

Applying to Competitive Universities

Apply 2027

Introduction to
competitive applications



Intro - Simon Wood

- MChem Chemistry (Oxford, Balliol)
- MRes Photonics Engineering (Cambridge, St Johns)
- DPhil (Phd) Engineering Science (Oxford, Balliol)

What is a competitive university?

- Good predicted grades aren't enough
- Often have entrance exams
- Interview prospective applicants



Oxford, Cambridge

Imperial college for STEM subjects

The LSE for Social Sciences and History

UCL for humanities

Warwick for maths

Medicine/dentistry/veterinary medicine



Oxbridge myths

- Oxbridge is expensive
 - Same tuitions fees
 - More scholarships
- There aren't people like me there
 - Admissions match applications



Oxbridge at the Sixth Form

- **2025 entry**
 - 111 applicants
 - 74 interviews (67%)
 - 31 offers (28%)
- 2026 entry
 - 112 applicants
 - 40 interviews (so far)

Our students are amazing!

14%

**LSE
offers**

6% nationally

75%

**Medicine and
vet offers**

23% nationally

29%

**Imperial
offers**

10% nationally

What do I need to apply to Oxbridge?

- Strong contextualised GCSE results
 - This will depend on your school, but 8-9s in key subjects
- A programme of 3-4 challenging A-levels

Other competitive universities are similar, but may be a little less stringent



What are universities looking for

- Enthusiasm for the subject
- Ability to study it at a high level

What do I need to apply to top universities?

- Take advantage of various super-curricular activities at college (and beyond)
- Strong, evidenced predicted grades
- Entrance exams (some subjects)
- Interviews

Timeline

- May 2026 - provisional predicted grades
- Sep 2026 - internal college deadline for early applicants (24th Sep in 2025)
- 15th Oct 2026 - UCAS final early applicant deadline
- Oct/Nov 2026 - entrance exams
- Dec 2026 - interviews
- Jan 2027 - final acceptance letters

Doing the small things right at the correct time



New personal statement

1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?
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?

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Supercurricular activities

- Maths Challenge
- Biology/chemistry/physics/linguistics olympiads
- Debating clubs
- Essay competitions
- Translation competitions

Not just DofE and EPQ

Entrance exams

Prepare for entrance exams

- Supercurricular competitions
- Dedicated sessions (e.g. SUAT in maths)
- Practice past papers

Interviews

Prepare for interviews

- Talk about your subject, build fluency
- Demonstrate that you are enthusiastic about your subject and you are capable of studying it at a high level

Medicine, dentistry, vet

- Work experience will also be critical
- Universities look at: GCSE results, UCAT score, work experience
- Students should be very tactical



College support

Me

- Weekly sessions Tuesday lunchtime from February

Departments

- Super-curricular activities, entrance exam prep, mock interviews

Tutors

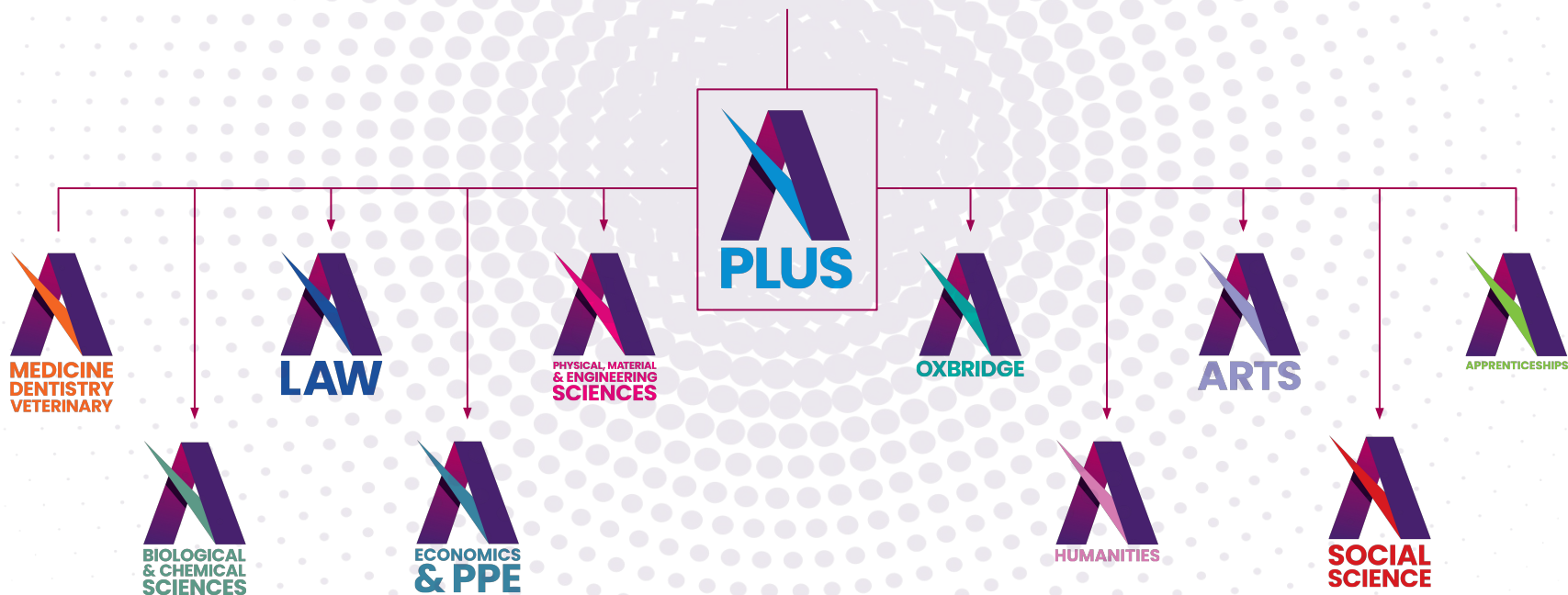
- Application and personal statement support



ASPIRE

AT FARNBOROUGH

Your pathways to excellence



What can you do to support students?

- Talk about subject
- Encourage
- Help plan time
- Ensure they've done research
- Make sure students are logging supercurricular activities

Ollie P



Questions?

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