

HOW TO HELP POTENTIAL OXFORD APPLICANTS

This table covers in general terms the evidence Oxford tutors collect on applicants and the significance and use made of this evidence, linking it to how we might help potential applicants to Oxford.

Evidence used in assessing students	Significance for admission to Oxford courses	How do Oxford tutors use it in assessment?	How we can help potential Oxford applicants
GCSE	GCSE is one piece of information we have for most candidates, and is taken as a sign of basic competence. Average candidate gets c.4 A* but some successful candidates have fewer	For some subjects GCSE used with other information to rank candidates. Poor performance in GCSE is noticed but decision is not made on GCSE alone. Many with all A* rejected. We take context into account.	GCSE choices can impact on university choice (e.g Maths for sciences), Consider what prepares students best for academic study, essay writing /problem solving. Emphasise quality over quantity.
A Level or equivalent	A in 3 A levels taken as sign of intermediate competence in some necessary skills. Some subjects require or recommend certain A levels subjects, but there is not always close alignment between an A level and university study.	We don't currently collect AS module marks. 8% get 3 As so that in itself is not sufficient for a place. Offers are made on A grade level performance in 3 A levels. Successful candidates very rarely have less than 3A performance.	A level choice can impact on future choices. Balance what student excels with what assists progression towards particular university courses. Tutors in FE and HE should communicate about what skills and knowledge individual A levels provide
Additional qualifications	Depends on qualification and subject applied for, but none are treated as essential	They may be used as evidence of particular engagement but only vary rarely as part of the offer.	FE and HE need to communicate about the new 14-19 education changes and their value
Work experience	In subjects with a vocational element, e.g. Medicine, Law engineering it can be helpful for developing understanding of the subject	As not all students get the same opportunities for relevant subject work experience, use it positively as a sign of engagement. Other work experience may be viewed as a sign of good time management etc.	Stress to students that although they may need to do paid work, Oxford doesn't require relevant work experience. Help students to think creatively about what is useful experience.

Extra curricular study	Very good sign of engagement and can demonstrate advanced level of ability and independent study	We recognise that not all students have same opportunities for this, so don't make it a requirement, but hope to see evidence of further reading etc	By advising and providing opportunities for widening reading and taking study beyond A level. Encourage discussion between HE and FE about what is useful.
Other extra curricular activities	Unless directly relevant (e.g. music for music), this is not significant for Oxford courses	Might take sport etc as sign of good time-management but well-roundedness is not required	Stress to students that full and active lives are valuable but they play no part in admissions decisions
Submitted written work (for some applicants only)	Gives information of how and what students are taught and more detail on a student's ability at A level tasks.	Varies depending on subject, but can be one of the pieces used in assessing candidates before interview	Help students to choose what work best represents their ability
Pre-interview tests (for some applicants only)	Aims to assess specific aptitude for the subject applied for, and to distinguish between large number of applicants whose paper qualifications may be similar	Depends on subject but can be one of several pieces of information used to assess whether candidate is interviewed	All tests can be prepared and trained for. Test samples are available. Help students to find and practice tests or to develop the skills tested.
Tutor reference	Gives important assessment of ability, potential, context of achievement and special circumstances.	Used in assessment, although recognise that there is variation in the detail and depth of information on individual students.	Honest assessments are helpful, and those which use comparison and context for the candidate
Personal statement	Less important than for most universities (where it can be very significant), but is supplemented for us by the interview	To look for signs of engagement with the subject chosen and related experience e.g. wider reading/work relevant to course applied for.	Not by encouraging activities for the sake of the UCAS form. Encouraging student to write 2/3 academic statement and to think about how their other experience is relevant to course applied for
Interview	The last but not the only significant piece of information. Aims to distinguish between students similar on paper	Check validity of other information, take student beyond their current study, assess potential and promise	Encourage students to discuss their academic interests and practice articulating arguments /problem solving.