(where available)

Interview(s)

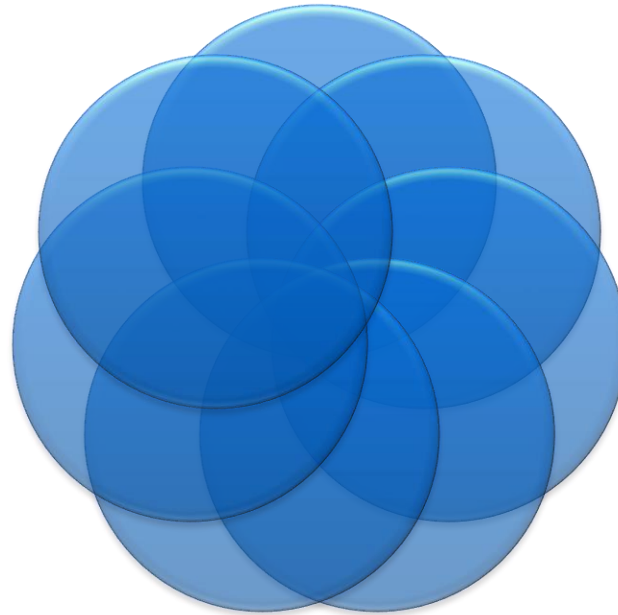
Predicted A level
(or equivalent)
grades

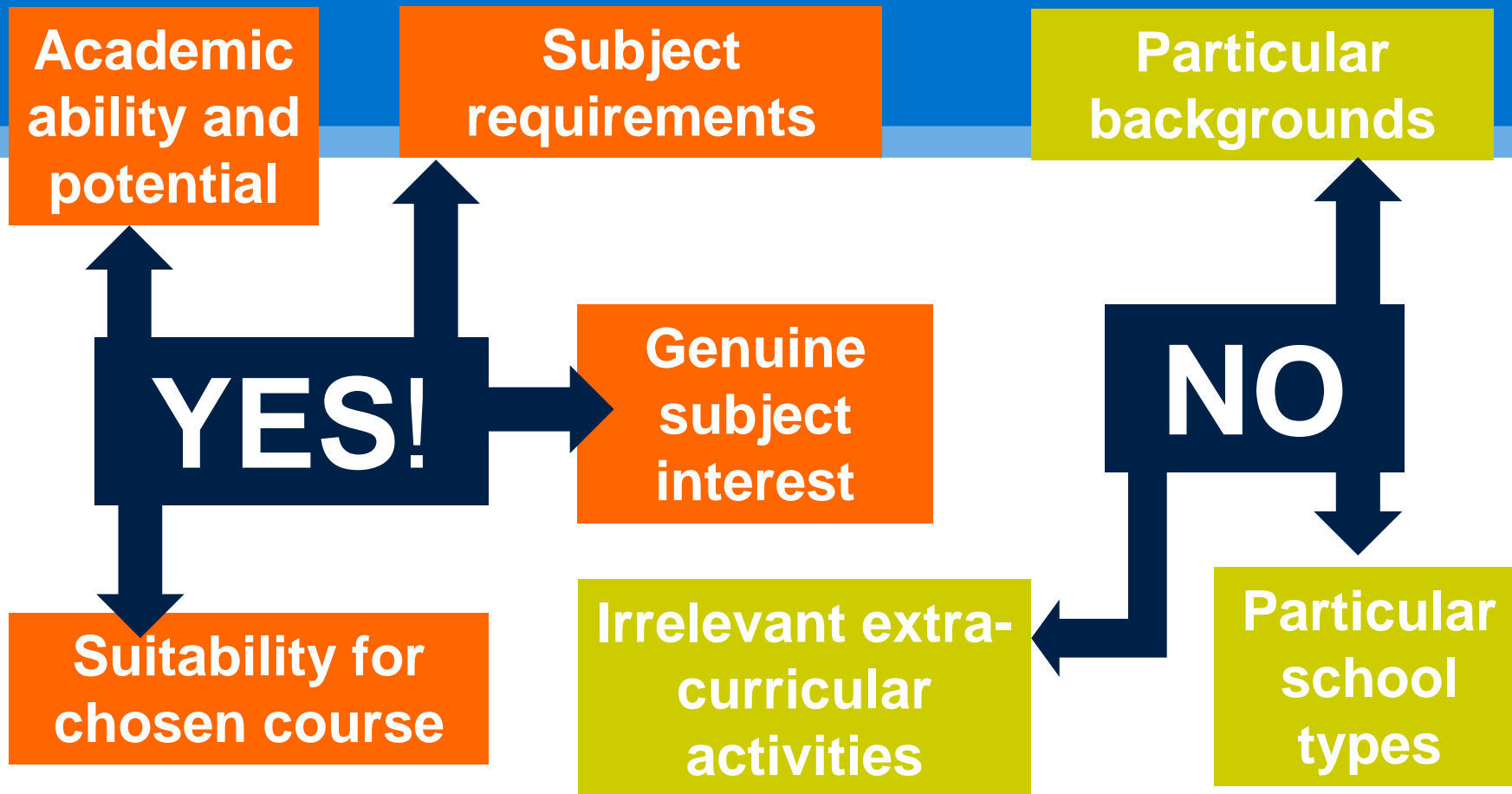
Written work

Personal
Statement

Admissions
Tests

Teacher's
reference





Personal Statements

- Important part of the application process
- Up to 4,000 characters (this includes spaces) or 47 lines of text (this includes blank lines)
- Allows students to:
 - Discover if they truly love the subject
 - Explain why they want to study this course
 - Show their motivation and commitment
 - Make a good first impression
 - Sell themselves to admissions tutors
- May provide content for discussion at interview



Structuring the Personal Statement

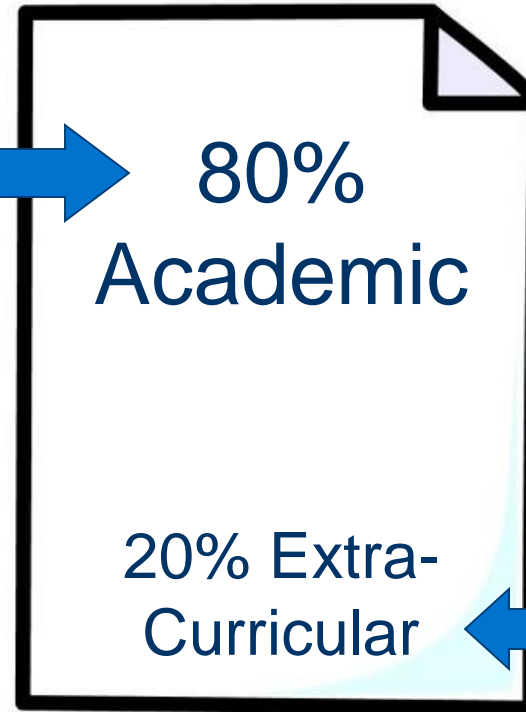
- I want to study...

- I have read/watched/visited ...

- It was interesting because...

- What I learned from this was....

- What was challenging was...



- In my spare time I play...

- I had some work experience at...

- I enjoy...

Teacher's Reference

Purpose:

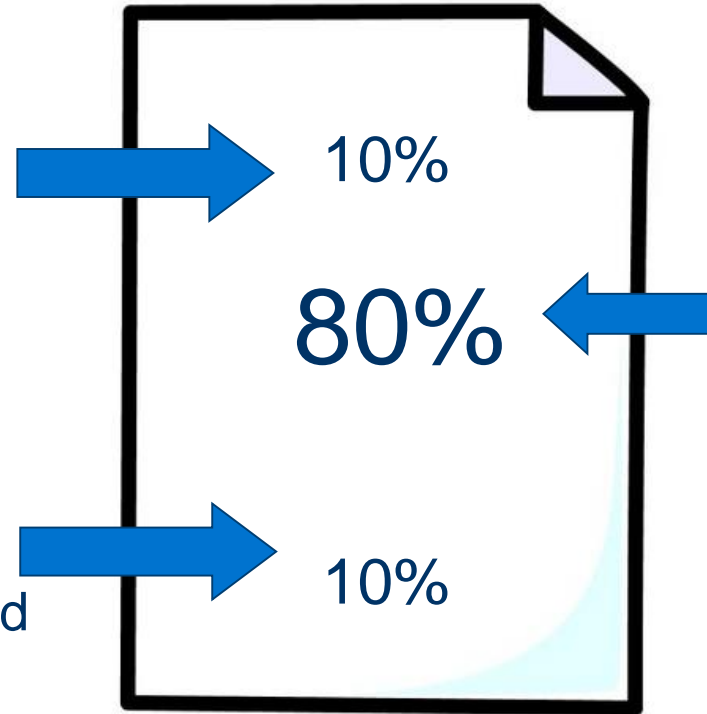
- Provides tutors with additional information on the academic suitability of a candidate to study their chosen subject
- Gives tutors an understanding of a student's achievement within their context (both educational and pastoral)
- Great attention is paid to the reference as it is provided by an educational professional who knows the candidate
- May increase in importance with UK educational reform
- Read by at least three and sometimes as many ten tutors
 - Can be used at shortlisting
 - During interview
 - In final decision making

Structuring the Teacher's Reference

- **School or college information** (can insert hyperlink to school profile or website)

- **Any mitigating circumstances** (including nature and length of impact)

- **Concluding statement**



- **Subject-specific information and aptitude for degree**

- Focus on subject choice

- Contextual achievement

- Areas of particular strength

Interviews

- Interactive tests of:
 - Interest
 - Aptitude
 - Core knowledge and technical skills
 - Capacity to learn from mistakes and to listen in discussion
- Focused and challenging questions
- New approaches to existing knowledge
- Interviews usually cover:
 - ✓ Academic work
 - ✓ Reading and other super-curricular exploration
 - ✓ Subject-related wider awareness
 - ✓ 'Prompt' material



Common Pitfalls



- Wrong subject
- Track-record in exams causes concern
- Inconsistent UCAS reference
- Thin UCAS Personal Statement - Lack of super curricular exploration
- Lack of practice for admissions tests – Lack of awareness of time pressure
- Interview challenges
 - Subject knowledge insecure
 - Insufficient analytical ability or clarity of thought
 - Unwillingness to re-think ideas in the face of contrary evidence

Preparing to apply

P Programme of study

- Course choice is the most important decision – personal interest(s), research thoroughly

R Results

- Work hard to do as well as they can in their current studies

E Engage and explore

- Be proactive in their learning – current studies and interests relevant to their intended degree

P Practise

- Discussing their academic interest(s)
- Past/example admissions test papers
- Time management – generally and for tests/exams



University of Oxford

www.ox.ac.uk/study

undergraduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk

University of Cambridge

www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk

admissions@cam.ac.uk