

Applying to Cambridge & Making a Competitive Application

Emily Ferris

Regional Manager – Europe & UK International

Information correct as of September 2025.

Please consult www.study.cam.ac.uk for the most up to date information.

This presentation should only be delivered by University of Cambridge staff.
Contact internationaladmissions@admin.cam.ac.uk for specific questions.



Session overview

1. Cambridge Explained
2. Application Process
3. Personal Statement and Supercurricular
4. Q&A



What makes Cambridge special?

- Over 800 years of history
- World-class education
- 95 countries represented through our undergraduate students
- Excellent employment prospects
- Being a member of a College- Accommodation guarantee for at least 3 years
- Extensive facilities - over 100 libraries across the University, 9 specialist museums and collections and course-specific such as labs, computer suites and more
- 500+ student-run clubs and societies



Top 5 in the world
(QS World University
Rankings 2025)



125 affiliates
of the University have
been awarded the
Nobel Prize since
1904

Big Bang Theory

Stephen Hawking

Theory of Evolution

Charles Darwin

Gravitational Theory

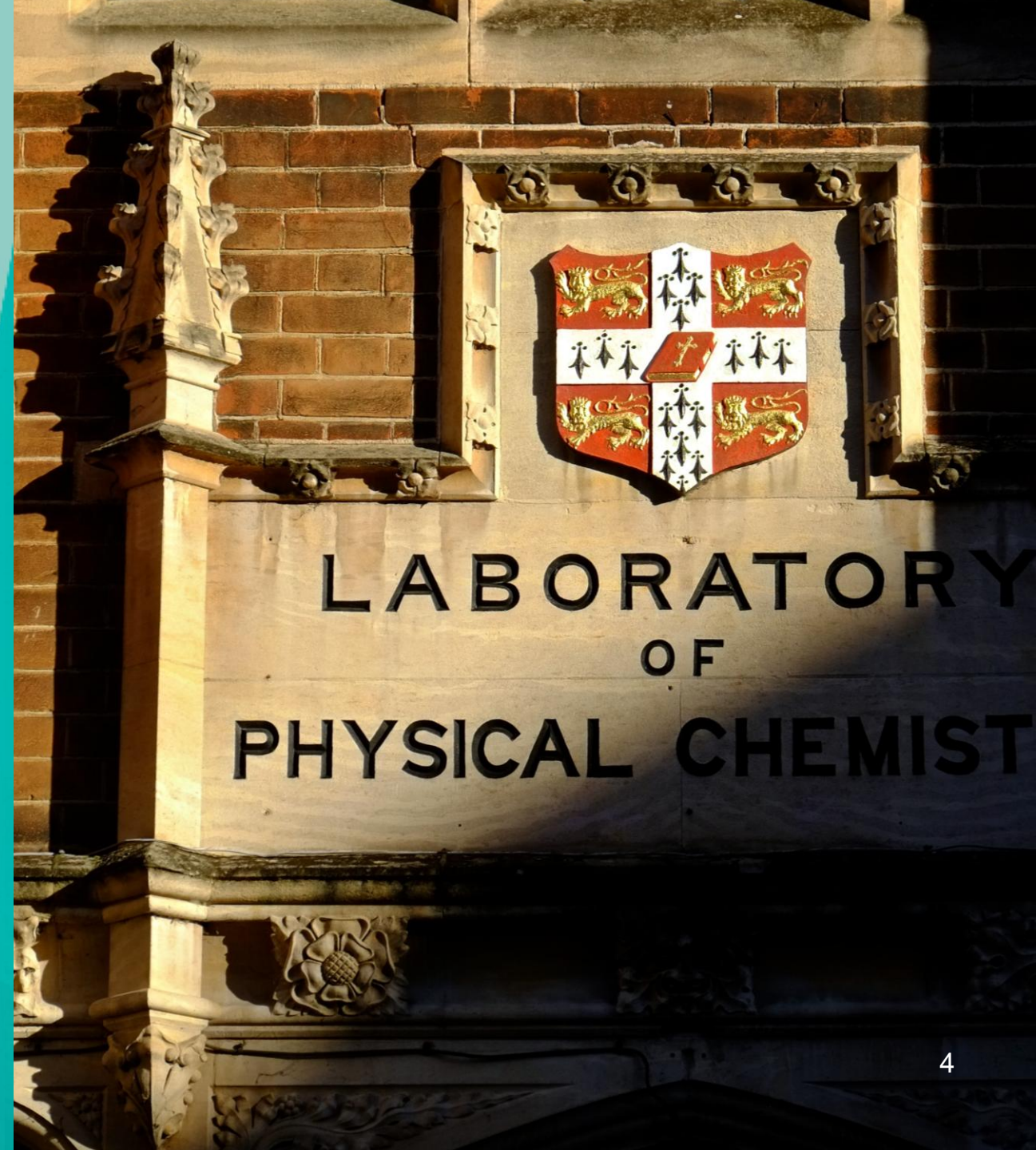
Isaac Newton

Modern Computer Science

Alan Turing

DNA

Francis Crick and James Watson



The collegiate University

The University is made up of **29 undergraduate Colleges**.

The Colleges:

- Admit undergraduate students
- Provide accommodation, places to eat, social opportunities
- Provide academic and pastoral care
- Organise small-group teaching (supervisions)
- Provide facilities for academic study
- Director of Studies
- Nurses and Counsellors

The University:

- Determines course content
- Organises lectures, seminars, practicals and projects
- Sets and marks examinations
- Awards degrees
- University support

Find out more:

www.cam.ac.uk/whycambridge

Challenging, stimulating courses

- Broad range of papers so you can choose to specialise in subject areas that interest you
- You'll be taught by experts in their subject field
- Teaching is through lectures, seminars, studio work, practicals and classes
- **Supervisions** – small-group teaching with a subject specialist to support your studies





**Museum of Archaeology
and Anthropology**



**Cambridge University
Botanic Garden**



**Museum of Classical
Archaeology**



The Fitzwilliam Museum



Kettle's Yard



The Polar Museum



**Sedgwick Museum of
Earth Sciences**



**Whipple Museum of the
History of Science**



Museum of Zoology

Collection & artefact highlights

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology: 14m tall totem pole from the Queen Charlotte Islands in Canada, Samurai armour from Japan

Fitzwilliam Museum: Original pieces by Claude Monet and Rembrandt, German armour from 1550s, an ancient Egyptian mummy's coffin

Museum of Zoology: One of the most complete Dodo skeletons in the UK & Cambridge's largest resident – the 21m fin whale

Whipple Museum of the History of Science: Charles Darwin's microscope, c.1846

Fulfilling student experience

- 500+ clubs and societies to join
- Sport, music, drama and more, at every level
- University newspaper, radio stations, students' unions
- Safe and relaxed city with large student population
- Pubs, clubs, bars, theatres and more
- Only 50 minutes from London



Cambridge Union Society

- Debate Society founded in 1815
- Largest student society in Cambridge
- Hosted numerous prominent figures including:
 - Theodore Roosevelt
 - Bill Gates
 - Winston Churchill
 - Dua Lipa
 - Zach Polanski
 - Sandi Toksvig
 - Professor Brian Cox
 - Krishnan Guru-Murthy



Cambridge Footlights

- World-famous student comedy society
- Former members have gone on to win Oscars, BAFTAs, and other entertainment awards
- Perform regularly at ADC Theatre
- Produce an annual pantomime, sketch shows, and original comic plays



What are we looking for?

- Academic ability
- Satisfy any subject requirements
- Genuine subject interest – motivation and enthusiasm
- Good 'fit' between applicant and course
- Vocational commitment (where appropriate)

We are looking for applicants with academic ability and potential, irrespective of social, religious, school or financial background.



What makes a strong application beyond grades?

- Serious academic interest in the subject
- Ability to think independently and critically
- Skills and experience related to chosen course
- Why you are the ideal applicant
- Personal statement
- The application is considered holistically
- Performance in admissions test (for some competitive courses)



Entry requirements

- Typical offers would be based on 17/20. Applicants are also usually asked to achieve a minimum of 17 in individual subjects.

In recent admissions rounds, most successful applicants have exceeded the minimum entry requirement of 17 out of 20, especially in relevant subjects.

Applicants for Cambridge courses with significant Mathematics content should note that there will likely be Mathematics questions at interviews in early December.

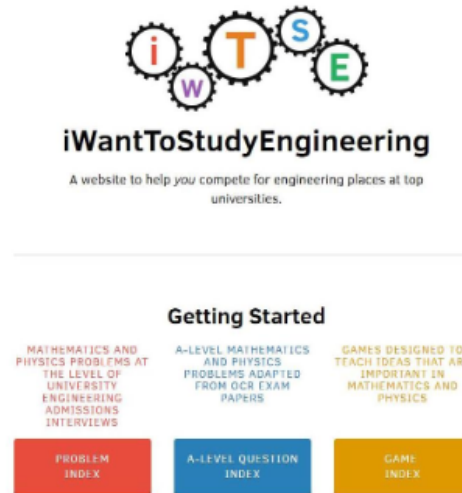
Some Colleges have different entry requirements.
Check our course pages for more details.

Check the subject requirements for your chosen course on our website:
www.cam.ac.uk/courses



Entry requirements

Any course that requires or strongly recommends A-level Further Mathematics is likely to expect applicants to have a more advanced knowledge of mathematics than you can acquire simply by completing the baccalauréat. If you are applying for one of these courses, you should ensure that you familiarise yourself with a Further Mathematics syllabus ([example](#)) and mention the fact that you are “topping up” your mathematics, in your personal statement. Some online resources are available to non UK students via [NRICH Mathematics](#) and the [Advanced Maths Support Programme](#), and Mark Warner and Anson Cheung's book, *A Cavendish Quantum Mechanics Primer* is especially helpful for those considering Engineering and Physical Natural Sciences, and further resources are available in the helpful resources section on the relevant [subject pages](#).



Problem-solving practice resource from the [Engineering page](#) (helpful resources section)



Undergraduate application process



Application process

Choose your course

1



- Think about what you enjoy
- Research course details
- Stay open-minded
- Contact the relevant Faculty or Department with any questions

Find out more:

www.cam.ac.uk/courses



Application process

Choose your College or open application

2



- 29 undergraduate Colleges
- Differences include:
 - Some elements of the admissions process, e.g. entry requirements, interview format
 - Types of accommodation
 - Accommodation costs
 - Facilities for sports and leisure
- Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre (ADRC) can advise on accessibility requirements
- Open application



Application process

Check admission test arrangements

3



www.cam.ac.uk/assessment

Admissions Test	Course(s) requiring the test	Registration deadline
LNAT	Law	September
ESAT	Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology; Engineering; Natural Sciences; Veterinary Medicine	September
TMUA	Computer Science; Economics	September
UCAT	Medicine	September

For Mathematics, **STEP is an offer requirement**, not an admission test.

For ESAT & TMUA, applicants must sit the **October sessions**.

Please check the relevant course webpage carefully for information regarding the type of test required.

Application process

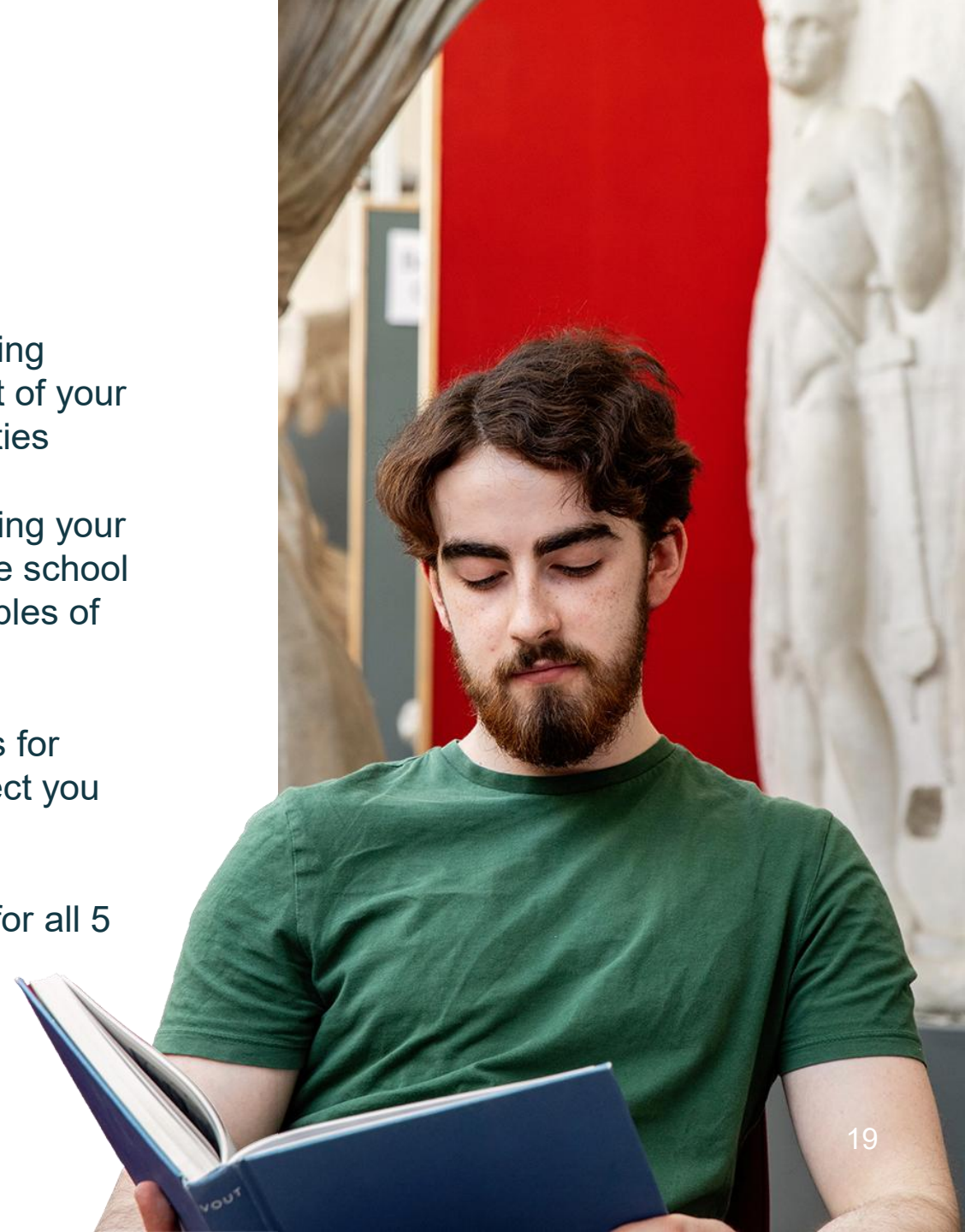
**UCAS application
(15 October)**

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Personal statement

- An academic piece of writing uploaded to UCAS as part of your application to UK universities
- Cover how you are exploring your academic interests outside school or college including examples of activities
- Explain academic reasons for wanting to study the subject you are applying for
- One Personal Statement for all 5 UCAS choices



Personal statement

Separated into 3 sections:

1. Why do you want to study the course?
2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?
3. What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

Find out more:

www.cam.ac.uk/apply

80% academic and super-curricular

- How you have explored your chosen subject
- Super-curriculars are what you have done to explore your subjects beyond your school curriculum

20% extra-curricular

- Demonstrate transferable skills
- Sports, volunteering, etc

Personal statement tips to remember

- Research your courses – keep it focused
- Be honest
- Draft, re-draft and proofread
- Don't plagiarise



Super-curricular ideas

- Current events
- Problem solving
- Literature
- Documentaries
- Exhibitions
- Podcasts and TED talks
- Sample lectures

Scan the QR code below for a list of super-curricular suggestions for each of our courses:



www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/apply/before/improve-application

Books

- Barnard, O'Sullivan and Virgo, What About Law
- Berlins and Dyer, The Law Machine
- Bingham, The Rule of Law
- Kennedy, Misjustice: How British Law is Failing Women
- McBride, Letters to a Law Student: A Guide to Studying Law at University
- Williams, Learning the Law

Journals/Articles

- [Law - The Guardian](#)
- [Charles Dickens and the Law](#)
- [Counsel Magazine](#)

Websites

- [My HE Plus - Law](#)
- [Learn More about Law](#)
- [Think Cambridge Law](#)
- [The Lawyer Portal: The Resource for Aspiring Legal Professionals](#)
- [Justice.gov.uk](#)
- [Courts and Tribunals Judiciary](#)
- [Legislation.gov.uk](#)
- [Mcbridesguides: Helping you to Study Law](#)
- [Public Law for Everyone](#)
- [The Secret Barrister](#)

Video

- [Justice with Michael Sandel](#)
- [Cambridge Law Webinar: Admissions Q&A](#)
- [Mental Health and the Law lecture by Richard Martin](#)
- [Exploring Legal Futures Webinar](#)

Podcasts

- [Law in Action](#)

Books

- [Engineering department recommended reading](#)
- [There Is No Planet B](#)

Journals and articles

- [Science news and science articles from New Scientist](#)
- [Nature News and Comment](#)

Websites

- [I Want to Study Engineering](#)
- [Isaac Physics](#)
- [My HE Plus - Engineering](#)
- [National Grid: Live Status](#)
- [Project Drawdown](#)
- [Explore NASA STEM](#)
- [F1 in Schools UK](#)
- [Greenpower: Home](#)
- [Oxford Sparks: Bringing Oxford Science to Life](#)
- [Brilliant, Learn to think](#)
- [Royal Academy of Engineering](#)

Videos

- [Example Cambridge Engineering Interview](#)

Podcasts

- [BBC Radio 4 - In Our Time, Science](#)
- [Radio 4 - More or Less: Behind the Stats](#)

Competitions

- [School Science Competitions](#)

Activities

- [Learn Python 3](#)
- [Python For Beginners](#)
- [UK Mathematics Trust](#)
- [EDT programmes](#)
- [Arkwright Engineering Scholarships](#)
- [Women in STEM - Women and girls in science, tech, engineering and maths](#)
- [Python Challenges - Christ Church, Oxford](#)

Application process

Additional forms

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All Cambridge applicants must also complete My Cambridge Application.

- My Cambridge Application deadline is **22 October 2025**.
- Ensures consistent information about every applicant
- Used to collect information not in the UCAS application but useful when assessing applicants, including:
 - Topics covered as part of A level / IB / equivalent courses
 - Optional Cambridge-specific personal statement



Application process

**Submit written
work and/or take
admission test**

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Submitted work

- For a number of our courses, you may be asked to submit 1-2 examples of your written work from a relevant A level / IB / equivalent course

Admission test

- For other assessments, Colleges will send you details with your invitation to an interview



Application process

Interview (usually December)

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- You'll most likely have 1-2 interviews, some applicants may have up to 4.
- Typically 35-50 minutes of interview time combined
- Discussion based – designed to be similar to supervisions

How to prepare

- Watch interview films on our website
- Practise talking about your subjects, interests and super-curricular activities
- Read your personal statement and any written work



Application process

Decision (January)

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The Cambridge Colleges are responsible for all undergraduate admissions decisions and they will notify you of the outcome of your application.

You may be made an offer

- This may be from the College you applied / were allocated to, or from a different College as a result of your application being 'pooled'

You may be unsuccessful

- Don't be deterred from applying by the prospect of not being successful. We can only offer places to those who apply!

Find out more...

There are many ways for you to find out more and get ready to apply to Cambridge:

- Explore courses and Colleges on our website
- Check entry requirements and any specific subject requirements
- Start exploring your chosen subject through super-curricular activities
- Attend one of our many events:
 - Open Days
 - Subject Masterclasses
 - Applicant Webinar Series
 - and many more: www.cam.ac.uk/ugevents



Thank you for listening

Q&A

www.cam.ac.uk/study