

# WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL

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# UK UNIVERSITY APPLICATION



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# What Makes a Successful UK University Application

In the post-COVID-19 era, higher education in the UK looks slightly different. Universities have raised their standards regarding what makes a good candidate. Learn how these changes can impact your application process by reading the latest insights from the Upgrade Academy Global team that will help you get offers from top UK schools!



## How is your UK university application appraised?

### Study subject fit



The first aspect that the admissions committee looks into when evaluating your application is if your profile fits the subject you are applying for.

Within UK universities students are expected to build on the skills and passion they have brought into the university. As a first-year university student, you should already have a solid foundation of knowledge into the subject of your choice and your profile should reflect that.

If you have entered competitions in subject-specific contests, olympiads in similar fields, or projects that demonstrate your skill in that area, then you have a good study subject fit.



### How do you make this decision?

Since your whole academic career lies in making the right choice with regards to the study subject, you must be 100% sure of your choice.

At Upgrade Academy Global, we work with students looking to find the right career path for them. We provide a Career Counselling service in which the student is assessed based on their skills and interests, a list of career suggestions is drafted and after narrowing down the choice options, a tailored academic trajectory is drawn out for the student.



## University fit

The other aspect that determines your chances of getting an offer is the university fit.

- Do you have the proper level of academic preparation to handle the workload of the university's courses?
- Are you inquisitive enough to pursue excellence and empower your peers to do the same?
- Is your passion for your chosen topic strong enough to sustain you through university?

If you couldn't give a positive answer to all of these questions, don't worry, we can work with you to get up to speed.

## WHAT YOU ARE UP AGAINST

### Acceptance rates 2020

Oxford	14%
Cambridge	21%
Imperial College London	36%
UCL	63%

The competition here comes down to everything else besides good academic results, which is a given.

WORLD UNIVERSITY RANK 2022	UK RANK 2022	UNIVERSITY
1	1	University of Oxford
=5	2	University of Cambridge
12	3	Imperial College London
=18	4	UCL
20	5	University of Edinburgh



# Building your application

The best time to start building your application for top UK universities is in the final years of secondary school, but the sooner you start the more time you have to add activities that display your academic prowess will increase your chances of getting an offer from the university of your dreams.



**18 May 2021**

UCAS Undergraduate application opens for 2022 entry.

**15 July 2021**

UCAS Conservatoires Apply opens for 2022 entry; The start of sending in applications, and conservatoires can start assessing candidates.

**7 September 2021**

The start of sending in applications, and universities can start assessing candidates.

**1 October 2021**

Closing date for music applications at 18:00 (UK time).

**15 October 2021 - 18:00 (UK time)**

Oxford and Cambridge applications deadline; medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine/science applications deadline.

**26 January 2022 - 18:00 (UK time)**

Equal consideration date for the majority of undergraduate programs; the application deadline for competitive programs. Deadline for most undergraduate dance, drama, or musical theatre courses.

**25 February 2022**

Extrastarts for eligible applicants; on a first-come, first-served basis.

**30 June 2022 - 18:00 (UK time)**

Final deadline for applications that started applying from February onwards.



## Personal Statement

The most influential essay for the start of your academic life, the personal statement is the cumulation of the work you did throughout secondary school and the first step to a top UK university.



### 2 Make good use of the words you have

With only 500 words for you to express the points covered above, this advice might seem obvious, however, this is important to emphasize again.

Use your words wisely. Don't be afraid to go back on your text multiple times to make sure everything points to you being dedicated to your academic passion.

### 4 Have someone review your essay

Reading the same texts over and over can make you look past the mistakes that would have otherwise been obvious.

That is why you should ask for help from other English speaking people. Having another person reading your Personal Statement can ensure that you clearly present yourself and your skills so that the admissions committee can see that you are the right student for them.

## Extracurricular Profile

Building on your Personal Statement, your extracurricular activities must tell the same story of excellence and devotion. If your subject of choice is physics, your extracurricular profile should contain physics olympiads and competitions, independent research into a topic of great interest to you and even projects you have developed yourself that help other physics enthusiasts gather and share their ideas.



### 1 Have a clear understanding of what the personal statement should express

The Personal Statement is unique in the types of values that it elicits from the writer. There are two main ideas that you have to get across to the reader: your passion for the study subject of your choice and the idea that you already are a self-made scholar in that field.

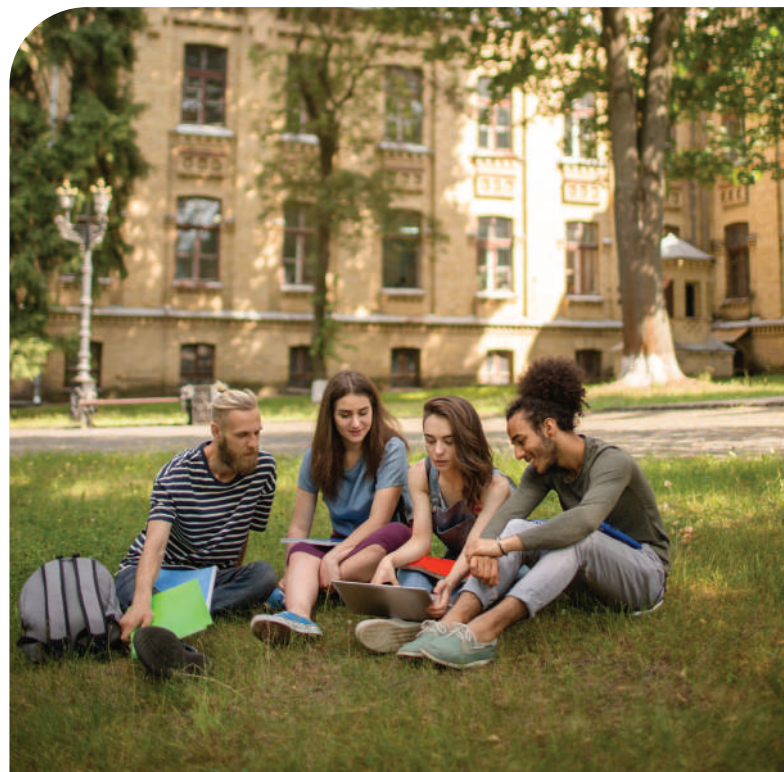
Having that in mind, you shouldn't stray away from academia. A story about a summer vacation, no matter how beautiful, is not going to be the best fit for your Personal Statement unless that summer you joined a research project which expanded your knowledge.

### 3 Be authentic, but not too informal



Since you have to convince the admissions committee of your academic value, you have to look and sound like a scholar. Slang words, contrived verbs, and informal tone must all be eliminated from your essay.

Still, be careful not to go to the other extreme and use complex words when describing simple circumstances. As people in academia always say: the goal of every paper is to be understood by anyone who happens to read it.





## Academic Development

Passion alone cannot take you to university. You need to develop your academic skills as well. Let's take the previous example. As you are preparing to apply to a top UK university and study physics, you have to become acquainted with the methods of learning used by undergraduate students.

Looking for and reading scientific papers, new theses in the field of physics and even the biographies of influential scientists should be on your to-do list.

Obviously, this process is much easier when you have someone to mentor you. We at Upgrade are all alumni of top UK and US universities. And we put our vast combined knowledge to good use, by preparing students for their academic futures. You can choose to talk to a mentor who has graduated in the same field you are applying to and they will give you pointers to works that have inspired them and methods of learning that will ease you into your undergraduate programme.

## Exams to Pass

### What are the exams you have to take?

Besides having a good academic background, UK universities will want to test your knowledge to ensure you will be able to meet the requirements of the courses in the program you are applying to. Mathematics is almost always a field you must excel in which is reflected in the universities asking candidates to take the STEP exams.

STEPS are exams that test your mathematical skills and the difficulty of the exam depends on your chosen study subject. The exam takes approximately 3 hours and there are two levels: STEP2 and STEP3. Some universities will require you to take both or only one of these exams.

In order to secure your place at a top UK university, you might need to prepare for some additional subject-specific exams. The subject-specific exams that universities require you to take are as follows:

SUBJECT	EXAMS
Law	Cambridge Law Test
	LNAT - National Admission Test for Law
Mathematics	Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT) Sixth Term Examination Paper (STEP)
	Test of Mathematics for University Admissions
Biomedical Science	BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)
	Graduate Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT)
	Health Professions Admission Test (HPAT Ulsyer)
	University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT)
Economics Management Geography Human Sciences PPE Psychology	Thinking Skills Assessment Cambridge (TSA Cambridge)
	Thinking Skills Assessment Oxford (TSA Oxford)
	Thinking Skills Assessment University College London (TSA UCL)

SUBJECT	EXAMS
Classics	CAT (Classics Admission Test)
English Studies	ELAT (English Literature Admissions Test)
Modern Languages Studies	MLAT (Modern Languages Admissions Test)
Oriental Studies	OLAT (Oriental Languages Aptitude Test)
Engineering Materials Science Physics	PAT (Physics Aptitude Test)
Fine Arts	Fine Art practical
History	HAT (History Aptitude Test)
Music	Music Performance Test

Find out which exams you have to pass for your specific subject & university and start preparing for them as soon as possible. It is best to be well acquainted with the exam subjects well in advance so that you can reduce the stress at the end of the last year of secondary school.

# Oxford and Cambridge

Home to many bright minds, Oxford and Cambridge have a long history of prestigious academic education.

While these two universities are renowned around the world, not everybody gets to experience the academic culture they have to offer.

What is unique about Oxbridge is the collegiate system. There are no central campuses at neither Oxford nor Cambridge. The entire student body is spread around the towns.



## What is a Oxbridge College?

Each college is unique, but generally, they offer similar facilities:

- › Student accommodation
- › Dining hall
- › Lending library
- › Chapel
- › Music rooms
- › Laundry
- › Green spaces
- › Common room (known as the JCR)
- › College bar

But besides being buildings filled with history, Oxbridge colleges are strong communities.

### FUN FACT

- Most colleges at Cambridge has a sister college in Oxford
- Some colleges offer grants for travel and vacation stays
- Theater, music, art and sports are funded by colleges
- Some colleges funding relies on the donations of college alumni
- The formal dinners and balls are a big part of individual colleges' culture

## College preference or an Open Application?

When you submit your application, you have to choose whether you want to apply to a specific college or opt for an open application. An open application means that you will be pulled to a college. Either way, the system allows equally well-qualified students to have equal chances of being made an offer, whether they make an open application or specify a preferred College.

This could change your undergraduate experience, as some colleges might be further away from your department's lectures seminars and practicals.

But location isn't the only criterion you must keep in mind if you decide to choose one college to apply to. Some colleges only offer accommodation for two years of your degree, while others offer accommodations for the full length of your degree.

Scholarships and special amenities, such as swimming pools and sports practice areas, should be something else to look out for.

Lastly, you must check whether the college you chose has any restrictions. Some colleges are for graduate students only, some are for mature students only (graduate and undergraduate over the age of 21) and others only accept female students.





# Prepare for your admission

Sometime between November and December, you will receive an invitation to an interview. This means that your Personal Statement was a success and your application made a good impression on the admissions committee. However, your application process is not over yet. Let's review the last components for you to arrive at your dream UK university.



## Interviews

The admissions interviews universities carry out have a double purpose: for the professors to get to know you and your abilities, and for you to get to know the university.

However, don't mistake this for a social call. While for some universities like UCL, Queen Mary and Imperial receiving the invitation for an interview means you are a shoo-in, for Oxbridge, this is simply another testing round.

For you to get a better picture of how this works, look at Oxford:

**Per year they receive over 23,000 applications and send out around 10,000 interviews and out of those people, only half will get through the interview round.**

What you need to do is train for your interview the same way you have trained for the other elements of your application.

At Upgrade Academy we understand the importance of your interview and have a dedicated team to help you master it. With mock interviews, constant feedback, a deep understanding of what the professors are looking for in the interview and continuous reassurance, you will be ready for this phase of your application.



## Final exams

The last step in your application process is meeting the offer requirements from the universities.

You will have to get the indicated grades in the offer on your A-levels exams or International Baccalaureate, on the STEP exams and, in some instances, on subject-specific exams.

Prepare for your exams throughout your secondary school and keep in mind that all the steps before this would be fruitless if you don't meet the requirements in your study offer.

# Who We Are

Upgrade Academy is a mentorship service that offers admission support for secondary school students. We have helped our students gain acceptance to the best universities in the world by offering them individualised coaching plans and comprehensive guidance from inspiring mentors.



# What We Do

After our initial discussion, when we get to understand your goals, as well your current academic situation, our mentors create a long-term personalized plan, specifically suited to your particular needs, so that you maximize your chances of admission to your dream universities. Each application prep plan starts ASAP, from the point you are NOW in your high school career and ends at the end of high school, when you have all your results and are ready to leave for college.

Learn from the people who actually studied there. We are alumni from top US and UK universities including but not limited to Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford and Yale.

# How Does Upgrade Academy Help You?



## Decide on a Dream

We help you in choosing your field of study, the right schools and university programs.



## Essays Support

Write unforgettable essays that truly convey who you are. Together we brainstorm ideas, create a structure and iterate through multiple drafts.



## Academic Development

Gain proficiency in the field you are going to study in university.



## Interview Prep

Mock interviews, advice and feedback from people who have been through these interviews themselves.



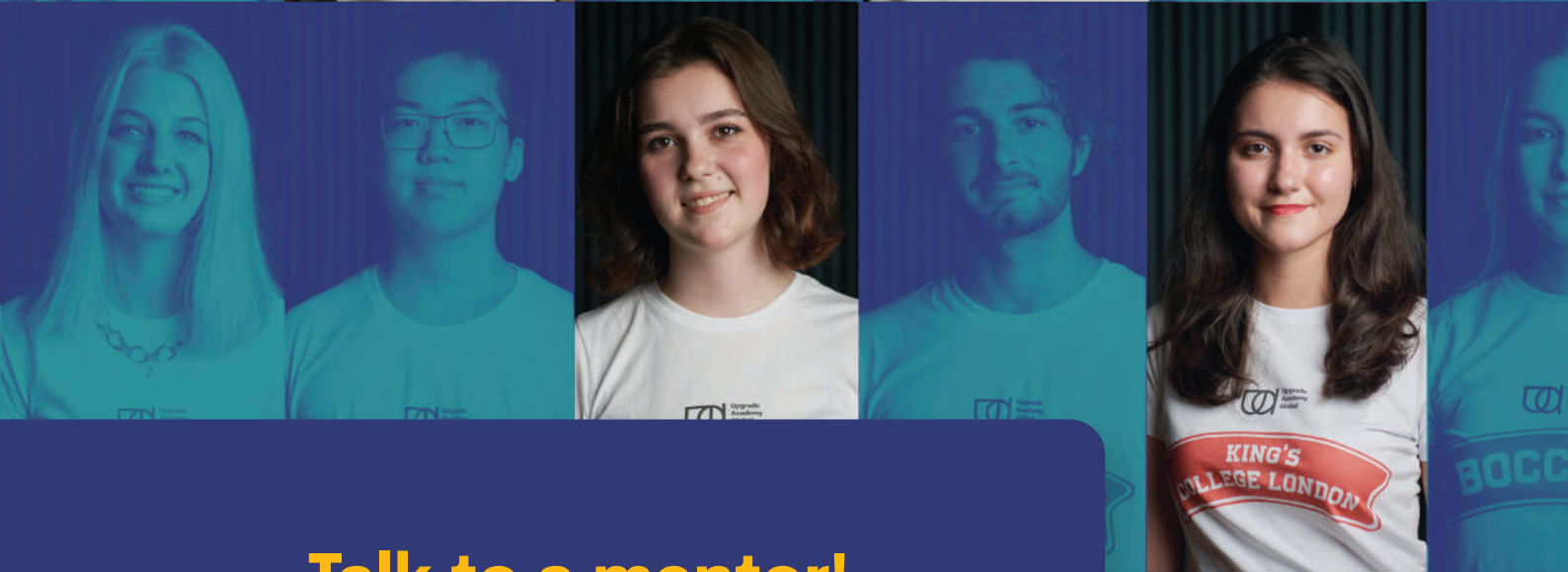
## Extracurricular Development

Create your own projects with a real impact on society.



## General Application Support

Clear application timelines, advice on financials and constant communication with students and parents.



**Talk to a mentor!**



Scan the code here to find a successful  
**Personal Statement** with comments from  
Upgrade Academy mentors!



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Do you want to know how to  
become a student yourself?

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